**Critical Incident and**

**Emergency Management Policy**

*Together we can succeed*

**Rationale**

A critical incident can be defined as a sudden, unexpected and tragic event or series of events which causes trauma and confusion within a school community and which overwhelms its normal coping mechanism. It may affect pupils, staff, parents and governors, may relate directly to the safety of the school community or may involve an incident beyond the school premises.

As a critical incident is likely to have a severe impact on the school, both in the short term and long term, our aim is to ensure that school strategies and procedures are in place to protect the physical and emotional wellbeing of every member of the school community.

**Examples of critical incidents**

A critical incident is likely to involve death or serious injury to one or more members of the school community and, or, their families either at school, journeying to or from school, participating in a school related activity, at home or in some other context.

In school:

* The death of a pupil or member of staff through natural causes
* An accident involving a pupil or member of staff
* A deliberate act of violence such as a knifing or the use of a firearm
* A school fire or an explosion

Out of school:

* Deaths or injuries through accidents
* Suicide
* Civil disturbances

**Purpose**

* To ensure that swift and appropriate action is taken in the case of the school being made aware that a critical incident has occurred
* To ensure that the welfare of pupils and staff is paramount
* The ensure that the school responds in a sensitive, consistent and effective manner which reduces confusion, panic and extreme emotion
* To have in place a Critical Incident Team, the membership of which is known to all relevant parties (see appendix)
* To have in place a Critical Incident Management Plan, the details of which are familiar to all relevant parties (see appendix)
* To maintain normality, as far as possible, in parts of the school which are not affected and to restore normality as soon as possible to the parts which are affected
* To have immediate access to all relevant contact details (including outside agencies)
* To offer sensitive, non-intrusive support in the short and medium term to all those affected directly or indirectly by the incident

**Guidelines for managing a critical incident**

* The headteacher will take charge of the school’s response. In the case of the headteacher being unavailable, the members of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will take charge. The headteacher’s office, if available, will be the central liaison point. If this is not available then the Nursery office will be used instead.
* The CIMT will assess immediate practical needs
* The CIMT will contact next of kin of those directly involved if required
* A short simple statement of facts will be prepared (see appendix)
* All contacts from the media will be dealt with by the headteacher or the CIMT
* Office staff taking incoming calls will use a statement agreed by the CIMT
* When necessary, all members of staff will be informed and will be guided in relation to informing pupils
* The CIMT will determine the involvement of parents if appropriate
* Short and long term support will be offered to those affected
* There will be an evaluation of the way in which the incident was dealt with

**Appendix 1**

**Members of the Critical Incident Management Team**

* Headteacher
* Deputy headteacher
* Premises assistant
* School administrator
* Chair of Governors or other members in their absence

One / two members of staff may be asked to take responsibility for the normal running of the school whilst the CIMT is engaged in dealing with the incident.

**Appendix 2**

**Critical Incident Management Plan**

Preventative Strategies

* Regular review of relevant policies e.g. health and safety
* First aid training
* Fire drills
* Lockdown procedures
* PSHCE program

Preparation for the eventuality of a critical incident:

* A critical incident report incident booklet will be drafted
* Members of the CIMT will have ready access to pupil, staff and governor contact details
* Members of the CIMT will have a register of emergency services and relevant outside agencies (see critical incident report booklet)
* In the case of the site having to be evacuated, venues to which pupils will be taken will be identified (see appendix)

In the event of a critical incident:

Initial response

* The headteacher should be contacted first (if not available the deputy headteacher)
* The headteacher should seek to clarify from relevant sources the nature and circumstances of the incident
* The CIMT will meet at the earliest opportunity and agree on procedures for managing the critical incident (see appendix)
* If the incident is on site health and safety measures will be put in place and the emergency services will be contacted

Longer term issues

* School structures and routines will be re-established
* Supportive strategies for pupils and staff will be implemented
* There will be ongoing contact with parents
* Actions taken will be reviewed and policies amended if appropriate
* PSHCE programs will be reviewed
* Staff will be mindful of anniversaries and other special dates

**Appendix 3**

SAMPLE LETTER TO PARENTS

Date:

Dear Parent/ Carer,

It is with great sadness that I have to tell you of the sudden death of NAME, (a pupil in Year XX/ a Year XX Teacher/ Learning Support Assistant, etc). The children were told this morning by their class teacher/ Principal at assembly.

NAME died of (an asthma attack, meningitis etc) and the children have been assured this is something that does not happen very often. Your child may or may not want to talk about it but it is likely that he/ she will need extra love and support from you in the days ahead. This does not mean that anything is wrong with him/ her. It only means that this traumatic event has been too powerful for him/ her to deal with on his/her own. He/ she may be feeling anxious. Take time to listen to your child and try to provide a predictable routine for him/ her at home. Avoid too many absences to start with. We have enclosed an information leaflet for you which may be useful at this time.

Trained staff from the County are helping to support us through this difficult time. It is sometimes necessary for a member of the team to speak to a class or individual pupils who may be distressed. He/ she will be guided by the headteacher/ class teacher in this. If you do not wish your child to receive such support from the team please contact us immediately.

We are deeply saddened by this great loss but are trying, for the children’s sake, to keep the school environment as normal as possible. Our thoughts are with NAME’s family at this tragic time and the school community sends them sincerest sympathy and support.

NAME’s funeral is on DAY/ DATE at TIME am/pm at (Name of Church or

Crematorium). We are in touch with the family regarding their wishes for the school’s representation at the Service.

**Appendix 4**

**PREPARED STATEMENT FOR MEDIA**

We are sorry to learn of the tragic……………………………….of ................................................

We hope at this time the school would be given the privacy needed to support our pupils at this difficult time, etc

NB: If the headteacher wishes to comment about the pupil, they may want to gain permission from the family to include:

Sporting achievements

Musical talents

Academic success

Personal attributes

**APPENDIX 5**

In the event of having to evacuate the school premises the following emergency areas have been arranged:

**Nursery –** Children and adults assemble on the Nursery playground

**Reception and Year 1** – Children and adults assemble at the back of the Reception Playground

**Year 2 and KS2 -** Children and adults make their way to the playing field and assemble in a line facing the fence in class order of youngest to oldest.

**Class teachers** and **teaching assistants** will supervise the evacuation of their respective areas and ensure a safe and orderly passage to the above areas.

**Fire marshals** will ensure that all areas have been evacuated and will report to the headteacher.

The **school administrator** is responsible for registers, folder with pupils in / out and the signing in book for adults.

**Appendix 6**

**Procedures for Critical Incident Management**

**Headteacher**

* Seeks clarification
* Summons the CIMT to inform of the incident
* Prepares relevant statements / letters
* Convenes and informs staff

**School administrator**

* Liaises with relevant staff
* Ensures phone lines are operative
* Call emergency services if appropriate
* Ensure health and safety measures are in place

**Deputy headteacher**

* Arranges staff cover if appropriate
* Contacts external agencies
* Contacts relevant parents

**Class teachers**

* Ensure the physical and emotional well being of pupils

**Appendix 7**

**Critical Incident Report Booklet**

**Information received from:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Contact details:\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Information passed to: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Time: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Details of incident so far:**

**Details of incident received so far:-**

**Unconfirmed reports:**

**Details of people known to be involved:**

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Involvement** | **Known/suspected** | **Contact details** |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |

**Staff members on Critical Incident Response Team:**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Name** | **Mobile number** |
| Tineke van der Ploeg (headteacher) | 07845734616 |
| Beth Harper (deputy headteacher) | 07709301906 |
| Sam Thompson (SLT) | 07791051478 |
| Caroline Mylroie (bursar) | 07342968909 |
| Chris Gray (premises assistant) | 07502473278 |
| Neil Swanston (chair of governors) | 07786313364 |

**Essential Tasks – Checklist**

**Stage 1**

Central Information Point is the school office

1. **Meeting of CIMT held to assess the ongoing danger**

Done: Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Allocate roles to staff members**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Role** | **Person Responsible** |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |
|  |  |

Done: Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Inform key people and seek support as appropriate**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **List of key contacts** | **Phone number** | **Done** |
| Fire / ambulance / police | 999 |  |
| OCC 24hour emergency contact | 01865379789 |  |
| Chair of governors | 01844352085 |  |
| Doctor / health centre | 01844351584 |  |
| Occupation Health Service | 01865815421 |  |
| Childline | 02890327773 |  |
| Child death helpline | 0800 282986 |  |
| NSPCC | 02890351135 |  |
| Human resources | 01865815472 |  |
| Health and safety | 01865816464 |  |
| Educational psychologist | 018655323532 |  |

1. **Brief all staff**

Think – clear information

Advice regarding how to inform and support pupils

Team working and practical arrangements

Support for staff

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Inform all pupils**

Think – clear language (no euphenisms)

Dispel rumour

Offer support

Age appropriate

Are there pupil more closely affected who need to be informed separately or in a small group?

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Make contact with parents as appropriate**

Think – By phone / by letter / visit home?

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ How \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Contact with media (if appropriate)**

Think – Prepared statement – measured tone

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ How \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Debrief staff at the end of stage 1**

Think – Thank staff

Advise about self – care

Information about next day

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Meeting of CIMT**

Done: Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Stage 2**

1. **Record any further information / details / contacts that have come to light since yesterday**

 Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Plan for cover / flexible timetable / appropriate rooms / refreshments etc as necessary**
2. **Brief staff on morning of stage 2**

Think – Practical arrangements

Support for pupils / Self care

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Pupils**
* Providing further information (as appropriate)
* Showing care and support
* Providing comforting routing and predictability
* Allowing pupils some involvement / outlet e.g. cards / drawings / poems / ceremonies

Details of action taken

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Pupil / groups of pupils** | **Action taken** | **By whom** | **Time** | **Date** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

1. **Parents**

Providing further information (as appropriate) e.g. letter / meetings etc

**Details of action taken**

1. **Debriefing staff at end of stage 2**

Think – ongoing practical arrangements

Longer term monitoring of pupils who may be at risk

More detailed self care advice

Done by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

1. **Debriefing CIMT at end of stage 2**

Done: Time \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix 8**

**Essential Tasks – Checklist**

**Longer Term Actions**

1. Funerals, services, ceremonies (e.g. memory books, art work, school event, planting tree etc.)
2. Re-establishment of feelings of safety and predictability among school community
3. Ongoing support of pupils and staff
4. School support for families affected by the incident
5. Ongoing monitoring of children who may be having difficulties – providing support and referring on as necessary

|  |
| --- |
| **Potential Referral Agencies** |
| Educational Psychologist |
| Didcot Intervention Hub |
| School Nurse |
| Family Links Worker |
| GP (through parent) |
| In school counsellors |
|  |
|  |

**Details of referrals made as a direct result of incident**

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Name of child** | **Referred to** | **Referred by** | **Date of referral** | **Outcome** |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |
|  |  |  |  |  |

1. Ongoing support of staff on stress / bereavement / coping through meetings / talks / referrals to staff support agencies

**Details of action taken**

Person responsible: Date:

1. Anticipate events / anniversaries / reminders that may be difficult or upsetting in the future and plan to support staff and pupils

**Details of action taken:**

1. Reflections (to be completed 6 weeks after the event)

**Details of key lessons learnt through the management of this event:**

**Completed by: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed on behalf of the governors: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Signed by the headteacher: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_**

**Emergency Telephone Contacts**

**County Council Emergency Contact Number 01865 378789** (24 hours): ask for the County Contact Officer, who can then alert the Directorate.

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Position** | **Name** | **Daytime tel no.** | **Out of hours tel** | **Mobile** |
| Headteacher | Tineke van der Ploeg | 01844352106 | 01869243269 | 07845734616 |
| Leadership team | Beth Harper | 01844352106 |  | 07709301906 |
| Leadership team | Sam Thompson | 01844352106 |  | 07791051478 |
| Premises Assistant | Chris Gray | 01844352106 | 01844354465 | 07502473278 |
| Chair of Governors | Neil Swanston |  |  | 07786313364 |
| Bursar | Caroline Mylroie | 01844352106 | 01844213542 | 07429863101 |

**Emergency Flowchart**

**Major Incident Occurs**

Gather initial facts about incident

(continues as situation develops)

**Is emergency assistance required?**

**NO**

**YES**

Call **01865 379789 (24hrs)** to request help from **County Council – Learning and Culture Directorate**

Call **999**  to request appropriate **emergency services** (fire, police, ambulance, coastguard)

**Tell operator:** Your name, name of establishment; telephone number you are calling from; nature and location of the incident.

**Ask operator to alert county contact officer**

**Stay by the telephone until the County Contact Officer calls you back and confirms details of the incident.**

County Contact Officer alerts all relevant County Council Directorates to implement their emergency plans in support of establishments affected by a major incident.

Tell emergency operator

**Nature and location of the incident, telephone number you are calling from.**

**Your name and which emergency services you need.**

**Contain and control the situation to the bet of your ability until assistance arrives**

Implement the Health and Safety emergency procedures so far as you are able and as appropriate; with help from support agencies as available.

**Refer to Emergency Action Guide**

**What equipment do you need to have in a critical incident?**

**In a building:**

* Wind up or battery powered radio
* Torch(es)
* Spare batteries
* Mobile phone and charger unit
* Something to drink (bottled water etc)
* First aid kit

**In a vehicle**

All above plus the following:

* Blanket
* Map
* Mobile telephone and car charger unit

**Stay calm and reassure others. Implement local emergency advice.**

**What to do in a critical incident**

 **At School – Office based**

What should we do?

* Go inside
* All persons stay inside (unless emergency services advise otherwise)
* Close all doors, windows, external fans
* Tune in to local radio

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Radio Stations**  | **FOX FM** **VHF/FM 102.6** **01865 871009** |
| **BBC Radio Oxford****VHF/FM 95.2****01865 889099** |

* Follow advice received

**What to do if there is an intruder on site?**

* Go inside
* Ensure all external doors are shut and locked
* Close all windows
* All persons stay inside (unless advised otherwise)
* Ring police on 999 and request urgent assistance
* Follow advice received
* Staff in outside buildings to remain in contact with the school office via mobiles / walkie talkies
* Please see lockdown procedure for further details

What to do if an intruder gets in to the building?

* Where possible move away from danger
* Leave building if practicable
* Ring police on 999 and request urgent assistance
* Follow advice received

**What to do if you see a fire?**

**On seeing smoke etc?**

* Set off alarm
* Evacuate the building safely
* Call fire and rescue service on 999
* Head count to check full evacuation
* Follow advice received from the fire and rescue service officer

**What happens if an offsite incident occurs?**

* Action “Out and about with Oxfordshire” procedures
* Set up “Home based incident centre”
* For major incidents contact 01865 379789 and ask for the County Contact Officer

**What if a person is travelling when an incident occurs?**

**In a vehicle**

* Close windows, turn off fans
* Tune in to local radio

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Radio Stations**  | **FOX FM** **VHF/FM 102.6** **01865 871009** |
| **BBC Radio Oxford****VHF/FM 95.2****01865 889099** |

* Follow advice / directions to emergency rest centres
* Phone school to inform them of your location

**Incident affecting wider area including school e.g. gas release**

**What should we do?**

* Go inside
* All persons stay inside (presume to stay inside unless emergency services advise otherwise
* Close all doors, windows, external fans
* Ring police on 999 and request urgent assistance
* Follow advice received
* If required evacuate the area
* Collect emergency contact details of parent/carer/employees
* Where possible secure the building
* Follow advice for evacuation (NB accommodation or transport will be managed by OCC)

**What if a bomb is suspected?**

* Check for suspect package
* Inform police on 999
* Collect all belongings
* Open all doors and windows
* Evacuate at least 300 metres from suspect bomb area e.g. at the bottom end of the field
* Await advice from emergency services

**Media Advice**

# Responding to the media

**Guidance for CYP&F staff**

**1. Introduction**

1. The media are an important part of our democratic society. As part of Oxfordshire County Council we are accountable to the people of Oxfordshire in particular and the public more generally. One route through which this accountability is expressed is via the media. It is important to have effective mechanisms for responding to the media when asked and, also, for approaching them when it suits our purpose to do so.
2. Many colleagues have instinctive feelings about the media whether based on experience or, sometimes, prejudice. Don’t believe all the bad stories you may have heard … but don’t dismiss them altogether. Some media outlets and some stories do need to be handled with a great deal of care. Most of our dealings however are with the local media which are, generally, fair and reasonable, and give us the opportunity to get across our point of view. These local outlets have worked with us for many years and will continue to need our co-operation in the future. It is in all our interests to have established mutually trusting working relationships.
3. Dealing with the media can be divided, simplistically, into proactive dealings (in which, for example, we chose, to share some good news via, for example, a press release) and reactive dealings. This guidance is principally concerned with the latter.

## 2. Approaches from the media

1. Please inform the Council's communications team on 01865 815266 or John Mitchell (01865 815619 ) about approaches made and responses given to the media (to ensure consistency of approach and messages given). Unless the matter is very straightforward and factual please contact the Council's communications team or John before a response is given; this is particularly important if the matter seems likely to be a sensitive or difficult one to manage.
2. The director, heads of service and John Mitchell may deal with the media as a matter of course. Other colleagues may deal with the media with the proviso that they are confident about doing so, have their line manager’s permission and that permission can be traced back through successive managers to the relevant head of service.
3. Requests for information/co-operation in relation to documentary (as well as news) type programmes should be treated with great care and discussed with the Council’s communications team or John Mitchell in the first instance.

## 3. Detailed advice

For more detailed advice please see the Annex.

**Annex**

**Responding to the media**

**Guidance for CYP&F staff**

**Detailed advice**

**1. General**

1. If you receive a call from the media, make a clear note of the enquiry and the caller’s contact details. If the call is from radio or television, check whether an interview is being sought (and recorded or transmitted live) or it is simply a request for information
2. If you are the best person to answer and the question is factual and straightforward, can be answered simply and contains no possible traps or policy issues, then you may deal with the enquiry there and then (assuming you have permission to do so – see 2.2 above).
3. In all other cases say that someone will call back and then please contact the council's communications team on 01865 815266 or John Mitchell on 0186581 5619 for advice and guidance. This will include agreement about who is the best person to 'front' the story.
4. For the purposes of interviews with the print or broadcast media only one 'voice' is usually required, this might be the Cabinet portfolio holder or officer depending on the nature of the enquiry, the nature of the response and the wishes of the portfolio holder.
5. Make sure that somebody *does* respond to the original enquiry or reporters may go elsewhere. If it is a story in relation to which we want to express a view we should make sure that we give that view.
6. **If *you* are going to respond**

2.1 General

1. Note down your key message(s) and any other points you wish to make and convey them in a simple and friendly way.
2. Never be afraid to say that you don’t know, or if it is true, that you cannot disclose the information sought. Most information is not confidential but if it is, better to say too little than too much.
3. If possible, check the final broadcast/publication for accuracy, and contact the Council communications team or John Mitchell if it has *significant* inaccuracies.
4. Try to imagine yourself as a reader/viewer/listener coming to the story for the first time. Think about a response that will set the context clearly and simply.

2.2 If the story is a very negative one consider these additional points

1. Examine all of the facts and come to a view about how much of a counter argument the Council has. Sometimes negative stories are exaggerated or simply wrong. Be firm in putting them right.
2. Always try to explain how the problem occurred clearly, methodically and in a jargon free way.
3. Explain what steps are being taken to stop a problem from re-occurring.
4. Don’t be afraid to apologise. If mistakes have been made, accepting the blame from the outset can be the best way forward.
5. See if you can turn a negative into a positive. This is not always possible and should not be used as a way of ducking an issue. However there are occasions when there is good news which can justifiably be used to ameliorate bad news.
6. Criticism can appear in a published or broadcast item before you have been offered the chance to put your side. As well as seeking editorial coverage to redress the balance, letters, particularly short ones, can be very effective. Letters are good when appropriate, but it’s best to avoid being drawn into a war of words with the public or editor of the paper; ‘tit for tat’ exchanges can do more harm than good.

**2.3** Preparing for an interview

1. Ask the interviewer what the first question will be, and discuss the topics the interview will cover. Broadcasters expect you to do this.
2. Ask whether other people will be taking part. If so, who?
3. Rehearse your main message mentally.
4. Have handy a legible note of any key points/statistics but keep these to a minimum. Don’t “read” from a script.
5. Anticipate potential problems, pitfalls and supplementary questions and be prepared for them, with answers.
	* On Air
* Try to feel and sound confident. It creates a good impression and makes for a much better broadcast.
* Be friendly and helpful. People will be more receptive to someone who sounds ‘ human’!
* Make your main point straightaway. A three minute interview may sound like a long time. It isn’t.
* Avoid jargon and bureaucratic language.
* If you don’t know say so, but politely – perhaps offer to find out?
* Keep movements/paper rustling to minimum. They distract the audience.
* Talk directly to the interviewer, not the camera or the microphone.
* Use an anecdote or metaphor if it helps convey a point.
* Try to end each interview on an upbeat, forward looking note.

**Critical Incident – Social and Emotional Support**

**How can staff cope and who can help them?**

* Be kind to yourself and be honest with yourself and your own reactions. If you feel overwhelmed by events, seek support. Do not feel pressured into supporting other people (including pupils) when you feel unable to do so.
* In the event of a major incident affecting an educational establishment or its local community, (or the County Council Contact Officer) would alert the appropriate agencies to co-ordinate social and emotional support for those affected.
* Remember that help and advice can be available from the Directorates (Educational psychology, Education social work) and from the County Council’s Occupational Health Service. They may be able to advise about further referral for more specialized help.

**Who may need help?**

* A major traumatic incident creates ripples that may affect a wide range of people: from those directly affected and witnesses, their relations, close friends and colleagues, those involved in managing the incident, to members of the local community (who may offer help, or who may share the same sense of loss or shock).
* Knowledge of the social groupings that are important to staff, volunteers and pupils and knowledge of community networks will be invaluable in both helping to identify potentially vulnerable people and in identifying natural sources of mutual support. Support agencies will find it helpful to draw upon your local knowledge in this way.

**What reactions might we notice?**

* Individual reactions to bereavement and traumatic loss will vary in intensity, duration and in the ways tht feelings are expressed. Generally though the normal grieving process has recognizable phases:

**SHOCK:** Disbelief/Numbness/Detachment

**DENIAL:** Expecting return of dead person/Sensing dead person’s presence

**AWARENESS:** Pining/Anxiety/Anger/Guilt/Depression/Emptiness

**ACCEPTANCE:** Gradually re-building life and relationships/Moving on in own life

* Often, **acceptance *begins* to develop *after* the first anniversary**, which may trigger a temporary return of some feelings and experiences.
* **Loss of concentration** is a common feature of trauma or bereavement in both adults and children, and may affect individuals ***over a period of about two years***. We often underestimate the duration of such effects, particularly in children and young people.
* **Young children** will often express their emotions physically (e.g. become prone to infections, disturbed sleeping or eating patterns), or through their behaviour (e.g. nail-biting, bedwetting, clinging, fear of separation or the dark). They may appear to **regress** in their development for a period of weeks; and may need to enact the incident through play (sometimes repetitive).
* **Talking** – or **listening** to others talk – generally helps; though people will vary in their readiness and willingness to do so. Children and some young people may need help to identify the feelings they are experiencing; and may need **reassurance** that what they are feeling is “normal in abnormal circumstances”.

**Reviewed on:** September 2018

**Next Review:** September 2019