

## SUPPORT FOR EDUCATION SETTINGS RELATING TO CRITICAL INCIDENTS AND OTHER TRAUMATIC EVENTS

### EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

Unexpected and tragic events cannot be prevented from occurring, and sadly bereavements and traumatic incidents are a reality that schools face. How we respond to these events is important in **promoting feelings of safety** and **psychological wellbeing** for the students and staff in our schools, and the wider community. The unexpected nature of these events however mean that they can **overwhelm** the usual systems of support and coping strategies of a setting.

Cognus Educational Psychology Service (EPS) is able to offer support to settings following a critical incident, and the type of support which can be expected from the service is detailed below. Support is available for Early Years, primary, secondary, and post-16 settings, for mainstream and specialist settings. We are able to respond to critical incidents that occur because this is a core element of our work and a **free service**. It takes priority over most other forms of work that an EP will be doing.

In these circumstances, the primary role of the EPS is to **advise** and **support** teachers and other adults who work daily with students and who know them well, as well as helping schools manage the immediate aftermath of an event. The EPS does not provide counselling, but rather immediate, short-term support, information and advice to staff. In some instances the EPS may attend parent meetings to offer support and to disseminate information.

Further resources and signposting are also available from our service, including guidance around best practice in sharing sad news, holding the initial meeting with staff after an incident, as well as supporting children and young people who have been bereaved. If you require any information regarding Educational Psychology Service support, please do not hesitate to make contact.

Nicholas English – Principal Educational Psychologist [nicholas.english@cognus.org.uk](mailto:nicholas.english@cognus.org.uk)

#### Key contacts and important links

Acting Director of Children's Services, Jonathan Williams (contact as soon as an incident occurs)

T: 0208 770 6534, E: [jonathan.williams@sutton.gov.uk](mailto:jonathan.williams@sutton.gov.uk)

Acting Strategic Lead for Education, Kieran Holliday

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Cognus Managing Director (Head of Safeguarding), Joanna Cassey

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Principal Educational Psychologist, Nicholas English

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Notification of Child Death website [SWLondon eCDOP](#)

Statutory child death arrangements for the LBS [Local Arrangements - Sutton Council](#)

[Report](#) a serious child safeguarding incident

[Report](#) a serious childcare incident to Ofsted

## CRITICAL INCIDENT WORK

*“A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school.”*

Critical incidents vary greatly in magnitude from the expected death of a staff member, to sudden and traumatic incidents that affect the whole school and its surrounding community. Critical incidents can be defined using the following system although settings will vary in their capacity to cope based on a number of factors.

When an incident occurs, it is important that schools contact the Assistant Director of Education, Fiona Phelps on **T: 020 8770 4604 | M: 07849 079412** as soon as possible, contacting Kieran Holliday if they are not able to reach Fiona. The Assistant Director will then contact the EPS who in turn will contact school to identify what support is required.

Level	Examples of incidents	Examples of EP response
<b>Level 1</b> – An incident which impacts some of the school community	Expected death of a pupil <sup>1</sup> or staff member Death of a parent or sibling of a pupil in the school	Conversation with Headteacher/ senior leader to provide advice about coping with bereavement and loss and the normal grieving process.
<b>Level 2</b> – A significant incident <sup>2</sup> which impacts the whole school community	Sudden death of a pupil or staff member Accident or death on the school site or on a school trip A violent intrusion on to the school premises, e.g. an armed intruder, bomb scare	Immediate communication with Headteacher/ senior leader to provide support and advice about how to give sad news to pupils. Guidance about how to manage communication to parents/carers and support for the emotional wellbeing of all in the school community.
<b>Level 3</b> – A major incident that impacts the wider community	An event involving a large number of pupils/staff and/or the local community e.g. transport accident, terrorism, pandemic A violent death An incident with a high media profile	Support to Headteacher in running staff meetings and ongoing response. In addition to the above, the EP response is likely to form part of a larger multi-agency response.

Even though many will experience this time as distressing and traumatic, most children and adults will come to terms with what has happened and recover without the need for professional counselling. Help and support is best given by trusted, familiar adults as and when it is needed, and for pupils to be encouraged to communicate how they are feeling. The EPS will support schools to facilitate this and be confident in this role.

<sup>1</sup> It is a statutory requirement to notify [CDOP](#) of all child deaths from birth up to their 18th birthday. Statutory child death arrangements for LBS can be found here [Local Arrangements - Sutton Council](#)

<sup>2</sup> Links to [report](#) a serious child safeguarding incident or to [report](#) a serious childcare incident to Ofsted

## EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE RESPONSE

If you wish the EPS to provide following a school emergency the process below is adhered to:

1. A senior member of the Educational Psychology Service will contact you to identify what steps have been taken so far and what needs to happen next. This will be by telephone or video call.
2. As soon as is possible two EPs (where this is appropriate) will come to the school site and provide support to:
  - i. Assess the likely impact of the particular incident on the school community and help in identifying school resources to manage identified impacts.
  - ii. Identify whether there are any cultural or religious implications surrounding the incident and how they might be addressed.
  - iii. Advise and support the Head and Senior Leadership Team, in conjunction with other support provided by Sutton Council.
3. Follow-up visits will be arranged by the EPs in order to provide continued support, including to:
  - i. Advise and support members of staff who are supporting children and young people.
  - ii. Attend staff and parents' meetings arranged by the school, with a view to briefing them on possible reactions and symptoms that children and young people may display, and to provide signposting and service threshold information.
  - iii. Support school staff in identifying staff or pupils experiencing enduring or acute effects and signpost to other services.
4. A senior member of the EPS will monitor the situation and arrange for a period of stand-by before support is stood down – usually within two weeks.
5. Ongoing monitoring will then be provided by the school EP, in consultation with the senior member of the EPS.

### Useful organisations:

[Jigsaw4U](#) - a charity that provides a wide variety of services across the London Boroughs of Merton and Sutton

[Child Bereavement UK](#) – organisation set up to help children and young people (up to age 25), parents, and families, to rebuild their lives when a child grieves or when a child dies

[Hope Again](#) – youth website of [Cruse Bereavement Care](#) for young people to learn from other young people how to cope with grief and feel less alone

[Winston's Wish](#) – help for grieving children, young people and families

[Grief Encounter](#) – organisation offering counselling, workshops, therapy, and helpline service to support bereaved children and young people

[Papyrus](#) – charity for the prevention of young suicide. For support through HOPELINEUK call 0800 068 4141 (open 9am - midnight every day of the year).

[Samaritans](#) – helpline service for anyone who needs to talk. For support call 116 123 or email [jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)