

## **Critical Incident Plan: Response to the CV-19 Pandemic**

### **Managing a bereavement in school**

Managing the death of a child or member of staff in school can be a very stressful experience for senior leaders.

It is one that we all hope we will never have to manage but equally one that we know will test our resolve and leadership skills. We also know that what we do to support our school community is vitally important in terms of getting back to normal and we also know that our actions will be scrutinised by many including the press.

Coping with a death in school is difficult enough and we all have measures that we would usually initiate to both share the news and comfort those affected. However, during these challenging times, not only are we more likely to face a bereavement, but with schools not being open, we will have to reconsider ways of communicating with our school population and how we can offer comfort and support. As senior leaders we may also feel isolated and removed from trusted colleagues who would offer us support and guidance, therefore making decisions even more difficult to make.

It is very hard to think of preparing in advance for such tragedies but anything we can do now might just help us through a very difficult period in the future.

As such it is worth revisiting your Critical Incident Plan to ensure it is up to date in terms of staff, staff contact numbers and support services that operate in your authority. There may be colleagues who have left or who are leaving or colleagues you know are in isolation or unwell. It is also worthwhile ensuring that all who might need one have got a copy to hand and that everyone is familiar with the principles and process. I have attached a copy the ATLP Critical Incident Policy. This was designed for very different circumstances, but the guidance is still very useful and the principles still applicable. Even though the buildings aren't there the key ATLP staff are.

It is worth noting that this contains sensitive information so please be aware of our usual GDPR protocols about sharing safely.

### **Support agencies**

There is an abundance of support agencies that can offer support to us at these difficult times.

However, I would like to remind all colleagues of the excellent help and support ATLP HR are able to provide and signpost to. Our insurance company has a helpline operated by DAS available to all staff and their family members: call 0117 934 2121. There is support available through the Education Support Service Help line on 0800 056 2561. Both are free and, of course, confidential.

In some local authorities there is still support from the Educational Psychology Service. You will know if this is still available to you or if you buy into such a service.

There are of course many other colleagues across our network of schools who will always be willing to offer support and advice. You will never be on your own.

I have looked at and can recommend Cruse who have tailored their support package to schools in light of the pandemic. They have a help line 0808 808 1677 and also a website called 'Hope Again' which is designed for young people.

Their main website can be found at

[https:// www.cruse.org.uk](https://www.cruse.org.uk)

However, they have specific sections covering the following topics:

- Death and bereavement during the corona virus.
- Get help about children's grief, supporting yourself, supporting someone else, what to do when someone dies, feelings when someone dies and about grief and bereavement.

Under the section specifically for schools:

- Get help for schools, death of a staff member, death of a pupil, supporting pupils bereaved by suicide, recognising the impact of bereavement on children and young people. There is a section on a School's Bereavement Policy. As such we do not have an ATLP policy. However, I will produce some general guidance and share.

There are of course a multitude of other support agencies. I have listed some below that I have either worked historically or have been recommended by colleagues.

Edwards Trust and Beyond the Horizon are both local charitable groups based in Birmingham. At the moment, along with many other organisations, they are not offering face to face counselling but telephone therapy only. Email to ask for support.

[Edwardstrust.org.uk](http://Edwardstrust.org.uk)

Email [Admin@edwardstrust.org.uk](mailto:Admin@edwardstrust.org.uk)

0121 454 1705

Email [Admin@beyondthehorizon.org.uk](mailto:Admin@beyondthehorizon.org.uk)

07960 6621345 or 0121 4445454

St Giles Hospice also offers bereavement services for any cause of death. Telephone 01543434536. Some services are based in Sutton Coldfield.

The Bereavement Help Point (Lichfield)—run by St Giles and operating weekly on Wednesday—01543 432031

Winston's wish [info@winstonswish.org](mailto:info@winstonswish.org) or free phone 08088020021

Child Bereavement UK

Email [support@childbereavmentuk.org](mailto:support@childbereavmentuk.org) or free phone 0800 028884. They now have a section relating specifically to CV19.

There are of course a multitude of other agencies available if these cannot assist.

Please get in touch if we can be of any assistance whatsoever and please remember to practice good self-care. These are tough times, but we will get through it together.