

Critical Incident Management Guidance for Schools

Birmingham City Council

September 2024





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If you have found this publication, please return it to:

Birmingham Resilience Team
Birmingham City Council
3 Priestley Wharf, Holt Street
Birmingham, B7 4BN

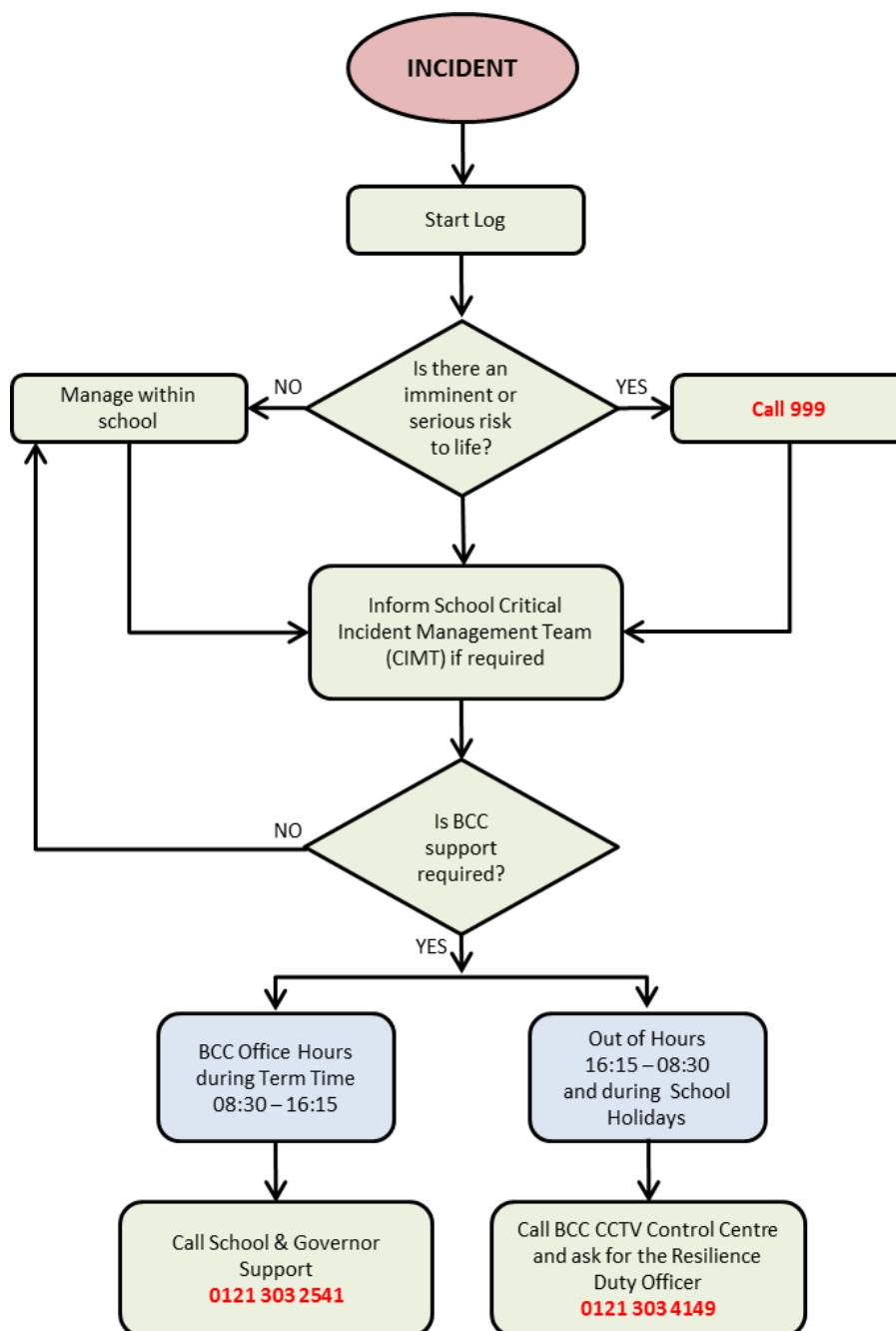
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Notification Procedure

If an incident occurs within your school, use this process flow to quickly identify who to inform. This process is also outlined in your School Emergency Plan (contact the Resilience team for a copy of the Template).



1. Introduction

Schools have a duty of care to provide a safe environment for all staff and pupils; in turn, parents entrust schools to keep their children safe. Thanks to the efforts of school staff, governors and/or trustees, schools usually remain a safe haven for children; however, schools can be affected by emergencies of different scales at any time.

Incidents affecting a school are varied and may include:

- > Severe weather
- > Fire
- > Accident or death of a pupil, teacher or staff member
- > Terrorist attack or criminal activity
- > Sexual assault
- > Chemical spill (e.g., science laboratory)
- > Suicide of a pupil, teacher or staff member
- > Road traffic collisions
- > Murder of a pupil, teacher or staff member
- > Public Health incidents

They may occur: on-site; off-site but affecting the school; during term time or school holidays; during school hours or out of hours. Incidents can have a profound and lasting effect on pupils, staff, parents and on the school as a whole.

Thankfully, critical incidents are rare but it is vital to be as prepared as possible to reduce their impact and respond effectively. Good crisis management can save lives; it can also prevent escalation, give confidence to staff, parents and pupils, enhance the school's reputation as a safe place to learn and protect against legal action.

1.1 Purpose of the Guidance

This guidance is intended to help schools be prepared for a critical incident and to ensure effective management in a difficult situation. Although it is not possible to prepare in detail for every situation it is essential to have a general plan to hand which outlines the steps that need to be taken.

This document provides some general guidance for schools in reducing the likelihood of a critical incident affecting them and the development of critical incident management plans to know what steps to take should a critical incident occur.

1.2 What is a Critical Incident?

A 'Critical Incident' can be defined as:

"An event or sequence of events affecting pupils and/or staff which creates significant personal distress to a level which potentially overwhelms normal responses, procedures and coping strategies and which is likely to have serious emotional and organisational consequences".

Critical Incidents may include:

- Fatal road traffic accidents involving pupils or staff
- Death or serious injuries on school trips or on school premises
- Pupil suicide

- Death or serious injury of pupils or staff as a result of criminal activity
- Death of pupil(s) in house fires

What constitutes critical for one school may not be critical for another; this will depend on their resilience and their ability to respond.

The below attempts to breakdown events that affect the school into levels to provide some guidance for when support from Birmingham City Council and other agencies may be required.

Level 1: Incident

An incident that can be managed within the school but may require some support from Birmingham City Council or other agencies; no immediate threat to life but may cause some disruption to the daily routine of the school. Examples include: ICT failure, water leak, local industrial action, failed heating system or supply failure (power, gas or water).

Level 2: Emergency

An unexpected event either within the school or outside of the school that is likely to cause some disruption to the school's functionality; likely to pose a real threat of, or actual injury or death, and requires urgent and significant support from LA and other agencies. Examples include:

- > A deliberate act of violence (e.g., knife or firearm)
- > School fire or laboratory explosion
- > Hostage situation
- > Gas leak/chemical leak
- > Destruction or serious vandalism of school premises
- > Death of a pupil or staff member
- > Transport accident involving a large number of pupils/staff
- > Civil disturbance or terrorism
- > Epidemic concerns

Level 3: Major Incident

Incident affecting the wider community which could have a significant impact on the school; likely to be declared a major incident by a category 1 responder; School closure may be necessary dependent on nature and proximity of emergency. The Birmingham City Council Resilience Team will be involved as part of a multi-agency response. Examples include:

- > Serious road or rail accident/spillage
- > Aircraft crash
- > Factory explosion
- > Terrorist action
- > A Flu epidemic or viral infection leading to national alert

Levels 2 and 3 are distinguished on how wide-spread their possible effect may be and the action that needs to be taken, not necessarily their potential severity.

While BCC's response and coordination is likely to take effect on the two higher levels, it is considered worthwhile to notify them at a Level 1 in case the incident escalates.

1.3 The incident management planning process

Preparing for emergencies is an ongoing process; in the UK we follow the Integrated Emergency Management (IEM) approach (a holistic approach to preventing and managing emergencies) which includes six key activities:

No.	Key Activity	Description
1	Anticipation	Actively horizon- scanning for risks and potential emergencies before they happen, during and throughout the recovery stage
2	Assessment	Most commonly carried out through risk assessments
3	Prevention	Implementation of mitigation measures and taking action to prevent an emergency
4	Preparation	Developing and embedding plans; training and exercising
5	Response	Responding to the direct and indirect effects of an incident
6	Recovery	Rebuilding, restoring and rehabilitating to a new normality

You should consider all elements of this wider incident management process for you to a) reduce the likelihood of an incident, b) ensure you are as prepared as possible to respond should the need arise c) facilitate a robust recovery process to ensure pupils, staff and parents are adequately supported.

Don't forget: Throughout each stage of this process it is important to consult members of staff and governors/trustees to gain their involvement and support.

2. Anticipation and assessment

It is important that you maintain an awareness of the possible threats to the school. The West Midlands maintain a Community Risk Register outlining the top risks within the area. This can be utilised to support your planning. The top risks within the West Midlands are:

1. Industrial Accidents
2. Power Failure
3. Severe Weather (including cold weather and heatwave)
4. Flooding
5. Social Disruption
6. Health Emergencies
7. Transport Disruption
8. Cyber Threat
9. Fuel Shortage
10. Terrorism

Liaise with emergency service and Local Authority emergency planning colleagues to understand their role in an emergency and what happens across Birmingham; understand your local area/local risks and conduct risk assessments for the school to identify possible areas of weakness and areas

for improvement. Be aware of your environment and sign up to any relevant early-warning alerts e.g., severe weather alerts from the Met Office and flood alerts from the Environment Agency.

The above will enable you to implement measures to reduce the impact of an emergency.

3. Prevention

Once you have an idea of the main risks in your area/to the school and have completed a risk assessment you can begin to look at ways to reduce the likelihood of a critical incident occurring and to reduce the impact should one occur.

This may include:

- > Delivery of awareness sessions for staff and governors/trustees
- > Staff participation in sessions delivered by NaCTSO e.g., ACT (Action Counters Terrorism) Awareness and ACT for Education e-learning module on the ProtectUK website here: [E-Learning | ProtectUK](#)
- > Staff completion of [See, Check and Notify \(SCaN\) | NPSA](#) training modules developed by the National Protective Security Authority (NPSA) to empowers staff to correctly identify suspicious activity and know what to do when they encounter it.
- > Awareness of [HOT Protocol](#) (Hidden, Obvious, Typical) to identify suspicious items
- > Lessons for pupils such as the British Red Cross 'Pillowcase Project' – helping children to understand, cope with and respond to weather related emergencies (teaching resources can be accessed online at: <https://www.redcross.org.uk/get-involved/teaching-resources/the-pillowcase-project>). Other teaching resources are also available.
- > Familiarisation with existing School Security documents and procedures
- > Implementation of visible security measures across the premises
- > Ensuring all are aware of the Stay Safe messages (Run, Hide, Tell)

4. Preparation (Planning stages)

Although it is not possible to prepare for every eventuality, having a critical incident management plan in place for your school, for which the relevant personnel have received adequate training and which has been regularly tested through an exercise schedule, will prepare you to respond more effectively to a critical incident at or affecting the school or its staff/pupils.

It will help all concerned to feel more secure in the knowledge that you have pre-planned basic actions with clearly defined and understood roles and responsibilities which will ultimately reduce the impact of an incident.

Having plans in place to deal with critical incidents also helps with the management of smaller, routine emergencies schools cope with on a regular basis.

The Department for Education's [Protective security and preparedness for education settings - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

Provides a range of non-statutory guidance for preparing for any major incidents – this includes apart from drafting plans, procedures, engagement activities as part of PSHE classes, Personal Emergency Evacuation Plans PEEPs, drills / exercises etc along with relevant templates that can be used and adapted as necessary.

4.1 Establishment of a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Your school should establish a Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) to manage a response in an organised and structured way. The team will vary depending on the school circumstances but should consist of staff/personnel with the necessary skills to fulfil the roles; usually senior staff members. Consideration should be given for representation of non-teaching staff, parents and the governing board.

Where possible, you should identify more staff than required to undertake roles in the CIMT and involve them to ensure they are prepared should they be asked to deputise.

In some smaller schools, it may not be possible to establish a full CIMT. In these circumstances, it is particularly important that whoever is dealing with the incident calls Birmingham City Council for support as soon as possible (refer to notification procedure on page 5).

Suggested roles and responsibilities of the CIMT can be found in section 5.1.

4.2 Development of a plan

Your plan should cover procedures for incidents occurring during and outside of school hours, including weekends and holidays, on the school premises or away from the school. It should also include emergency procedures for extended services, such as breakfast clubs, after-school clubs and holiday activities.

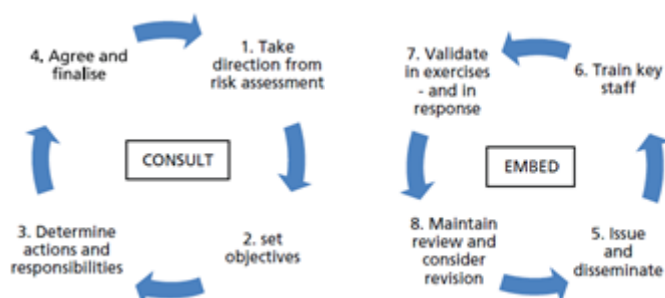
It should be generic enough to cover a range of potential incidents and be developed as part of the wider incident management planning process.

As a minimum your plan should include:

- a. Roles and responsibilities
- b. Activation procedures
- c. Key contact details
- d. Action cards for responding to specific risks as identified in your risk assessment/through liaison with emergency service/emergency planning teams
- e. Training and exercising schedule
- f. Media management
- g. Incident log template
- h. Recovery strategies

The CIMT should own and develop the School's Critical Incident Management Plan. It is recommended that all staff and governors/trustees are involved in the development of a plan to share ideas, create awareness and instill a sense of ownership.

A standard approach to the development of critical incident/emergency plans is as follows:



4.3 Sharing of the plan and its content

Your Critical Incident Management Plan should be shared with those who have a named role in the plan, and members and deputies of the CIMT, to ensure they are aware of the plan and their role within it. It may be appropriate to share some of the plan content with parents so that they understand how a response would be managed and what to expect from the school in an incident affecting their child.

4.4 Training and exercising to support the plan

It is vital that those with a named role in the plan, and members and deputies of the CIMT, receive the necessary training to ensure they are able to respond effectively. It is also important that the plan is regularly exercised to identify any training needs, any changes to be made and to provide a safe environment to test the processes you have put in place.

A training and exercising schedule should be put in place to maintain currency and ensure competency and preparedness to respond. Plans should be exercised annually as a minimum and/or following an incident.

Exercising may take one of the following forms:

- a. **Discussion based exercise:** Cost effective, least time consuming, structured to allow participants to explore issues and walk through plans in an unpressured setting
- b. **Table top exercise:** Discussion based on a scenario either in real time or with time jumps to exercise different phases. Participants would need to be familiar with the plan to exercise as the scenario unfolds
- c. **Command post exercise:** Typically involves teams at all management levels. Participants work from their day to day location rather than getting all together. Useful for testing information flow, comms, equipment, procedures, decision making and coordination
- d. **Live exercise:** Live play based on a scenario; resource heavy
- e. **Test:** A test or fail element (unique)

4.5 Debriefing

Following an exercise (or real activation of the plan), a debrief should take place for all staff involved. This will allow lessons to be identified and any recommendations to be made for improvement. It also allows an opportunity for staff to input, offload and for positive feedback to be given.

Debriefs should include, where possible, a hot debrief (same day, at site, following each shift rotation if implemented and immediately following the incident) and a cold debrief (within four weeks in a structured environment).

The Chatham House Rule should be adopted for all debriefs as follows:

"When a meeting, or part thereof, is held under the Chatham House Rule, participants are free to use the information received, but neither the identity nor the affiliation of the speaker(s), nor that of any other participant, may be revealed". The purpose is to encourage openness and the sharing of information.

4.6 Review

The plan should be reviewed annually to maintain currency and should be signed off by the governing board. Sign off should require evidence that a training and exercise schedule has been implemented within the previous 12 months and is scheduled for the next 12 months as a minimum.

4.7 Additional preparatory measures

Additional preparatory measures to facilitate a smoother response include:

- > Maintain and regularly update a list of the next of kin of all pupils and staff and how to make contact with them in the event of a critical incident
- > Where pupils and staff are off the school site, a duplicate next of kin list should remain on the school premises. The importance of accurate information should be reinforced in communication from schools to parents and carers.
- > A list of any pupils out of school on visits or placements on any day should be kept on the school premises
- > Head teachers may consider a reciprocal 'buddying' system, where, in the event of a critical incident, each is paired with another head teacher to give support and carry out some operational functions within the school
- > Adhere to existing school visit policies and procedures

5. Responding to a critical incident

5.1 Roles and Responsibilities

a) Head teacher or nominated deputy

- > Overall responsibility for the emergency
- > Maintain an overview of the situation and delegate tasks to appropriate staff
- > Ensure relevant authorities are informed
- > Act as central contact for internal and external communication

b) Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

Called together as soon as incident occurs either in person or via teleconference.

The CIMT will be responsible for the following:

- > Establishing a duty rota for staff
- > Co-ordination at the incident scene together with emergency services

- > Collecting accurate and up to date information on the incident
- > Working with the Council's Communications Teams (depending on SLA with academies) to agree a mechanism for disseminating appropriate information for both teaching/clerical staff and pupils and organise the response to the media
- > Ensuring content on websites (internal and external) is appropriate and reflects cleared messages
- > Making decisions about who is keeping contact with the parents of dead/injured children (bear in mind this contact may continue for some time)
- > Establishing parental wishes regarding the nature of the information to be given in school; i.e. funeral, memorial services
- > Close liaison with any outside agencies involved. Consider arranging for information sharing with other schools (attended by siblings, relatives or close friends)
- > An awareness of the effects the incident is having on other staff – including regular staff briefings
- > Designating someone to respond to any contacts made by parents not directly affected by the crisis
- > Organising basic provisions – food, drinks, paper tissues, writing / drawing materials, availability of medical assistance
- > Ensuring safety procedures are followed
- > Dealing with the return to “normality”
- > Maintaining a log of all issues, actions and decisions in the approved format
- > Leading the recovery process

c) Birmingham City Council

Birmingham City Council is defined under the Civil Contingencies Act, 2004, as a Category One responder alongside colleagues from Police, Ambulance and Fire.

Through various Services, they may be able to provide support such as extra communication facilities, assistance with dealing with the media, alternative accommodation if the school building is unusable, and help with transportation and procurement. They can also provide legal advice (where appropriate), and welfare support from a variety of services. Refer to the notification process on page 5 for access to this support.

i. Birmingham Resilience Team

The Birmingham Resilience Team is responsible for emergency planning and business continuity for the Local Authority and for providing business continuity advice and assistance to businesses and the voluntary sector.

The team ensure the Authority have the necessary plans in place to respond to an emergency and they co-ordinate the response of Birmingham City Council during an emergency and during the recovery phase.

They work collaboratively with partners including emergency services, Environment Agency, Met Office, utility companies etc, as part of a coordinated multi-agency approach to planning, responding to and recovering from emergencies in Birmingham.

They can provide the following support:

- > Coordination of BCC service support
- > Planning support
- > Debriefing
- > Activation of emergency plans to support a response including but not limited to:
 - Emergency centre plan
 - Emergency transport plan
 - Major emergency plan

ii. Children & Families Directorate

The Children & Families Directorate contains all Education Services within Birmingham City Council including Education Safeguarding, Educational Psychology and School and Governor Support.

Services within this Directorate can provide the following support:

School and Governor Support

- > Help facilitate appropriate support Local Authority support
- > Arrange when appropriate for a “Heads Up” style alert notification of incidents to lead officers, councillors and partner agencies
- > Assist the Head Teacher with respect to any required communication with the media, governors/trustees and parents and through the Press Office as appropriate

Education: Early Help and Safeguarding Team

- > Post incident review and support around potential safeguarding issues
- > Post event support to Senior Leadership Team
- > Implementing staff supervision through an ‘Action Learning Set’ approach
- > Liaison with partner agencies and OFSTED/RSC where appropriate

Educational Psychology Service

Provide consultation on the management of the aftermath of the critical incident for the head teacher and designated senior staff. This could include:

- > assisting the head teacher in deciding what information to provide to staff, pupils and parents and how this should be communicated
- > providing advice and support as needed for staff with managing distressed pupils, colleagues and parents
- > liaise with other support services working within the school as needed
- > providing advice on such issues as ‘getting things back to normal’ and commemorating the event
- > giving advice on appropriate support for staff and pupils affected on a group or individual basis
- > by agreement, arrange for direct same day or next day on-site debriefing/support for staff and pupils as necessary
- > negotiate with the head teacher the extent of Educational Psychology involvement following a critical incident and where needed, signpost support alongside any appropriate offer via Educational Psychology traded services
- > where necessary, offer follow-up support to a school at a later date where there may be subsequent challenging events related to the original incident, for example, a court case.

iii. BCC Occupational Health, Safety and Wellbeing Team

- > undertake accident investigation
- > support with undertaking post incident risk assessments
- > review site security
- > liaise with and provide support in dealings with Enforcement Authorities (Police, HSE, Fire)

iv. BCC Press Office

- > The Press Office will deal with all enquiries from the news media, advise on wider communications, attend the school if necessary and deal directly with reporters.

5.2 Keeping a log of decisions/actions

A log book provides an official record of everything you or your team did during an incident and during the recovery phase. It is where you record the decisions made, the reasons why and the options discussed, any actions taken and how progress of those actions was reviewed.

A template log can be found in Appendix A; this should be started as soon as possible following an incident.

Your log and other data/records related to the incident should be stored in a readily retrievable manner once the incident is over in case they are required at a future date as part of an inquiry process. Such records are also invaluable in identifying lessons as part of your debrief process that would improve any future response. Debriefing is covered in section 4.5.

5.3 Communication

Good internal and external communications are vital for the efficient management of an incident. Your plan should cover communications procedures relating to your school and you may want to add additional tasks to any action checklists to ensure these procedures are carried out e.g. change answer phone message on telephones, amend website, use parent text system to contact parents etc.

a) Keeping people informed

All staff and school governors/trustees should be informed as soon as possible. Give pupils, staff, governors/trustees and parents accurate, up-to-date factual information, update them at regular intervals, and ask them not to speculate or to encourage rumours.

Pupils should be informed in small groups with age appropriate information. If possible, this should be done the same day as the incident. In the case of a fatality, the educational psychology service will be able to advise on the best way to inform pupils.

An early decision should be made about how to inform parents. Bear in mind the speed with which rumours circulate. Make use of telephone trees or other methods to ensure parents are informed quickly and efficiently. It is important to agree a pre-prepared factual statement or the telephone tree will distort the message. In the case of a fatal incident, the police will normally inform the parents of the child or children involved.

b) Media Management

Do not allow the press onto school premises or give them access to children unless there is a specific reason and permission and consents are in place. In some cases, the police are likely to take the lead when dealing with the press, and to offer some protection against media intrusion. It is important for schools to establish a communications and media management strategy. The BCC press office can advise and support the school with media issues and, where appropriate, media enquiries can be directed to the BCC Communications Team.

It is important to remember that media is just one part of wider communications, particularly in the age of social media where information and/or rumour can spread very quickly; it is vital that communicating with parents, pupils and staff is considered hand-in-hand with media handling. In fact, good initial communication can lessen the impact of news media reports.

If there is likely to be a high media presence at the school site, it may be appropriate to pre-designate an area for media vans and journalists from which interviews can be given. This may prevent the media blocking access routes to the school or intimidating pupils and staff.

5.4 Grab Bag

A 'grab bag' is a store of important and useful equipment and resources that can be accessed quickly should you be required to evacuate your premises.

You should keep this in an accessible place in case of an evacuation; it is also best practice for a second set of documents to be stored in a different, secure, location in case you cannot access the school building.

Suggested grab bag contents include:

- > Contact List (Staff, insurance, suppliers etc.)
- > Manifest of pupils & SEND/disability support needs
- > Building/site plan/map
- > Log Book
- > Petty cash
- > Hi-visibility vest/jacket
- > Spare mobile phone and phone charger
- > Wind-up torch
- > First Aid kit
- > Foil emergency blankets
- > Water and snack bars
- > Whistle
- > Compact megaphone
- > Wind-up radio
- > Waterproof notepad and pens
- > Gloves
- > Two-way radios
- > Batteries
- > Items to support SEND needs
- > Business continuity plan

> Critical Incident Management plan

Although it will not be feasible to store staff/pupil medication within a grab bag, considerations should be made for how this could be easily removed with you on evacuation where it is safe to do so; this will not always be possible and a safe, speedy evacuation should always be the priority.

There are mechanisms in place for accessing medication when an evacuation has taken place:

- > Emergency Service personnel may be able to re-enter the building to collect a medication box for you (if it is safe to do so)
- > 999 for any medical emergencies
- > Parents where possible and not an immediate requirement
- > Contact the staff/pupils GP for an emergency prescription (out of hours they often have an automated message for their providers)
- > Out of hours, the BCC Resilience Duty Officer who can contact the out of hours NHS England West Midlands Team for support

Maintaining a list of medication for staff/pupils in a secure, accessible place could speed up the process of accessing required medication in an emergency.

5.5 Action cards

Action cards should be included within your Critical Incident Management Plan to provide a quick reference for how to respond to different types of emergency.

Some key actions are outlined in the section below.

The National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) has developed guidance to assist in planning for and responding to fast moving firearms or weapon including bomb threats.

a) Bomb Threat

Unfortunately there have been numerous examples recently of bomb threats aimed at schools. Threats may be received through various methods including telephone, email, in person or via social media and although they usually turn out to be hoaxes, they must always be taken seriously. All staff should know how to respond to these threats; they should know what questions to ask if they receive a phone call and what to look out for from the caller.

The National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) has developed a fillable template to use when a bomb threat is received. An example of this template is included in appendix B and can be accessed via the following link to be shared with staff and kept near telephones: [Bomb threat checklist | Protect UK](#)

Further advice and guidance on responding to a bomb threat can be found on the NaCTSO website: [Bomb threats | Protect UK](#)

b) Firearms and Weapon Attacks

The police have released a short film called 'Stay Safe: Firearms and Weapons Attack' which outlines the key actions people should take in the event of a firearms or weapons attack.

The film advises those who get caught up in an incident to **'RUN, HIDE and TELL'** - guidance which can be applied to any place; the advice given in the film has saved lives. Run Hide Tell can be viewed via this link: [Stay safe film | Protect UK](#). Consideration should be given to adjustments that will need to be in place to support those with SEND.

Any suspicious behaviour or activity should be reported immediately to the confidential Anti-Terrorist Hotline on 0800 789 321 or in an emergency dial 999.

c) Lockdown Procedures

All opportunities to detect and deter threats should be considered and addressed as part of the IEM Anticipate, Assess and Prepare activities previously mentioned.

It is advisable that all schools have effective lockdown procedures which are regularly practised and reviewed in case prevention methods do not work. It is not advisable to circulate the actual plan in case it falls in to the wrong hands.

Lockdown arrangements will depend heavily on the size and layout of the school. It is, therefore, only possible to provide guidance on things to consider when developing lockdown procedures.

Key points to consider:

- > Lockdown signals should be clearly distinguishable from evacuation alarms to avoid confusion
- > It is important that everyone knows where to congregate to eliminate any confusion
- > If staff/pupils are outside at the time bring them inside as quickly as possible. However, consider the nearest possible building to take them to which can be secured. It may be safer for them to hide or disperse
- > Once in lockdown mode, the administrative office should be informed immediately of any pupils not accounted for and an immediate search instigated
- > How communication channels can remain open safely and securely including the possibility that you may not be able to speak (e.g., use of pop up messages on computers, instant messaging, text, email, radios, mobiles, PA systems)
- > You may wish to pre-identify suitable rooms for lockdown and access and egress points (not just doors, windows and gates) that need to be secured, on a map which could be kept within a plan. It is important that these rooms have exit routes in case an intruder gains access to the premises.
- > Identify how you can quickly and physically secure the site and whether you can lock down specific areas
- > Ability to disable lifts without them returning to the ground floor
- > Processes should be flexible and realistic

Where there is no time to activate lockdown procedures, the Stay Safe 'Run, Hide, Tell' principles should be applied.

Further guidance is included in Appendix C. Additionally, NaCTSO have issued 'Developing Dynamic Lockdown Procedures' which may provide additional information. This document can be found [here](#).

6. Recovering from a critical incident

Those schools which have planned their response to a major incident in advance are likely to cope better and recover more fully.

The purpose of the recovery and return to 'business as usual' phase is to resume normal working practices for the school as quickly as possible, therefore, planning for recovery should be initiated by the school as soon as is practically possible during the incident. Where the impact of the incident is prolonged, 'normal' operations may need to be delivered under new circumstances e.g., from a different location.

An action plan should be agreed for this final phase of the incident response. The following issues should be considered:

- > The ongoing safety, health and wellbeing needs of the school community
- > The environment and physical infrastructure
- > The financial and economic recovery of the school
- > Communication strategies
- > The longer-term impacts e.g. anniversaries, memorial services and VIP visits
- > Learning lessons from the incident to inform future development

This section includes a list of some of the considerations required during the recovery and stand-down phases.

6.1 Psychosocial support

The psychosocial effects of critical incidents varies considerably depending both on the nature of the incident and on the age, background and personality of the individual. Effects can range from mild through to severe, may be immediate or delayed and may last a very short time or persist for many years. The following are the main effects commonly reported by people who have experienced a traumatic event:

- i) Recurring intrusive recollections of the traumatic event such as in dreams and flashbacks.
- ii) Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma. This might be avoidance of a classroom where an event took place or of objects that were a key feature during the event.
- iii) Symptoms of increased arousal, characterised by hyper-vigilance, increased startle reactions, sleep difficulties, irritability, anxiety and hyperactivity.

It should be stressed that the above are natural human responses to extraordinary events and are part of our survival mechanism whereby our bodies are in a state of preparedness for 'fight or flight'. Because of the bewildering emotions generated which are outside the usual pattern of experience, individuals may need a lot of reassurance about the likelihood that these extreme emotions will subside.

a) Possible effects on staff

It is important to bear in mind that individuals show stress in different ways and at different times – sometimes the people from whom you least expect it. We all have stress levels which vary depending on our circumstances at the time. It is helpful for staff to know that it is acceptable for them to show distress or grief and that there is support available to them.

Each school will have its own internal support system – both formal and informal. It is helpful if staff, particularly in a large school, know how to access that personal support.

It may be necessary to provide temporary cover for class teaching.

Form tutors in a secondary school or class teachers in a primary school have some difficult tasks in the immediate aftermath of an incident. These may require the staff to listen to and respect the wishes of the children, allowing discussion of some issues.

The following situations can be difficult:

- > Reading the class register from which name(s) are now missing
- > Children showing signs of upset
- > Uncharacteristic behaviours from a class, for example, excessive talking
- > Leaving the empty chair/spaces in the classroom
- > Handing back books/belongings to a bereaved family
- > Dealing with requests from the Coroner's Officer, for example, for shoes or clothing to assist in identification

b) Possible effects on pupils

- > Pupils may need a particular member of staff to be available with whom they can talk about particular problems. It is helpful for times of availability to be given.
- > Pupils often feel they have a "real" ownership of issues surrounding a death because of their close attachment to the deceased pupil(s).
- > Some pupils may need reminding that final decisions about some issues must rest with the family of the deceased or injured.
- > Open mourning can communicate distress to other pupils less affected by a specific tragedy.
- > Some children in the neighbourhood may be affected because of their social links with the victims of an incident.
- > Many pupils feel upset but may show it at different times, in different ways and in different places.
- > Typical reactions can include tearfulness, withdrawn behaviour, anger and aggressive outbursts, inattentiveness, denial, inappropriate humour.
- > Recurring grief can be triggered by an apparently unrelated incident.

c) Where to access Psychosocial Support

- > **Birmingham City Council Educational Psychology Service**

In the initial days of a critical incident, the Educational Psychology Service can provide consultation about appropriate support for staff and pupils. The nature and impact of the incident will be different for individuals and the setting as a whole. In some scenarios, staff fell confidence on drawing on their own well-established resources to support children, staff and families. In other scenarios the setting may wish for more direct advice and support or signposting to other agencies or resources. The Educational Psychology Service can also be a source of information if there are longer term concerns about individuals' responses to the original event.

> **Workplace Wellness**

Schools can subscribe to Workplace Wellness, a service providing proactive, practical information and emotional support delivered by qualified practitioners and available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. Benefits include:

- > 24/7/365 access to telephone counsellors
- > Structured Telephone Counselling
- > CCBT (Computerised Cognitive Behavioural Therapy)
- > Manager support helpline
- > Post-trauma critical incident support
- > Legal, debt and practical life management helpline online self-help EAP portal
- > Day 1 intervention for stress manager referral

Employees can phone 0800 111 6387 for support if the school is subscribed to this service.

Schools who do not subscribe are able to purchase the services on an ad-hoc chargeable basis by phoning Workplace Wellness on 0800 111 6387.

> **Voluntary agencies**

Various voluntary agencies are able to provide advice and support to those affected by a traumatic event or bereavement. A list of suggested support agencies is provided in Appendix D.

6.2 Memorials

The nature and severity of the incident will determine not only the levels of media interest but the community reaction. The school (or in some specific circumstances the Local Authority) may be a natural focus for organising a memorial or other remembrance services.

A memorial service provides an opportunity for those affected to share their grief with others and can be an important part of the grieving and healing process.

Undertaking a fitting memorial is a delicate balance and should consider:

- > Parents' wishes
- > Introducing a book of condolence
- > Establishing a condolence website
- > Consultation on memorial design
- > Possible location of a school memorial (the local community may wish to be involved)
- > Holding a school based memorial service – preferably including pupil contributions if appropriate
- > The impact of anniversaries/birthdays
- > Public inquiry or litigation will provide reminders and media attention
- > Maintaining contact with the media
- > Keeping other parents and the community informed (where appropriate)

In the event of a large scale, or high profile incident the memorial often has an important national as well as local role and is likely to receive extensive media coverage. For those reasons, it is important to consider the organisation and structure of such events very carefully, covering such aspects as timing, invitations, representation and conduct.

Preparations for such occasions should involve all relevant faith communities, representatives of the bereaved, extensive involvement with the Council, the local community, dignitaries, the police and those who provided different aspects of the response.

6.3 Recovery of the School facility

In the immediate aftermath of a critical incident in a school, the normal functioning of the school may be severely disrupted. The school itself may be inaccessible either partially or fully and for a short or extended period due to flooding, Police investigation etc.

The head teacher may need to make a decision on whether to close the school and when to re-open. There are many arguments for keeping schools open following a critical incident if this is practicable to enable pupils, staff and parents to benefit from the mutual emotional support of being together, however, this will depend on the circumstances and may not be possible.

Appendix A Incident Log Template

[illegible]

Appendix B: Dynamic Lockdown Guidance

The National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO) defines dynamic lockdown as *“the ability to quickly restrict access and egress to a site or building (or part of) through physical measures in response to a threat, either external or internal”*.

The aim of a lockdown is to prevent people moving into danger areas and preventing or frustrating attackers accessing a site (or part of). It is recognised that due to their nature some sites may not be able to physically achieve lockdown.

Although guidance is predominantly targeted as a protect and prepare measure against terrorist activity, it can also be applied within schools for other incidents requiring staff and pupils to invacuate (shelter indoors) as a place of safety. Depending on the threat, you may choose to activate a partial lockdown or a full lockdown;

Examples of where lockdown procedures may be activated include:

- > Incident or civil disturbance within the local community posing a potential risk to the school (e.g., terrorism, bomb threat, wide-spread protest, riots)
- > Intruder on the school grounds posing a potential risk to pupils, staff and visitors
- > Warning received regarding local air pollution risk (e.g., smoke plume, gas cloud)

Partial Lockdown

Exterior doors and windows are locked but free movement is permitted within the building, dependent upon the circumstances.

This may be as a result of a reported incident or civil disturbance in the local community with the potential to pose a risk to pupils, staff and visitors in the school (e.g., civil unrest). It may also be a result of a warning received regarding the risk of air pollution (e.g., smoke plume, gas cloud) or a roaming animal considered to be dangerous.

Partial lockdown should be seen as a precautionary measure which puts the school in a state of readiness should the situation escalate, whilst retaining a degree of normality.

Immediate Actions

- > All outside activity to cease immediately with pupils and staff returning indoors (there will need to be a means of communicating the alert to duty staff at break times / during outdoor P.E. sessions etc.)
- > All pupils and staff to remain indoors and external doors and windows should be locked
- > Free movement may be permitted within the building, dependent upon the circumstances

Full Lockdown

All interior and exterior windows and doors are locked, staff, students and visitors are confined to classrooms or an identified safe space and no entry or exit of the school is permitted.

This will be a result of an immediate threat to the school (e.g., terrorism, bomb threat, intruder on school grounds) and may be an escalation of a partial lockdown. Of course, lockdown depends on a decision that it is safer to remain than to evacuate.

Immediate Actions

- > All pupils return to base (classroom, form room or other agreed location e.g. sports hall, assembly hall, dining room)
- > External doors locked
- > Classroom doors locked (where a member of staff with a key is present)
- > Windows locked and blinds drawn
- > Pupils sit quietly out of sight (e.g., under desk or around a corner)
- > Register taken - administrative office should contact each class in turn for an attendance report if this is possible and safe to do so
- > Mobile phones to be turned to silent and vibrate to be turned off

Lockdown should remain in place until it has been lifted by a senior member of staff or the Emergency Services. At any point during the lockdown, the fire alarm may sound which is a cue to evacuate the building.

Lockdown away from school/abroad

You must consider what would happen if a lockdown situation should arise when a group is away from school, whether this be on a short visit, day trip or a longer overnight trip in the UK or overseas.

As part of any risk assessment it is important to consider what would happen if an emergency situation arose that was out of the control of those supervising the pupils off school premises.

You should give guidance to pupils prior to a trip/visit and reinforce this during the trip/visit itself. As a minimum you should identify and communicate an emergency meeting point in case the party gets separated and remind them to follow instructions from the Emergency Services.

Communication

Communicating an activation

- > Consider your method for communicating activation of a lockdown
 - It must be distinguishable from evacuation alarms

- Silent messages may need to be used (email, instant messenger, screen pop up messaging, text groups providing phones remain on silent) so as not to alert an intruder
 - Where silent messages are not required, utilise existing internal messaging systems (Public Address systems, text, staff phones etc.)
- > Establish communication with the emergency services as soon as possible where appropriate
 - > If required, notify parents as soon as practicable via schools established communications system

Communicating with parents and carers

School lockdown procedures, especially arrangements for communicating with parents and carers, should be routinely shared with parents and carers.

In the event of an actual lockdown, it is strongly advised that any incident or development is communicated to parents and carers as soon as is practicable. Parents and carers will obviously be concerned but regular communication of accurate information will help to alleviate undue anxiety.

Parents and carers should be given enough information about what will happen for the following reasons:

- To reassure them they are doing everything possible to ensure their child's safety
- To keep them informed
- To reduce the number of parents contacting the school as this could tie up telephone lines
- To deter them from coming to the school as they could interfere with emergency service access and may even put themselves and others in danger

It may be prudent to reinforce the message ***"...the school is in a full lockdown situation. During this period the switchboard and entrances will not be staffed, external doors locked and nobody will be allowed in or out..."***

Communicating with the Emergency Services

It is important to keep lines of communication open with Emergency Services as they are best placed to offer advice as a situation unfolds. The school site may or may not be cordoned off by Emergency Services dependent upon the severity of the incident that has triggered the lockdown.

Appendix D: Supporting Information

The following websites contain information and advice on supporting children, families and staff in managing their reactions to bereavement. They also include lists of publications for those who wish to understand more about childhood bereavement and suggestions for fiction and non-fiction books that can help children of different stages of development to understand death and their reaction to it.

Beyond the Horizon

<http://www.beyondthehorizon.org.uk/>

Childhood Bereavement Network

<http://www.childhoodbereavementnetwork.org.uk/>

Child Bereavement UK

<https://childbereavementuk.org/>

Cruse Bereavement Care

[Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](#)

Education Support Partnership

<https://www.educationsupportpartnership.org.uk/>

Edward's Trust

<http://www.edwardstrust.org.uk/>

NHS Choices

<https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/mental-health-helplines/>

Winston's Wish

<http://www.winstonswish.org.uk/>

BCC Supporting Victims Signposting Guide – Available from Birmingham Resilience Team

Appendix E: Key Contacts

School and Governor Support	0121 303 2541
BCC CCTV Control Centre	0121 303 4149
Birmingham City Council Press Office (Office hours)	0121 303 3885 / 07920 088 571
Birmingham City Council Emergency Press Officer (Out of Hours)	0121 303 3287
Educational Psychology Service	0121 303 1793 / 07880 189 024
Education Early Help and Safeguarding Team	EducationSafeguarding@birmingham.gov.uk
BCC Occupational Health, Safety & Wellbeing Team	0121 303 3736
Police	999 or 101 for non-emergency
Children's Advice and Support Service (CASS) - Birmingham Children's Trust Emergency Duty Team	0121 303 1888 / 0121 675 4806
Local Authority Designated Officer	0121 675 1669