

# Coping with Suicide

A summary of support for educational settings 2018

# Contents

[03 Foreword](#)

[04 Establishing the facts](#)

[05 Appropriate language](#)

[06 Critical incident support from Bath and North East  
Somerset Council](#)

[07 Alerting Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services](#)

[07 Free support from the Samaritans  
Step by Step Service](#)

[08 Letting people know: guidance for telling staff,  
students and parents](#)

[09 Providing immediate support: guidance  
and sources of help](#)

[09 Memorials and funeral](#)

[10 Hosting a parent / carer event](#)

[10 Providing on-going support](#)

[10 Responding to Self-Harm - links to B&NES Guidance](#)

[11 Example statements for the media](#)

# Foreward

This guidance has been developed by Bath and North East Somerset (B&NES) Suicide Prevent Strategy Group, in conjunction with the B&NES Local Safeguarding Children Board. It brings together in one place existing resources and support available to educational settings. Whilst it does not provide new guidance, it aims to make existing support easier to navigate. It provides support in the event of a death by suicide, or a death where suicide is suspected. It is relevant to the death of a student or member of staff. It covers;

- Support available from the local authority
- Checklists and flow chart of things to do and consider
- Links to support for families, pupils and staff
- Suicide prevention messages and resources

The contents of this resource has been largely drawn from two existing resources that are judged by the B&NES Suicide Prevention Strategy Group as providing sensible and constructive advice:-

● [Help When We Needed It Most: How to prepare for and respond to suicide in schools and colleges – Samaritans](#)

● [After a Suicide: A toolkit for schools - American Foundation for Suicide Prevention](#)

Having a response plan in advance of suspected death by suicide is particularly important for maintaining the structure and order of the school / college routine, whilst facilitating the expression of grief, and reducing the risk of imitative suicide (sometimes referred to as suicide contagion or copycat suicide). Schools with critical incident plans in place are best equipped to deal with a suicide should it happen. Good planning in the aftermath of an attempted or suspected suicide enables people to respond effectively at a time when resilience may be low.

Suicide is a very complicated act. It can be caused by a mental health problem such as depression, which can prevent a person from thinking clearly about his or her problems and how to solve them. Sometimes mental health problems are not identified or noticed; in other cases, a person will show obvious symptoms or signs. Two important messages are that all of us should seek the help of others when we are feeling down or vulnerable and that young people should tell an adult if they are worried about a friend.

### **The experience of one B&NES head teacher:-**

I hope I never have to use this resource but it is good to know it is there. What I learnt from the experience of a student suicide is that you have to draw on every ounce of emotional intelligence within the school. Don't underestimate the intense feelings of grief, loss and anger that the whole community will feel including other parents and be aware that it is not uncommon for this to be directed at the school. Be really careful about what you say and the language you use. Don't talk about the death as suicide unless this has been firmly established and the family has given you permission to do so. If others are talking about suicide then the issue can be addressed in general ways as set out in this guidance.

## What to do in the event of a death (or suspected) by suicide

Local emergency services have agreed protocols in place for how to respond to any death, this includes suicide or deaths suspected to be as a result of a suicide. [The Rapid Response and Child Death Protocol for Unexpected Deaths \(Appendix 15 page 31\)](#) sets out the arrangements for those under 18 years of age and deaths are reviewed by the Child Death Overview Panel. Rapid responses to the death or suicide of an adult vary depending on the location the death occurred and circumstances surrounding the death.

## Establish the facts

Following the news of a death, establish the facts before taking any action. The Rapid Response Team and emergency services will be able to help with this. It is important to know:-

- If the death is being treated as suicide at this stage
- If the family want the cause of death to be known

The guidance here helps with how to respond depending on the answers to these questions.

Be aware that it is likely to be many months before an inquest is held, and that in many cases narrative conclusions (formally known as verdicts) may mean that the death is not officially recorded as suicide. It is important to note that there may be a great deal of speculation within the school / college community, and that schools often have to act on the basis that the death is being treated as suicide. When talking with the family and police you may be informed of details of the death such as certain factors that led up to it, the method of death and the existence and contents of any suicide notes. Whilst rumours may circulate about these things and people may directly ask you about them, it is best practice not to disclose or discuss these details particularly with students. Having agreed statements for staff to share with students will help ensure messages remain consistent and appropriate.

## Use appropriate language

The UK Charity Papyrus (preventing young suicide) provides helpful suggestions on how to get the language right when talking about suicide. [On pages 17 & 18 of their resource Building Suicide-Safer Schools and Colleges: A guide for teachers and staff](#), they advise that using sensitive language can help build awareness and understanding to increase empathy and support.

### Terminology to avoid

“Committed suicide”	Suicide hasn’t been a crime since 1961. Using the word ‘commit’ suggests that it is still a crime (we ‘commit’ crimes), which perpetuates stigma or the sense that it is a ‘sin’. Stigma shuts people up – young people will be less likely to talk about their suicidal feelings if they feel judged.
“Successful suicide”	Talking about suicide in terms of success is not helpful. If a young person dies by suicide it cannot ever be a success. We don’t talk about any other death in terms of success: we would never talk about a ‘successful heart attack’.

### Terminology to use

When a suicide has occurred	“Ended / took their life” “Died by suicide” “Killed themselves”
About suicidal behaviour	“Attempted to take their life” “Engaged in suicidal behaviour”

# Critical incident support from the council

The Council has a [Critical Incidents in Schools and Early Years Protocol \(Appendix 15 page 31\)](#) in place which sets out the support available to schools/ educational establishments in the event of critical incident which has impacted upon or harms a child who attends a school or early years setting in B&NES. A student / member of staff suicide or suspected suicide would be considered a critical incident.

The support will be proportionate to the situation and is determined by the 'level' the incident is categorised as. The levels are set out in the Protocol. A Critical Incident Coordination group will be established of which the school is key member. The group will be chaired by a staff member from the Council and this will usually be the Head or Deputy for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance. They will determine in the first instance which agencies will be required to support the school. The group will normally be convened within 48 hours of notification of the incident. The Head or Deputy for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance will make contact with the Headteacher as soon as they are notified of the incident to discuss immediate actions required and confirm the Coordination group agenda and time.

The school may need to decide immediate actions that are required before the Coordination group is convened and can discuss this with the Head or Deputy for Safeguarding and Quality Assurance.

Key facts to establish include:

- Is there confirmation that the cause of death is being treated as suicide?
- What do the family want disclosed?

Immediate thought must be given to contain any media interest and a media plan and statement will need to be considered and agreed (B&NES Council schools will agree a media statement with B&NES Communications and Marketing Team).

## Additional resources

### Further guidance and information in appendices

- **Sample media statement.** [Appendix 1](#)
- **Key messages when responding to the media.** [Appendix 2](#)

## Alerting CAMHS

In order to protect other potentially vulnerable young people the B&NES Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAMHS) request that you also alert them of the death as a matter of priority. By informing the duty / on call desk of the situation they are able to be mindful of young people in their service who may be affected by the death. They will urgently review risk plans of those within the same school / college or family as required.

**Telephone 01865 903889**

## Free support from the Samaritans

Schools / colleges may consider using the Samaritans 'Step by Step' service [www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools](http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools). Whilst this is not quality assured by B&NES Council, it is a national service promoted by Public Health England. The Samaritans provide a free and comprehensive package of support for schools, colleges and other settings from day one following a suicide. All Postvention Advisors have received training and are DBS checked. Alongside practical advice the service is able to provide emotional support to staff. The Samaritans do not offer 1-1 emotional support to young people aged under 18 in the school or youth setting, however, students can access this support by calling, emailing, texting or going to the Bath and District branch

# Breaking the news

## Handling rumours and misinformation

### Telling staff

If possible, hold an emergency staff meeting or implement a predetermined crisis alert system. Call an end of afternoon whole staff meeting to debrief the day.

#### Further guidance and information in appendices

- **Sample agenda for staff meeting and notes for informing staff.** [Appendix 3](#)

### Telling students

Best practice is to do this in small groups e.g. tutor groups or class sets. Avoid breaking news in an assembly. Be factually accurate but avoid disclosing any details. Produce a clear statement to ensure consistency of message using appropriate language. The content of this will depend on whether or not the death is being treated as suspected suicide and if the family has requested the cause of death is not disclosed.

Ensure that when informing students of the death they are directed to sources of support and trusted adults if they feel distressed by the news.

#### Further guidance and information in appendices

##### Sample notification statement for students when:-

- **Death has been agreed as suspected suicide.** [Appendix 4](#)
- **Cause of death unconfirmed.** [Appendix 5](#)
- **Family request cause of death is not disclosed.** [Appendix 6](#)

### Telling parents / carers

Best practice is to do this as soon as possible by email or via letter. This should include a brief statement plus information on what their child has been told and where to access further help. The content of the message will depend on the circumstances.

#### Further guidance and information in appendices

##### Sample letter to parents / carers when:

- **Death has been agreed as suspected suicide.** [Appendix 7](#)
- **Cause of death unconfirmed.** [Appendix 8](#)
- **Family request cause of death is not disclosed.** [Appendix 9](#)

# Providing immediate support

Ensure that all staff know how to signpost students to sources of emotional support if needed. Strike a balance between being sensitive to those who are grieving and in shock and maintaining the school / college routine. Set aside a room with a staff member where students can go if they are upset or need privacy or a quiet space.

Ensure that all staff are also supported. They too will be deeply shocked by the death and feel bereaved. For both staff and students, the death may also trigger personal grief and anxiety due to circumstances outside of work.

## Further guidance and information in appendices

- Available support from -B&NES Council Services and others. [Appendix 10](#)

# Memorials and funerals

**Memorials:** Best practice is to acknowledge the importance of memorials but to avoid anything that sensationalise or glamorises suicide and to limit any memorials to within two weeks following the death. Consider offering to forward cards and tributes to the family if they would welcome it.

Talk with students about the risks linked with online memorials. For example comments may become public or published without their permission. They can also attract negative and hurtful comments which will be distressing to family and friends. Finally, anything that romanticises suicide can be harmful to those who are vulnerable and increase the risk of suicide in other vulnerable readers

**Funerals:** If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, parents or carers of students who wish to attend should request their child to be absent from school in the normal way. It is recommended that parents / carers accompany students who want to attend the funeral.

## Further guidance and information in appendices

- Further advice about memorials and funerals. [Appendix 11](#)

# Hosting a parent carer meeting

A parent / carer meeting can be a good way of addressing questions and fears and provide strategies for supporting children and young people at home. The meeting should acknowledge the recent death but make clear that the focus will be on supporting young people in times of distress and crisis and signposting to sources of support if worried about mental health issues.

## Further guidance and information in appendices

- Further advice about hosting a meeting. [Appendix 12](#)

# Providing ongoing support

Death by suicide will have a lasting impact on a school / college or setting.

**Support for individuals** - Some members of the school community will be particularly vulnerable and effort should be made to identify any such students, staff or families and provide them with additional support

**A whole school / college approach** can be supported through a range of emotional health and wellbeing resources that cover, information, PSHE and broader pastoral care.

## A note about self-harm

Some people self-harm as a way of coping with difficult feelings. Self-harming is not in itself an indication that someone is suicidal, however, many people who die by suicide have at some point in their life self-harmed. Some students may self-harm as a way of dealing with grief and schools are alerted to B&NES Guidance on supporting young people who self-harm using the Oxford NHS Foundation Trust website HarmLESS

## Further guidance and information in appendices

- Sources of support for staff, students, parents/ carers / curriculum and policy development. [Appendix 10](#)

## Further guidance and information in appendices

- Further information on self-harm. [Appendix 13](#)
- HarmLESS [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/harmless](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/harmless)

# Appendix 1

## Sample media statement:

The following sample media statement has been approved by the B&NES Communications and Marketing team and can be adapted as relevant. It deliberately makes no reference to the word suicide as it is not appropriate for the school / college to identify this to the media.

*The senior management team at [insert name of school] has been informed that one of their students has died suddenly. The student was [add age] years old. Our thoughts and support go out to [his/her] family and friends at this difficult time.*

*The school /college will be hosting a meeting for parents, carers, and others in the community at which members of the school /college pastoral team [add others] will be present to provide information on common reactions following a sudden death and how to support children and young people. Trained counsellors, school nurses [add others] are also available to meet with students and staff over the coming weeks, as needed.*

*The Samaritans offer a listening service for anyone who is in distress or has been affected by this death. They can be contacted on **Tel. 116 123** or email them at [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org).*

*Papyrus is a national charity [www.papyrus-uk.org/contact](http://www.papyrus-uk.org/contact) dedicated to supporting young people. Their website provides information and advice to young people their families and friends in times of distress. They also promote a confidential helpline number: **HopeLineUK – 0800 068 4141***

# Appendix 2

## Key messages when responding to the media

- We are heartbroken over the death of one of our students. Our thoughts go out to [his/her] family and friends, and the entire community.
- We will be offering support for students and staff over the coming days and weeks
- We will be hosting an information meeting for parents and the community regarding such unexpected death. Experts will be on hand to answer questions.
- No TV cameras or reporters are allowed in the school or on school grounds.
- The media are advised to refer to the Samaritans Media Guidelines [www.samaritans.org/media-centre/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide](http://www.samaritans.org/media-centre/media-guidelines-reporting-suicide)

## Appendix 3

### Telling Staff: Sample agenda for staff meeting and notes for informing staff

This meeting should be conducted by a senior member of staff such as the Head or Assistant Headteacher / HR manager or the Designated Safeguarding Lead. They will act as the nominated Crisis Response Lead. It should be held as soon as possible, ideally before school or setting starts in the morning.

Depending on when the death occurs, there may not be enough time to hold the meeting before students have begun to hear the news through word of mouth, text messaging, social media. If this happens, the Crisis Response Lead should first verify the accuracy of the reports and then notify staff of the death through the school's predetermined crisis alert system, such as e-mail or calls to classroom phones. Remember that information about the cause of death must be withheld until the family has been consulted.

#### Goals of Initial Meeting

- Introduce the Crisis Response staff
- Share accurate information about the death
- Allow staff an opportunity to express their own reactions, feelings and grief. Identify anyone who may need additional support and refer them to appropriate resources
- Provide an appropriate statement to students for use in tutor or class groups
- Arrange cover for any staff unable to manage reading the statement.
- Prepare for student reactions and questions by providing handouts to staff on talking about a sudden death to young people
- Explain plans for the day, including locations of crisis counselling rooms
- Remind all staff of the important role they may play in identifying changes in behaviour among the students they know and see every day, and discuss plans for handling students who are having difficulty
- Brief staff about identifying and referring at-risk students as well as the need to keep records of those efforts
- Appraise staff of any outside crisis responders, or others, who will be assisting
- Discuss plans for students and staff wishing to attend the funeral when more details are known
- Identify which Crisis Response staff member has been designated as the media spokesperson and instruct staff to refer all media enquiries to him or her.

## Appendix 3 continued

### End of the First Day

It can also be helpful for the Crisis Response Lead and/or the Head teacher to have a full staff meeting at the end of the first day. This meeting provides an opportunity to take the following steps:

- Offer verbal appreciation to all the staff for their response today
- Review the day's challenges and successes
- Debrief, share experiences, express concerns, and ask questions
- Check in with staff to assess whether any of them need additional support, and refer accordingly
- Disseminate information regarding the death and/or funeral arrangements
- Discuss plans for the next day
- Remind staff of the importance of self-care and to look out for each other
- Remind staff of the importance of documenting crisis response efforts for future planning and understanding

## Appendices 4, 5, 6

### Sample death notification statement for students

These statements are intended as a guide to staff. They indicate the tone of a message that should be used when breaking the news of a death and the boundaries of information that can be discussed. They should be used in small group settings such as tutor groups or class sets. It is not appropriate to break such news in large groups such as in assemblies.

# Appendix 4

## Breaking the news to students

### **Option 1 – When the family have agreed that the cause of death can be described as suspected suicide.**

*It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our students [for those in different year group give Year X, for those in year group / class give name provided parents have agreed] has died by suspected suicide. This is a big shock to all of us and we are all thinking of [his/her] family and friends. All of us want you to know that we understand how upsetting this news is. We are here to help you in any way we can.*

*A suicide death presents us with many questions that we may not be able to answer right away. Rumours may begin to circulate, and we ask that you do not spread these as they may be untrue and hurtful to others. We will do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.*

*Suicide is a very complicated act. It can be caused by a mental health problem such as depression, which can prevent a person from thinking clearly about his or her problems and how to solve them. Sometimes mental health problems are not identified or noticed; in other cases, a person will show obvious symptoms or signs. Two important messages are that all of us should seek the help of others when we are feeling down or vulnerable and that young people should tell an adult if they are worried about a friend.*

*Each of us will react to this death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may experience a great deal of sadness. For others this tragic death will trigger feelings of distress about other sad events in your life and people you have lost. Some of you may find you are having difficulty concentrating on your work, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. However you react, we want to reassure you that your feelings are quite natural. We also know that sometimes people have feelings of guilt when someone they know dies. It is really important that you know this death is not anyone's fault.*

*We have arranged for support to be available to any student who wants it. [Describe here support details re counsellor / quiet room and arrangements to access these] Remember you are not allowed to leave the school / college grounds without permission. A notice is going home today to your parents and carers about the death so that they understand if you want to talk to them today or sometime in the future.*

# Appendix 5

## Breaking the news to students

### **Option 2 – When the cause of death is unconfirmed.**

*It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our students [for those in different year group give Year X, for those in year group / class give name provided parents have agreed] has died suddenly. This is a big shock to all of us and we are all thinking of [his/her] family and friends. All of us want you to know that we understand how upsetting this news is. We are here to help you in any way we can.*

*The cause of death has not yet been determined by the authorities. A sudden death presents us with many questions that we may not be able to answer right away at the moment. Rumours may begin to circulate, and we ask that you do not spread these as they may be untrue and hurtful to others. We will do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.*

*Each of us will react to this death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may experience a great deal of sadness. For others this tragic death will trigger feelings of distress about other sad events in your life and people you have lost. Some of you may find you are having difficulty concentrating on your work, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. However you react, we want to reassure you that your feelings are quite natural. We also know that sometimes people have feelings of guilt when someone they know dies. It is really important that you know this death is not anyone's fault.*

*We have arranged for support to be available to any student who wants it. [Describe here support details re counsellor / quiet room and arrangements to access these] Remember you are not allowed to leave the school grounds without permission. A notice is going home today to your parents and carers about the death so that they understand if you want to talk to them today or sometime in the future.*

# Appendix 6

## Breaking the news to students

### **Option 3 – When the family has requested that the cause of death not be disclosed**

*It is with great sadness that I have to tell you that one of our students [for those in different year group give Year X, for those in year group / class give name provided parents have agreed] has died suddenly. This is a big shock to all of us and we are all thinking of [his/her] family and friends. All of us want you to know that we understand how upsetting this news is. We are here to help you in any way we can.*

*The family has requested that information about the cause of death is not be shared at this time. A sudden death presents us with many questions that we may not be able to answer right away at the moment. Rumours may begin to circulate, and we ask that you do not spread these as they may be untrue and hurtful to others. We will do our best to give you accurate information as it becomes known to us.*

*Each of us will react to this death in our own way, and we need to be respectful of each other. Feeling sad is a normal response to any loss. Some of you may experience a great deal of sadness. For others this tragic death will trigger feelings of distress about other sad events in your life and people you have lost. Some of you may find you are having difficulty concentrating on your work, and others may find that diving into your work is a good distraction. However you react, we want to reassure you that your feelings are quite natural. We also know that sometimes people have feelings of guilt when someone they know dies. It is really important that you know this death is not anyone's fault.*

*We have arranged for support to be available to any student who wants it. [Describe here support details re counsellor / quiet room and arrangements to access these] Remember you are not allowed to leave the school / college grounds without permission. A notice is going home today to your parents and carers about the death so that they understand if you want to talk to them today or sometime in the future.*

## Appendices 7, 8, 9

### Sample death notification statement for parents

To be sent by e-mail or regular mail

# Appendix 7

## Informing parents and carers

### **Option 1 – When the family have agreed that the cause of death can be described as suspected suicide.**

*I am writing to you with the very sad news that one of our year [add year] students has died by suspected suicide. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.*

*All of the students were given this news by their teacher in [tutor groups/class sets] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read out to them. Support has been available to all students through [add detail]. If you feel your son/daughter needs support in school they should speak to [add detail about arrangement in place].*

*We know that you may be concerned about your child's reaction or expressions of feelings about this news. If you can, try and talk with them about positive ways to manage problems. Two important messages are that all of us should seek the help of others when we are feeling down or vulnerable and that young people should tell an adult if they are worried about a friend.*

*Over the coming weeks and months we will be concentrating on supporting students and staff affected by this death. This not only includes close friends of the student but also those for whom this news triggers feelings of sadness and loss due to events in their own lives. We plan to provide this support whilst also returning the school to normal routines as soon as possible.*

*Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school. This should be sent in writing to us.*

*We will be hosting a meeting for parents and others in the community at [date/time/location / or further details to follow]. Members of our Crisis Response Team and local services will be present to provide information about common reactions following a suicide and how adults can help young people cope with these. They will also provide information about suicide and mental illness in adolescents and will address attendees' questions and concerns.*

*If you would like to speak to a member of staff about your child's response to this sad news or any aspect of the content of this letter, please contact either myself or [add details].*

*Yours Sincerely,  
[Head Teacher]*

# Appendix 8

## Informing parents and carers

### **Option 2 – When the cause of death is unconfirmed**

*I am writing to you with the very sad news of the sudden death of one of our year [add year] students. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.*

*All of the students were given this news by their teacher in [tutor groups/class sets] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read out to them. The cause of death has not yet been determined by the authorities. We are aware that there has been some talk about the possibility that this was a suicide death. Rumours may begin to circulate, and we have asked the students not to spread these since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to family and friends. We will do our best to give accurate information as it becomes known to us.*

*Support has been available to all students through [add detail]. If you feel your son/daughter needs support in school they should speak to [add detail of arrangements]. We know that you may be concerned about your child's reaction or expressions of feelings about this news and any rumours they have overheard. If you can, talk with them about positive ways to manage problems. Two important messages are that all of us should seek the help of others when we are feeling down or vulnerable and that young people should tell an adult if they are worried about a friend.*

*Over the coming weeks and months we will be concentrating on supporting students and staff affected by this death. This not only includes close friends of the student but also those for whom this news triggers feelings of sadness and loss due to events in their own lives. We plan to provide this support whilst also returning the school to normal routines as soon as possible.*

*Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school. This should be sent in writing to us.*

*We will be hosting a meeting for parents and others in the community at [date/time/location / or further details to follow]. Members of our Crisis Response Team and local services will be present to provide information about common reactions following a suicide and how adults can help young people cope with these. They will also provide information about suicide and mental illness in adolescents and will address attendees' questions and concerns.*

*If you would like to speak to a member of staff about your child's response to this sad news or any aspect of the content of this letter, please contact either myself or [add details].*

*Yours Sincerely,*

*[Head Teacher]*

# Appendix 9

## Informing parents and carers

### **Option 3 – When the family has requested that the cause of death not be disclosed**

*I am writing to you with the very sad news of the sudden death of one of our year [add year] students. Our thoughts and sympathies are with [his/her] family and friends.*

*All of the students were given this news by their teacher in [tutor groups/class sets] this morning. I have included a copy of the announcement that was read out to them. The family has requested that information about the cause of death is not shared at this time. Rumours may begin to circulate about the cause of death, and we have asked the students not to spread these since they may turn out to be inaccurate and can be deeply hurtful and unfair to family and friends. We will do our best to give accurate information as it becomes known to us.*

*Support has been made available to all students through [add detail]. If you feel your son/daughter needs support in school they should speak to [add detail of arrangements]. We know that you may be concerned about your child reaction or expressions of feelings about this news. If you can, talk with them about positive ways to manage problems. Two important messages are that all of us should seek the help of others when we are feeling down or vulnerable and that young people should tell an adult if they are worried about a friend.*

*Over the coming weeks and months we will be concentrating on supporting students and staff affected by this death. This not only includes close friends of the student but also those for whom this news triggers feelings of sadness and loss due to events in their own lives. We plan to provide this support whilst also returning the school to normal routines as soon as possible.*

*Information about the funeral service will be made available as soon as we have it. If your child wishes to attend, we strongly encourage you to accompany him or her to the service. If the funeral is scheduled during school hours, students who wish to attend will need parental permission to be released from school. This should be sent in writing to us.*

*We will be hosting a meeting for parents and others in the community at [date/time/location / or further details to follow]. Members of our Crisis Response Team and local services will be present to provide information about common reactions following a suicide and how adults can help young people cope with these. They will also provide information about suicide and mental illness in adolescents and will address attendees' questions and concerns.*

*If you would like to speak to a member of staff about your child's response to this sad news or any aspect of the content of this letter, please contact either myself or [add details].*

*Yours Sincerely,*

*[Head Teacher]*

# Appendix 10

## Sources of support

### Supporting Bereavement: B&NES Services and resources

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Critical Incident in Schools and Early Years Settings Protocol

[See Appendix 15](#)

Out of Hours Contacts – to be called if the school are concerned about a family / family member outside of normal working hours

**Emergency Duty Services (01454) 615165**

Education Psychology Service

[See Appendix 14](#)

B&NES Bereavement checklist

[www.directorofpublichealthaward.org.uk/content/bereavement-checklist-0](http://www.directorofpublichealthaward.org.uk/content/bereavement-checklist-0)

### Supporting Bereavement: Other sources

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Samaritans Step by Step Service

[www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-education/step-step](http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-education/step-step)

CRUSE when a child is bereaved by suicide

[www.cruse.org.uk/for-schools/suicide](http://www.cruse.org.uk/for-schools/suicide)

Papyrus: prevention of young suicides  
HopeLine UK

[www.papyrus-uk.org](http://www.papyrus-uk.org)  
**0800 0684141**

Diocese of Bath and Wells

Supporting Church of England Schools.  
**01749 670777**  
Ask for David Williams or bereavement support

Roman Catholic Schools

School Chaplains / Priest support

Bereavement Trust

[www.bereavement-trust.org.uk](http://www.bereavement-trust.org.uk)  
**Free Helpline 0800 435 455**

Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

[www.uk-sobs.org.uk](http://www.uk-sobs.org.uk)  
**03001115065**

Support After Suicide Partnership

[www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk](http://www.supportaftersuicide.org.uk)

## Appendix 10 continued

### Sources of support

#### Support for children & young people in times of distress

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KOOTH free online counselling

<https://kooth.com>

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Off The Record

[www.offtherecord-banes.co.uk](http://www.offtherecord-banes.co.uk)

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Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services  
– self referral process

[www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/young-people/south-west/banes/banes-community-camhs/](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/young-people/south-west/banes/banes-community-camhs/)

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B&NES School Nursing Service

<http://bathneshealthandcare.nhs.uk/childrens/school-nursing>

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Papyrus: prevention of young suicides

<https://papyrus-uk.org/help-advice/resources/spot-the-signs>

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Childline

[www.childline.org.uk](http://www.childline.org.uk)  
Free phone 0800 1111

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Samaritans

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)  
Free phone 116 123

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The Mix

[www.themix.org.uk](http://www.themix.org.uk)

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Young Minds

<https://youngminds.org.uk>

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#### Support for parents / carers

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All of the above can provide useful information for parents and carers  
Young Minds host a parent helpline

<https://youngminds.org.uk>  
Tel 0808 8025544

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## Appendix 10 continued

### Sources of support

#### Training resources for staff

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Not Too Young to Grieve [www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk](http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk)

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Child Bereavement UK <https://childbereavementuk.org>

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Winston's Wish [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)  
Freephone 08452 030405

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Charlie Waller Memorial Trust [www.cwmt.org.uk](http://www.cwmt.org.uk)

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#### Policy guidance

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Creating a Suicide-Safer Community in your School or College [www.papyrus-uk.org/repository/documents/editorfiles/toolkitfinal.pdf](http://www.papyrus-uk.org/repository/documents/editorfiles/toolkitfinal.pdf)

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Winston's Wish – positive responses to death a strategy for schools [www.winstonswish.org.uk](http://www.winstonswish.org.uk)

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Samaritans: Help when we needed it most [www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-education/step-step](http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/samaritans-education/step-step)

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#### Curriculum resources

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Promoting Positive Mental Health - B&NES/ CAMHS Resources [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/south-west/schools-resource-pack](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/children-and-young-people/south-west/schools-resource-pack)

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DEAL - Samaritans' teaching resources help schools develop the skills that young people need to cope with life's challenges. [www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools/deal-teaching-resources](http://www.samaritans.org/your-community/supporting-schools/deal-teaching-resources)

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# Appendix 11

## Memorials and Funeral

### **The Samaritans advice regarding MEMORIALS:-**

This is a difficult issue that needs to be carefully managed, taking account of the wide range of feelings that are likely to be displayed. It is natural to want to pay tribute to those who have died. However, it is important not to sensationalise or glamorise suicide as that may act as a trigger for anyone who is deeply affected.

School / college managers should set a time limit for memorials [about two weeks]. They may offer to forward cards and other tribute material to the family afterwards. Permanent memorials following a suicide are generally to be discouraged. Schools cannot control online memorials and other social networking activity following a suicide.

However, students should be warned about the risks of online memorials – their comments may become public / published without their permission, online memorials can attract negative and hurtful comment and anything that romanticises suicide can be harmful to those who are vulnerable and increase the risk of suicide in other vulnerable readers. Schools could consider establishing an online memorial on their own website, which they can then moderate and remove after an agreed time.

### **The Samaritans advice regarding FUNERALS:-**

The nature of the student's death should not by itself encourage greater attendance at the funeral than it would for any other tragic death at the school. They recommend that parents / carers accompany students who want to attend. Those who don't attend should have normal classes to go to. If appropriate, schools might engage the faith leader prior to the funeral to suggest that eulogies should be fitting and do not sensationalise what has happened.

# Appendix 12

## Hosting a parent / carer meeting

If the school has offered to host a parent / carer meeting this should acknowledge the recent death but make clear that the focus will be on:-

- Supporting your child if they are experiencing bereavement and or anxiety following the death
- Outlining the support provided within the school / setting including statements about counselling, memorials, social media and the funeral
- Supporting your child if they are experiencing mental health problems or are in distress.

It is advisable to have a high staff to parent / carer ratio and to draw upon the support of health and safeguarding professionals including

- Members of the Critical Incident Team
- School Nursing Service
- Child and Adolescent Mental health Services
- Education Psychology Service
- Local faith leaders
- The Bath and District Samaritans
- Samaritans' Step by Step Service  
[www.samaritans.org/education/step-by-step](http://www.samaritans.org/education/step-by-step)

# Appendix 13

## Responding to self harm

Self-harm is a term used when someone injures or harms themselves on purpose rather than by accident. Common examples include 'overdosing' (self-poisoning), hitting, cutting or burning oneself, pulling hair or picking skin, or self-strangulation. Self-harm is always a sign of something being seriously wrong (Royal College of Psychiatrists). Unfortunately some young people use self-harm as a way of trying to deal with very difficult feelings that build up inside. Whilst many people who self-harm are not suicidal, their actions can be very serious and even life threatening.

Bath and North East Somerset has adopted the self-harm guidance and support tools developed by Oxford Health NHS Foundation Trust found on their website HarmLESS [www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/harmless](http://www.oxfordhealth.nhs.uk/harmless).

A sample self-harm policy for educational settings is available on the B&NES Director of Public Health Award website: [www.directorofpublichealthaward.org.uk/content/policies](http://www.directorofpublichealthaward.org.uk/content/policies)

# Appendix 14

## **Critical Incidents in Schools and Early Years Settings Protocol for the Educational Psychology Service (EPS)**

### **Aims of this Protocol**

1. To set out the operational procedures followed by the EPS so that staff and children of any of the establishments involved in a critical incident are well supported.
2. To help ensure that members of the EPS are themselves supported, and given appropriate supervision, when a critical incident occurs
3. To help ensure that the EPS is accountable for its critical incident response and that its operational procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

### **Definition of a Critical Incident**

The Educational Psychology Service uses the definition of critical incident outlined in the Bath and North East Somerset Council's plan in support of schools and other children's services:

*"When a member of a Bath & North East Somerset Council's Children's Services establishment or affiliated group, in the course of authorised activities, has suffered a life threatening injury or death, or is at serious risk, including being missing from an off-site activity."*

Academies, schools in the independent sector and early years settings within Bath and North East Somerset will also be entitled to receive support from the EPS when a critical incident occurs.

### **Underlying Principles**

- The EPS makes use of the application of psychology and evidence-based practice to provide an informed and effective critical incident response
- The EPS's course of action is flexible and responsive to the school's or setting's needs
- The main aim of EPS involvement is to support, facilitate and empower the Headteacher, Management Team and school or setting staff to manage the incident or bereavement effectively. We will not normally offer direct support to individual children or young people. This is because following routines and ensuring familiarity in the initial stages helps to reinforce their sense of security and acknowledges that their responses are normal under abnormal circumstances. It is at these early stages and later on where familiar staff are key to identifying children and young people who are struggling. Follow-up meetings between EPs and staff can focus around next steps for such children and young people.

## Appendix 14 continued

### Procedures

***The EPS Critical Incident Protocol sits under the Local Authority's Critical Incidents in Schools and Early Years Settings Protocol (Final Version November 2017).***

#### 1. First Response

A school or early years setting may contact the EPS or Education Inclusion Service in the first instance. Information could arrive via a telephone call to admin or a named EP, or via an email. Requests may also come via Social Care or from senior managers in the People & Communities Department. Education Inclusion Service admin have a script to follow when answering telephone requests in order to gather essential information in a consistent manner. Information gathered from these sources will be passed onto the Lead Educational Psychologist/s. The Lead Educational Psychologist/s will pass on information to Lesley Hutchinson (Head of Safeguarding).

Alternatively, information about a critical incident may come from Lesley Hutchinson.

#### 2. Level of Response

If agreed at the Coordination group, the EPS response can be at one of three levels.

##### Level 1 - Bereavement and Trauma

- An accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/ parent, carer out of school
- The event is not sudden and/or traumatic. The school or setting is able to cope, and support strategies are in place
- There is low impact and a low level of awareness among the majority of pupils/staff
- Advice is needed for staff – for example around coping with bereavement and loss, the normal grieving process.

##### Likely EPS Response

- A telephone conversation with the Headteacher/Senior management. Over-the-phone advice and information
- A follow-up phone call or visit by an EP when needed

The EPS would not charge for the above response.

##### Service Arrangements

- The incident is logged, along with any actions taken. No other special arrangements are required.

##### Level 2 - Critical Incident

- An accident, illness, or death of a pupil/member of staff/parent/carer at or near the school, or on a school trip
- The event is sudden and traumatic

## Appendix 14 continued

- The school or setting feels unable to cope; there are significant numbers of distressed pupils and staff.
- The school, setting or Local Authority requests EPS support and advice to help manage the critical incident.

### Likely EPS Response

- A team of 2 EPs visit the school to agree roles and provide advice and support. This may include the following:
  - Helping staff to carry out a risk assessment.
  - Helping staff to devise an action plan.
  - Meeting with key staff to explore their feelings around the critical incident and draw up a plan of support.
  - Meeting key staff to help identify what support can be offered, by either school staff or relevant agencies, to children and young people.
- A follow-up visit will be offered. In particular, we will be asking staff about specific children and young people who are struggling and devise a plan of action for them.

The EPS would not charge for the above response. Any other subsequent support needed will be negotiated with the Lead Educational Psychologist/s at a rate of £95/hour.

### Service Arrangements

- The response is coordinated by a manager. Other EP appointments and visits are cancelled by admin as appropriate so that EPs can focus on the incident
- A record of involvement is kept in the Service critical incident log
- EPs are offered a debrief by a manager at an agreed time, and no later than 5 days following initial involvement

### **Level 3 - Major Disaster**

- A small or large scale disaster affecting the school and /or local community
- Bath and North East Somerset Emergency Planning team implement a crisis response or disaster plan
- EPs respond as part of a much larger multi-agency team led by the Emergency Planning team
- There is national as well as local impact with high media interest.

### Likely EPS Response

- A team of 2 EPs visit the school to agree roles and provide advice and support. This may include the following:
  - Helping staff to carry out a risk assessment.
  - Helping staff to devise an action plan.
  - Meeting with key staff to explore their feelings around the critical incident and draw up a plan of support.

## Appendix 14 continued

- Meeting key staff to help identify what support can be offered, by either school staff or relevant agencies, to children and young people.
- A follow-up visit will be offered. In particular, we will be asking staff about specific children and young people who are struggling and devise a plan of action for them.

### Service Arrangements

- Normal EPS activities and casework are suspended or significantly reduced
- A manager co-ordinates the EPS response on a day-to-day basis, in consultation with the Emergency Team
- Supervision is offered on a daily basis to those EPs most involved
- EPS involvement is logged
- The EPS reviews its response to the disaster no later than one term following its occurrence.

**For all level 2 and level 3 requests the manager of the Education Inclusion Service should be informed before any direct action is taken.**

The Lead Educational Psychologist/s may need to gain further information before making a decision about the level of response required.

### **3. EPS Critical Incident Log**

The EPS maintains an electronic log on the S drive. It is the responsibility of those EPs most directly involved to upload information to the log for all level 1 and 2 incidents. For level 3 incidents this task is carried out by an EPS or EIS Manager. There is an annual audit of the log to inform a review of practice.

Confidential paper information about children and staff are stored in a secure critical incident file, organised by school or setting, and/or in pupil files if already open.

### **4. Support for EPs**

- A Service critical incident handbook and pack is available to EPs (from April 2013)
- EPs should have the option to decline involvement if personal circumstances are placing high demands on their emotional well-being (e.g. through recent personal bereavement)
- EPs responding at level 2 or above should have the opportunity to have supervision or debriefing as soon as possible after a visit, and no later than 5 days thereafter
- Appointments which conflict with the critical incident duties will be cancelled or postponed by an administrator
- A manager should be contactable by the EPs involved throughout the period of the incident.

### **5. Resources**

## Appendix 14 continued

- 
- EPs have a critical incident handbook (from April 2013) together with a range of additional resources. EPs are advised to have this handbook to hand in case an incident occurs, together with a 'first aid' kit.

### **6. Review Arrangements & Further Actions**

Date protocol drawn up	November 2017
Date for review	November 2018
Annual audit of critical incident log	July 2018

# Appendix 15

## **The Rapid Response and Child Death Protocol for Unexpected Deaths Critical Incidents in Schools and Early Years Settings Protocol**

### **1. Foreword**

The Local Authority has a duty to safeguard all children who live in Bath and North East Somerset. In the event of a critical incident taking place which impacts upon or harms a child who attends a school or early year's setting in the local authority area, this protocol will be followed.

The Critical Incident in Schools and Early Settings protocol provides an overview of the response that can be expected from the Local Authority to a critical incident affecting a child or children requiring specific management and where Children Services is the lead organisation. It has been developed as any child based incident requiring a specialist response that may not be covered by other existing plans.

The effectiveness of a response to a critical incident depends on close cooperation and joint working with partners. It is the responsibility of everyone within Children Services to be fully aware of their responsibilities within this protocol and have a full understanding of the roles and responsibilities of the other agencies with whom they may be working.

For most of us, involvement in a critical incident is likely to be a rare occurrence. However, we cannot know when the rare occurrence may materialise and this document provides guidance for the management of such events.

This protocol is concerned with the *impact* of a critical incident and how a response is given to schools and early year's settings to enable them to support and safeguard children and young people. **It is not to be confused with the overarching response and business continuity procedures employed by the Local authority in the event of a Major Incident as required by the Civil Contingencies Act 2004.**

### **Definition of a Critical Incident**

*'significant unexpected distressing events that impact on staff, fellow professionals the children they care for and their families' (Solent. NHS.UK)*

## Appendix 15 continued

Critical Incidents are defined under three categories:

### **Level 1 - Bereavement and Trauma**

- An accident, illness, death of a pupil/member of staff/ parent, carer out of school
- The event is not sudden and/or traumatic. The school or setting is able to cope, and support strategies are in place
- There is low impact and a low level of awareness among the majority of pupils/staff
- Advice is needed for staff – for example around coping with bereavement and loss, the normal grieving process.

### **Level 2 - Critical Incident**

- An accident, illness, or death of a pupil/member of staff/parent/carer at or near the school, or on a school trip
- The event is sudden and traumatic
- The school or setting feels unable to cope; there are significant numbers of distressed pupils and staff.
- The school, setting or Local Authority requests support and advice to help manage the critical incident.

### **Level 3 - Major Disaster**

- A small or large scale disaster affecting the school and /or local community
- Bath and North East Somerset Emergency Planning team implement a crises response or disaster plan
- There is national as well as local impact with high media interest.

### **Aim of this protocol is:**

- to cover critical incidents that meet the criteria described above. It does not replace Children Services duty to inform other organisations or agencies as required by legislation i.e. Child Death Overview Panel (CDOP).
- to document the procedures to successfully manage any critical incident affecting children and young people not covered by other corporate plans and associated responses.
- to set out the operational procedures followed by Children Services so that staff and children of any of the establishments involved in a critical incident are clear what actions they should take and are well supported in carrying out their safeguarding duties.
- to help ensure that members of staff are themselves supported, and given appropriate supervision, when a critical incident occurs
- to help ensure that the local authority, the setting and the school are accountable for its critical incident response and that its operational procedures are reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

## Appendix 15 continued

### 2. Responsibility of Children Services

Children Services should demonstrate accountability for effective governance and learning following a critical incident. There is a need to be responsible to ensure that when a critical incident happens, there are systematic and timely measures in place for:

- safeguarding children, young people, property, resources and reputation
- understanding why the event occurred
- ensuring steps are taken to reduce the chance of a similar incident happening again
- reporting to other bodies where necessary
- providing support to all staff affected by the incident
- sharing the learning with other Local Authorities and stakeholders

Each incident will vary in terms of levels of harm and numbers of people involved, risk exposure, financial loss, media interest and involvement of stakeholders. Because of these factors, **the response to each incident should be proportionate to the scale, scope and complexity of each incident.**

### 3. Operational set up

In order to provide a 'whole service' approach to critical incidents in schools and early years setting there needs to be a coordinating group made up of health and social care agencies and other appropriate staff identified by them.

The key members will depend on the nature of the Critical Incident but in any situation an element of experienced judgement will also be required when considering the implementation of the Critical Incident Protocol.

Key members may include:

- Head Teacher/Early Years Manager
- Chair of Governors
- Lead Member for Children Services
- Educational Psychologist
- Social Worker
- HR Business partner
- Corporate Communications Manager
- Police
- Health providers (including mental health)

### 4. Reporting a critical incident

If a critical incident occurs, Head Teachers and Early Years Managers must first notify B&NES Council Children and Families Service by **Telephoning 01225 396313**, following this by sending in a Critical Incident Referral Form to provide written detail of the incident. This form will help prompt managers to decide what other action to take around the incident. The referral will then be

## Appendix 15 continued

passed to the Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance Lesley Hutchinson on Telephone 01225 396339 (lesley\_hutchinson@bathnes.gov.uk)

On receipt of the notification the Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance will co-ordinate the response to supporting schools and Early Years on behalf of the partner agencies and will work closely with Head Teachers and Early Years managers to mobilise appropriate services that ensure a co-ordinated response and one that meets the needs of children, young people and the staff involved within 48 hours of the incident.

The Head (or Deputy) of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance will Chair and determine the membership of the coordinating group, log decisions and any proposed actions and inform all relevant staff/stakeholders that the Critical Incident Protocol has been invoked.

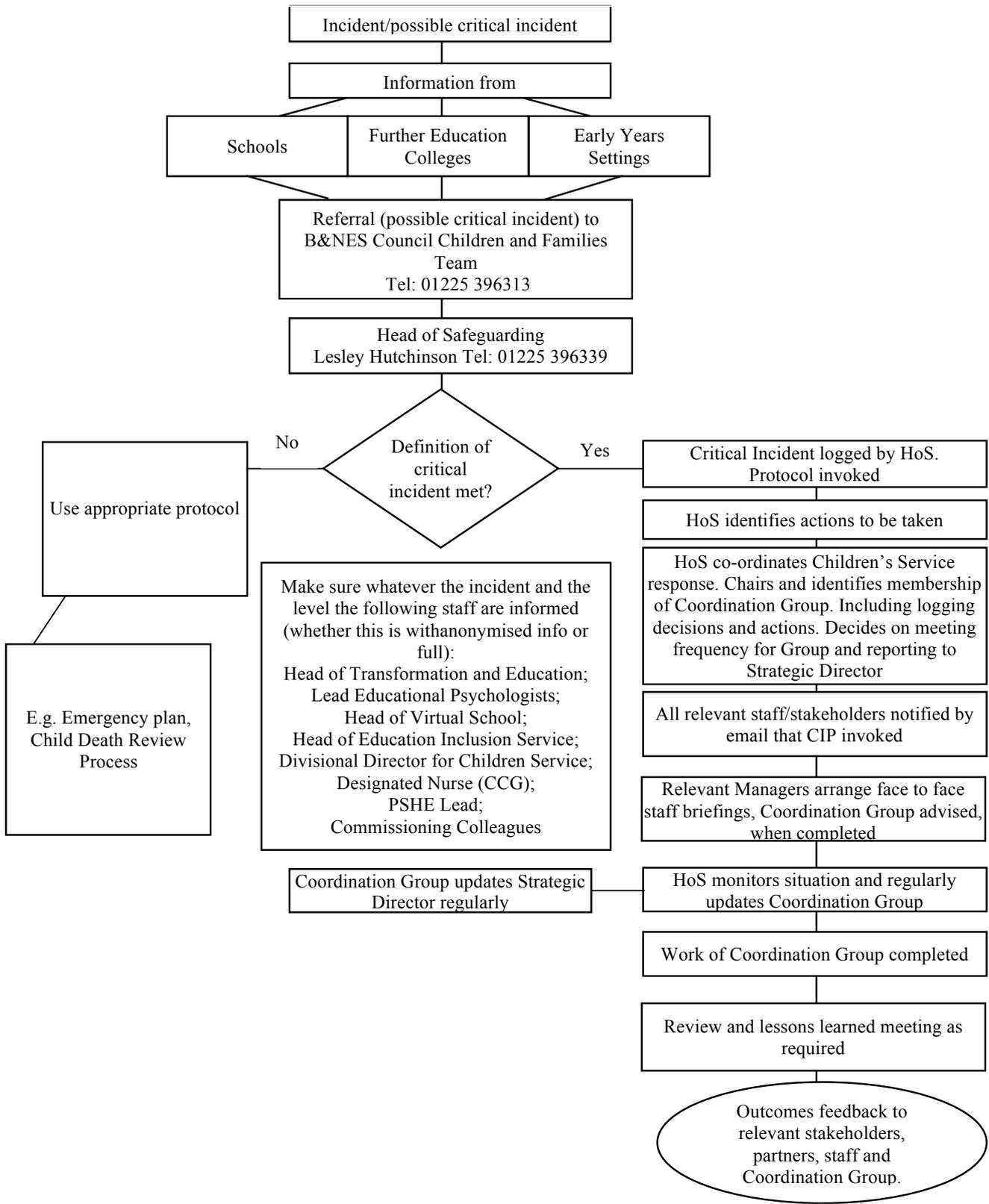
All relevant managers to arrange face to face staff briefings as soon as possible and advise the Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance when completed. The Head of Safeguarding & Quality Assurance will monitor the situation, regularly update the Coordinating Group, debrief the Strategic Director for the Council, review and identify any lessons learned.

Outcomes of the critical incident will be fed back to relevant stakeholders, staff, partners and the coordinating group.

The following Flowchart details the steps to be taken to manage the incident.

Appendix 15 continued

**Critical Incident Protocol Flowchart**



## Appendix 15 continued

### 5. Responding to a critical incident

#### **Support for Children, Young People and Families**

At the earliest opportunity in managing the incident, consideration must be given to support for children, young people, their families and carers. The most appropriate method of support will be offered and provided if required.

#### **Support for staff**

People respond to incidents in different ways and managers need to be sensitive to this.

- Provide immediate support and make them safe
- Try not to leave a member of staff who has witnessed the incident alone immediately following the incident
- Be sensitive to individual needs

#### **Communications and Media**

Critical Incidents, by their very nature, may attract considerable media attention. That attention may not just be local or national sources but also internationally. Children Services will need to develop a Communications Strategy in conjunction with the Corporate Communications and Media Relations Team.

#### **Debrief**

It is important when the incident has ended, that all agencies involved in the incident hold a series of debriefs as required and if requested. The purpose of the debrief would be to identify areas for improvement in procedures, equipment and systems. Debriefs should not be a forum to criticise the performance of others but to provide positive steps towards improving any response to future incidents.

### 6. Review Arrangements and Further Actions

Date protocol drawn up	November 2013
Date for review	Sept 2015
Date of review	Nov 2017
Annual audit of critical incident log	Nov 2017
Date of next review	Nov 2018

Appendix 15 continued

**Critical Incident Referral Form**

<b>Date of Referral:</b>	
<b>Date of Incident:</b>	
<b>Reporting Organisation:</b>	
<b>Brief summary of Incident:</b>	
<b>Critical Incident Category: (circle the level)</b>	Level    1                    2                    3
<b>Brief Explanation of Reason for Categorisation:</b>	
<b>Other Factors for Consideration:</b>	
<b>Agency Stamp / Signatory:</b>	

**Internal Use Only**

Date incident logged:	
Date referred to Head of Safeguarding and Quality Assurance:	
First Meeting:	
Who Was Invited:	
Date Support Concluded:	