

Introduction - Dealing with critical incidents

A critical incident may be defined as an incident or situation involving trauma, fatality or serious injury to an individual or serious damage to property. By its very nature such an incident is sudden, unpredictable and outside the range of normal human experience.

Such events are normally very distressing to pupils and staff. Infrequently, a serious crisis may affect your school. It can happen on the premises or may involve pupils and or staff when they are away. Sometimes, a disaster affecting the wider community may have a significant effect on your school.

Examples of some of the critical incidents that have happened in Ealing over the last few years include:

- A fatal stabbing of a secondary age pupil at the end of a school day
- Attempted suicides of staff and pupils on school premises
- The violent non-accidental death of a whole family with primary age children
- Deaths of pupils in both mainstream and special schools as a result of long term illness
- The sudden, unexpected death of young teachers
- The murder of parents of primary age children
- A serious, accidental injury of a primary age pupil on school premises during the school day
- A major rail crash involving the use of high school facilities
- The kidnapping of a primary aged pupil.

These may seem very shocking but are only listed to illustrate to colleagues that it is important to be 'wise before the event'. In the event of a crisis like this there can be three aspects to deal with at once:

- the critical incident itself
- the impact on your school as a community
- the public impact of the incident, including how it is reported in the media.

This guide has been prepared to assist headteachers and school staff to deal effectively with critical incidents. It will ensure that you are clear about the Children's Services response to a crisis at a school and will have:

- A detailed, comprehensive emergency plan to follow
- Clear guidance on who to notify in the Children's Service with contact numbers readily available
- Guidance on the kind of help the Children's Service is able to offer
- Guidance on dealing with the media
- Guidance on funeral rites across different cultures
- Lists of useful resources.

Dealing with other serious incidents

There is another level of incident that may not be "critical" but is nevertheless traumatic and serious and may lead to a "critical" situation. Such events include:

- Child abuse allegations
- Loss of use of part of the school
- Significant drop in school standards
- Chronic or acute negative media attention

Advice and guidance in this manual will support such situations but the highly varied nature of these events means that action will be agreed in accordance with the needs identified at the time and with advice from appropriate professionals.

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- [Yes](#)
- [Neutral](#)
- [No](#)

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