



School Emergency Policy

**Latest review/revision by the Standards Committee of the School's
September 2020; 5th October 2022**

**Approved at a meeting of the full Governing Body held on 21st
October 2020; 26th October 2022;**

**Reviewed/Approved at a meeting of the full Governing Body held
on 19th June 2024**

Review date: June 2026

**Signed: _____ Chairperson schools governing
body, on behalf of the governing body**

Date: _____

**Signed: _____
Headteacher**

**Distribution: Staff, governors, pupils, parents/carers, volunteers
and visitors to the school**

School Emergency Policy

This policy must be read in conjunction with the School Emergency Plan.

This policy should be read in conjunction with:

- Safeguarding policy
- Suite of risk assessments developed by the school

The content of this policy has been drawn up taking account of the Rhondda Cynon Taf County Borough Councils guidance on Emergency/ Critical Incident Planning and Response Guidance for Schools and PRUS, Emergency Assistance and the information from the National Counter Terrorism Security Office (NaCTSO). The school emergency plan also guidance from RCT Emergency/ Critical Incident Planning and Response Guidance for Schools and PRUS and advice taken from the Nottingham County Council document - Coping with a School Emergency 2011.

All staff have received training on the PREVENT agenda and the use of the Respect and Resilience Self-Assessment Toolkit which forms part of the policy on Tackling Extremism.

The aim of a school emergency plan is to help staff respond swiftly and effectively to an emergency at school, during an off-site activity or an after-school activity.

Despite every effort incidents and emergency situations can happen and, in most cases, there are recognised school procedures in place to deal with them. However, it must be noted that on occasions, unusual or more major incidents can occur. In this instance the school management team has prepared plans specific to Ysgol Ty Coch Special School to deal with any emergency and to ensure that the relevant staff within the school are aware of the agreed procedures and plan.

The potential for a major emergency is low, however, the consequences for all involved could be substantial so the importance of a plan, and rehearsal of those arrangements, is essential.

Possible Hazards

In the context of school life emergencies, which by their very nature are beyond the usual accidents or incidents, may be categorised as major disasters or potential major disasters. Depending on the circumstances, they could pose both short-term difficulties and long-term problems for the school and its occupants. The identification and analysis of such potential hazards is therefore an essential first step towards preparing a school emergency plan.

Consideration of potential hazards needs to be wide ranging and the corresponding emergency management arrangements must be flexible. Some major hazards are listed below. For each major hazard identified it is necessary to consider the scope of the threat, its effects and the counteracting measures.

Natural Disasters

The range of possibilities, perhaps precipitated by severe weather, is wide but needs to reflect that the school's area of interest stretches to the community from which its pupils are drawn. The school itself may not be directly affected. The Council's Emergency Planning Officer assists in identifying and quantifying the likely risks using historical authority records and advice from other agencies such as the Environment Agency and the Met Office.

Incidents Involving Death or Injury

This could involve a road traffic accident during a school trip, a death of pupil or staff or even one merely associated with a school because of the involvement of several pupils or staff.

Serious Damage to School Buildings

There are a number of possible causes ranging from fire, impact damage, structural failure or damage caused by severe weather conditions such as flooding.

Health Hazards

The range of possibilities is so great that forward planning is not practical but measures may be needed to put in place with health pandemics such as swine flu or major outbreaks of other illnesses such as meningitis, e-coli infection etc. In this case, advice would be taken from the Health and Safety Executive and Cwm Taf Health Board.

Industrial Incidents

There are no heavy industries within the localities, however the Tonteg site is close to light industries such as the Treforest Industrial Estate, where chemicals may be stored. It is also close to the local electrical substation. In addition, there may be unforeseen incidents due to atmospheric conditions e.g. a gas cloud

Malicious Intent

This may present itself in the form of a bomb threat, suspicious packages (left unattended) or an incident with aggressive people (who may be armed) outside the school or a visitor showing aggression. In these cases, depending on the circumstances, evacuation may need to occur or lockdown procedures may need to be followed.

The Planning Process

Preparing for emergencies is an ongoing process which involves:

- Risk assessment
- Planning
- Training
- Exercising
- Reviewing

Links with Other Areas of Work

Many aspects of the emergency plan have some relation to other policies already held in the school.

- First aid arrangements
- Evacuation procedures
- Fire safety management procedures
- Educational visits policy
- Health and safety documentation
- PE
- Bereavement guidance

Some emergencies may affect the local community but not directly impact on the school e.g. if there was a bereavement. In such instances, it might be suitable to activate certain aspects of the plan (e.g. post incident support) to help those affected.

The emergency plan contains sensitive information so it is important to keep it secure. Copies are kept in reception in a locked cupboard and in the head teacher's office at the Tonteg site. A copy of the plan is kept locked in a cupboard in reception at the Buarth y Capel site. The electronic version is held on the SMT drive and is password protected.

The plan is reviewed annually by the Health and Safety Committee of the Governing Body.

Potentially any member of staff could be notified of an emergency so it is important that all staff are aware of the plan and know where it is located.

Contact Details

The contact details of all staff are kept up to date on the Emergency Plan. Contact details are for staff across both sites. There are also contact details for the members of the governing body, Local Authority and emergency services.

Details of pupils are held in the black folder in the offices at the Tonteg and Buarth y Capel sites. In the case of an emergency these books are to be retrieved by reception staff and retained safely.

Activation of Plan

Throughout the response to an emergency, staff should maintain an incident log. When an incident occurs the priority is to safeguard those on site (i.e. pupils, staff, parents/ carers) and alert the emergency services if necessary. Following this, inform the Local Authority.

A log needs to be kept of the Notification of the Incident (Emergency Plan 2.1)

Grab Bags

Having the necessary resources available during the onset of an emergency can prove very beneficial to the response. Grab Bags are kept on each site in the entrance storage cupboard at the Tonteg site and in the reception at the Buarth y Capel site.

The grab bags contain:

- A first aid kit
- Torches
- Two-way radios
- Batteries
- A whistle
- A loud hailer
- High visibility tabards
- Blankets
- Sterile gloves
- Pens
- School Emergency Plan

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) should be established at the onset of an incident-people have already been identified on the School Emergency Plan and will work closely in conjunction with the head teacher for coordinating the response.

Employees who are not CIMT may have other roles in an emergency for example, those who are trained in first aid. In addition, staff will have a crucial role in responding to an emergency, reassuring the pupils and minimising disruption to the school routine. They may also be required to provide assistance in other ways such as accompanying pupils to hospital.

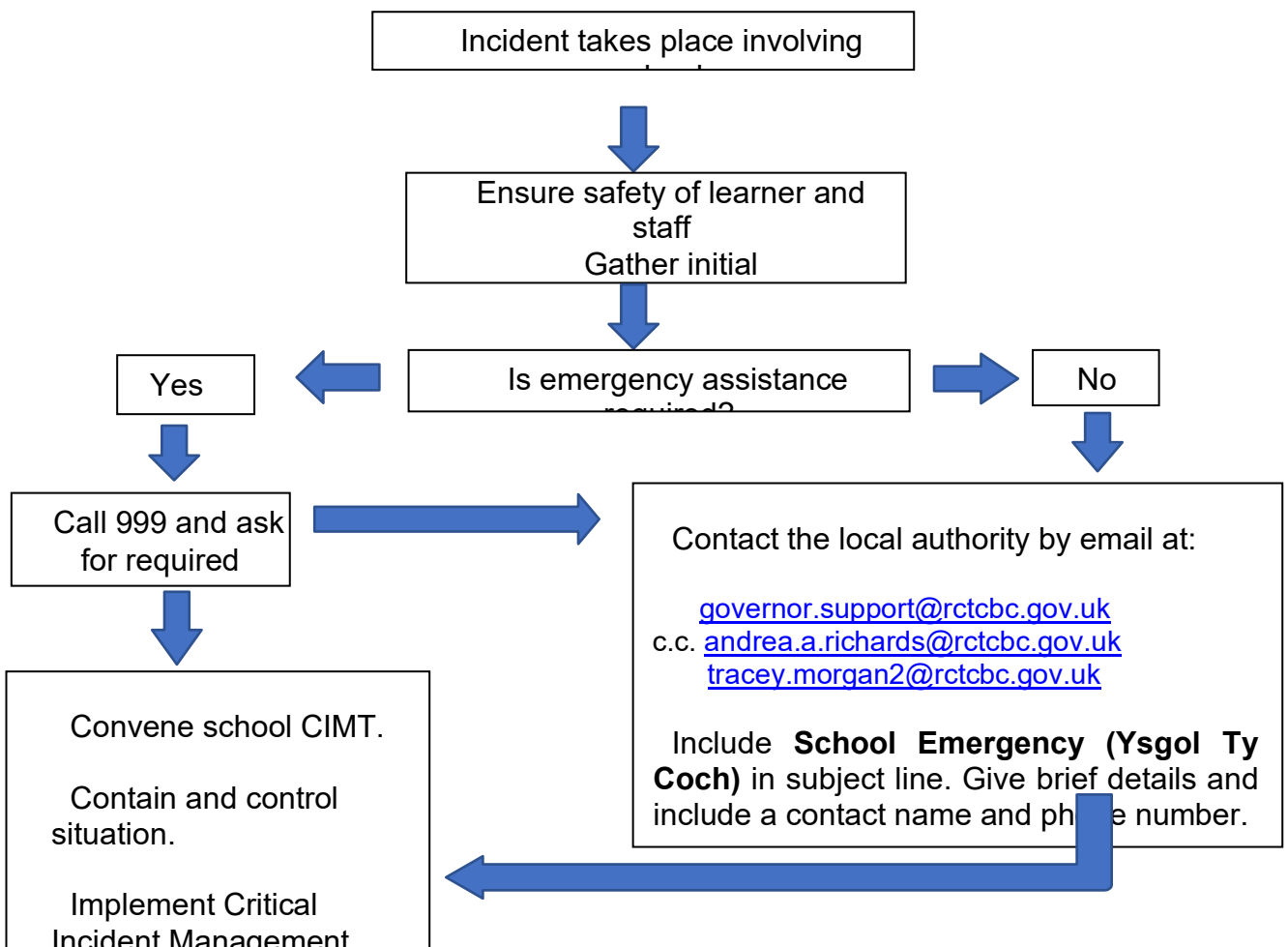
Where possible, staff and governors need to carry a means of identification with them when responding to an accident, as this may be required by members of the emergency services.

Emergencies During Educational Visits/Off-site Activities

Leaders of educational visits have a legal duty of care for people under their charge. The school uses the EVOLVE system and all staff have received training in applying this. Prior to an educational visit at least one member of staff is identified who may be contacted in the event of an emergency. A copy of the risk assessment is held in school along with the documentation related to the trip (e.g. a list of all attendees, contact details for the group and parents/ carers.) If the trip takes place outside of school hours, a copy of the risk assessment is held with the nominated person - the head teacher or deputy head teacher.

Immediate Response

On first receiving notification of the incident, the Headteacher or designated senior staff member will need to make an immediate assessment. The following initial protocol should come into action.



The local authority will be in a position to provide the school with a range of assistance through mobilising key service and support functions. Upon being notified of an incident via the emergency email trigger, the following actions will be undertaken by the local authority's Critical Incident

Team (CIT), under the direction of the **Lead Officer, Ms Andrea Richards (Service Director for 21st Century Schools and Transformation)** (or another senior officer from within the Education and Inclusion Services Directorate as advised by the Director of Education and Inclusion Services):

Immediate Actions for Lead Officer

- Contact school to determine nature and status of incident and discuss necessary immediate actions.
- Decide on necessary composition of the local authority's CIT. To include at the outset Senior Emergency Planning Officer, Senior Health and Safety Officer, representative from Media and Marketing Team, other senior officers as deemed necessary by the nature of the incident. Other members added as necessary. This could take place over subsequent days and weeks.
- Liaise with and provide updates to the local authority's Media and Marketing Team.
- Contact Legal Services for advice.
- Liaise with the emergency services if necessary (this could be via the Headteacher).
- Contact appropriate Chair of Governors.
- Contact Diocesan/Church Education Authority Officer if appropriate.
- Liaise with other services, e.g., gas services, electricity services, water, Corporate Estates
- Provide regular updates to the Chief Executive, Councillors, legal representatives, Media and Marketing Team and family members, etc., in collaboration with the school.
- The Lead Officer or a senior officer appointed by the Lead Officer will become part of the school's CIMT and co-ordinate the local authority's support for the school throughout the period of the incident.

Lockdown Protocol

Full Lockdown Protocol

Code Red Tonteg Site (Class staff)

- Gather all pupils and staff in your class and move to place of safety
 - If in a sensory garden shelter in Hobbit House and lock the door
- If outside then come straight in to nearest entrance - NOT THROUGH RECEPTION
- Everyone away from the windows at the front of the school. Pull blinds

closed. (Staff to thumb lock the outside doors, if safe to do so).

- Inside doors closed
 - Shut lights off
 - Put furniture against doors
 - Turn off monitors. Make a professional judgement to help for pupils to be quiet and regulated (i.e use of very quiet devices or activities)
 - If the perpetrator goes around the back of school, move into the corridors quietly and ensure doors to areas are closed.
 - Keep laptop or phone for communication through Email/ TEAMS MESSENGER
 - Turn phones to vibrate
 - Family Centre
 - If in the family centre dynamically risk assess, if safe to do so move into the school or go upstairs. Account for all visitors
 - Everyone away from the windows at the front of the school. Pull blinds closed. (Staff to thumb lock the outside doors, if safe to do so)
 - Shut lights off
 - Put furniture against doors
 - Turn off monitors
 - Turn phones to vibrate
 - Take the register and ensure all pupils/ staff accounted for.
- CODE RED FINISHED:**
- Await for Code Red finished via Email/ TEAMS MESSENGER

CODE BLUE (SHELTER)Tonteg

- Gather all pupils and staff in your class and move to place of safety
 - If in the sensory garden come straight into school through Dreigiau
 - If outside then come straight in to nearest entrance
 - Staff to ensure windows shuts and thumb lock the outside doors
 - Inside doors closed
 - Keep laptop or phone for communication through ~~gmail~~/ Teams message
 - If air pollution issues, turn off air conditioning or heaters, seal cracks around doors using equipment to hand.
- Fire Alarm
- If fire alarm sounds evacuate the building, go to place of evacuation
- Family Centre
- If in the family centre account for all visitors. Close windows and lock doors

CODE BLUE FINISHED:- Await for Code Blue finished via tannoy or Email/ TEAMS MESSENGER

Full Lockdown Protocol

Code RED BYC SITE

- Gather all pupils and staff in your class and move to place of safety
 - GRAIG DDU (cabin) Staff to thumb lock the outer and inner doors, pull blinds and keep away from windows.
 - If outside then go straight in to the nearest entrance, around the back of school.
(If GD go to main part of school)
 - BARCUD COCH to move into the HALL for their safety, away from the windows. If the perpetrator goes around the back then go to the main corridor. Put furniture against doors
 - LLANWYNNNO & RHIGOS to stay in their classes away from windows. If the perpetrator goes around the back then to go into the sensory room, ensure blinds are shut, lock the door.
 - Everyone away from the windows at the front of the school. Pull blinds closed.
(Staff to thumb lock the outside doors, if safe to do so). Inside doors closed
 - Shut lights off
 - Put furniture against doors
 - Turn off monitors Make a professional judgement to help for pupils to be quiet and regulated (i.e use of very quiet devices or activities)
 - Turn phones to vibrate
 - Keep laptop or phone for communication through Email/ Teams messenger
 - Take the register and ensure all pupils/ staff accounted for.
- CODE RED FINISHED**
- Await for Code Red finished via Email/ Teams messenger

CODE BLUE (SHELTER) BYC

- Gather all pupils and staff in your class and move to place of safety
- GRAIG DDU (cabin) Staff to thumb lock the outer and inner doors and shut windows
- If outside then go straight in to the nearest entrance, around the back of school (If GD go into main part of school)
 - BARCUD COCH to shut windows and lock doors
 - LLANWYNNNO & RHIGOS to shut windows and lock doors.
- Staff to thumb lock the outside doors and close the windows. Inside doors closed. If air pollution issue, turn off air conditioning or heaters, seal cracks around doors using equipment to hand.
 - Keep laptop or phone for communication through email/ teams messenger
 - If fire alarm sounds evacuate the building, go to place of evacuation

CODE BLUE FINISHED:- Await for Code Blue finished via tannoy or Email/ Team Message

Unexpected death

If any incident relates to the unexpected death of someone in the school (a learner or staff member) or any other critical incident which may serve to cause considerable personal distress and have the potential to overwhelm usual coping responses, please ensure that the Head of the Educational Psychology Service Robert.Kempson@rctcbc.gov.uk is also included in the communication so that appropriate assistance from the Educational Psychology Service can be provided, as required. Please refer to Appendix 5 'Critical Incidents in Schools – Preparation and Planning' which has been produced by the local authority's Educational Psychology Service and Eye to Eye Counselling Service to support schools to prepare, plan and manage such incidents and takes precedence in the event of such incidents.

A: Issues requiring immediate response by the school – the ‘Golden Hour’

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	Done or N/A
1. Gather information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complete Action Log (see Appendix 2) • What happened/where/when? • Call the emergency services if necessary. • How many involved; who are they? • Name and contact numbers of adults at location of incident. • Details and location of injured (severity, name of injured and supervising adult(s) name(s)/contact number). • Details and location of non-injured names, and supervising adult(s) names(s)/contact number. • Has anyone else been informed e.g., emergency services (what were they told?) • Inform Rhondda Cynon Taf Council: governor.support@rctcbc.gov.uk cc. andrea.a.richards@rctcbc.gov.uk tracey.morgan2@rctcbc.gov.uk 		
2. Convene school Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) for briefing.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify who is to be the school’s lead officer and ‘Loggist’. • Decide which key individuals need to be involved. Assign tasks and ensure each individual knows what is expected and logs their action on a central log of events record sheet. • Consider whether you may need to close the school but where possible avoid closing and maintain normal routines. • Identify a member of CIMT as the person to co-ordinate information (SPOC). • Liaise with the local authority’s Lead Officer on any physical support that may be required from local authority services and the local authority’s Critical Incident Team. These could be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health and Safety - Media and communications - Corporate Estates - Cleaning - Transport - Educational Psychology Services - Others. 		

A: Issues requiring immediate response by the school – the ‘Golden Hour’

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	D o n e o r N/ A
<p>3. Ensure that the school site is made safe for staff, learners and visitors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Secure the immediate safety of learners and staff - this may include evacuation or keeping learners and staff inside the building (sheltering) or implementing the school’s Lockdown Protocol. • Establish the location of all learners, staff, and visitors using timetables, registers, and the visitors’ book, and make a list of those unaccounted for. • Liaise with and provide access for emergency services as necessary. • Safely evacuate school building or parts thereof as necessary. Consider relocation to other premises or part of school. If partial evacuation, consider where staff or learners are to be accommodated or whether they need to go home in the first instance. Ensure that parents/carers do not take learners away without being directed to do so. • If a decision is taken to close the school, liaise with the Lead Officer who will contact the School Transport division and arrange for learners to be collected. • Open/close parts of school as required, and arrange to turn off water, gas, and electricity supplies if necessary. • Establish safe access and egress points to school building and key areas. • Liaise with Corporate Estates and Health and Safety support provided by the local authority as necessary. • Ensure that the Asbestos Log is available if required. • Ensure access to/availability of Fire/Intruder alarm system controls, location of hazardous substances/chemical stores. • Ensure security of school premises. • Consider a staff rota and ensure that staff take regular rest periods. • Make arrangements for reuniting learners with their parents/carers • Keep a record of staff/learners who have been allowed to leave site in case they need to be contacted later in the day. 		

A: Issues requiring immediate response by the school – the ‘Golden Hour’

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	D o n e o r N/ A
<p>4. Establish a base for CIMT to operate and agree on communications protocol.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CIMT to agree a statement to be provided to parents/carers and to be used for all incoming calls, which can be managed by properly briefed staff or via informative answer phone messages where not all school lines can be operated personally (e.g., after school hours). Support for this can be obtained from the local authority’s Media and Marketing Team who will be represented on the local authority’s own Critical Incident Team. • CIMT to agree a statement for teachers to read to learners. (see also points 6 and 7). • CIMT to brief personnel having direct links with public/media (factual brief statements only). (Discourage any speculative discussion; refer all press enquiries to local authority’s Media Team in the case of a serious incident). • Liaise with the local authority’s Media Team officer in relation to a press release. • Ensure dedicated telephone line(s) or mobile phones for outgoing and incoming calls are available (the use of mobile phones for outgoing calls will ensure incoming calls can be more readily received). • Ensure school reception is adequately staffed to deal with queries and calls from parents. • Action the ‘telephone cascade’ for staff and governors (where appropriate) to keep information flow fast and accurate. • Instruct staff not to speak directly to the media but to refer all enquiries to the Headteacher or other person designated as being responsible for contact with the media who must in turn seek advice from the local authority’s Media Team. Staff should not share or respond to any information relating to the incident on social media. 		

A: Issues requiring immediate response by the school – the ‘Golden Hour’

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	D o n e o r N/ A
<p>5. Contact families whose relatives (children and adults) are or may be involved</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Should be done quickly and with great sensitivity, preferably by a CIMT member – but remember it is the responsibility of the police liaison officer to inform next of kin in the event of a death. In event of a major incident the police may give advice regarding naming badly injured people or fatalities. • If any incident relates to the unexpected death of someone in the school or any other critical incident which may serve to cause considerable personal distress and have the potential to overwhelm usual coping responses, please ensure that the Head of the Educational Psychology Service, Robert Kempson - Robert.Kempson@rctcbc.gov.uk, is also included in the communication so that appropriate assistance from the Educational Psychology Service can be provided, as required. Please refer to Appendix 5 ‘Critical Incidents in Schools – Preparation and Planning’ which has been produced by the local authority’s Educational Psychology Service and Eye to Eye Counselling Service to support schools to prepare, plan and manage such incidents. • Consistency of information is essential, therefore use a CIMT agreed statement and the most up-to-date information from the contact adult on site. • Immediately inform parents/carers of any injured learners of what has happened and where their child is, recording what their plans are, e.g., to travel to their child, any assistance they need and any means of communications with them (e.g., mobile phone number). • If the incident is related to a school visit, parents should first hear of the incident from the school (or from the visit leader), not from hearsay or from the media. This may be difficult as students on the visit will have mobile phones and social media access. Information given must be limited until the facts are clear and all involved parents/next of kin are informed. Inform parents/carers of any other learners on the visit but not directly involved in the incident. • Try not to leave messages or use extended 		

A: Issues requiring immediate response by the school – the ‘Golden Hour’

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	Done or N/A
	<p>chains of communication.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a reception base for concerned relatives coming to the school. • Ensure this is staffed by people who can comfort and inform relatives. Maintain direct contact with this base. 		
<p>6. Prepare general information for all parents/staff/governors.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If you have concerns about issues of legal liability or the likelihood of police action, any further information should be checked and agreed with the local authority Lead Officer and Media Team who may need to consult with relevant agencies, before letters/emails are issued to the wider school community. • Information should be simple, factual, express sympathy, concern, and should indicate when further information may be provided. A sample template letter is provided in Appendix 6. • Ensure CIMT have a schedule to brief staff on a regular basis. • Ensure all staff (teaching and non-teaching) and governors are discouraged from speaking to the media. This responsibility should be referred to a named person in the team and/or the Media Team. 		
<p>7. Briefing learners</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Usually, best managed in class or smaller groups by adults best known to the learners. The agreed statement can then be delivered in a way which is appropriate to the group. • A large gathering can generate hysteria, which can become a management problem in itself. 		
<p>8. Briefing Media</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of the local authority Media Team will have been assigned to the local authority’s CIT and, under the direction of the Lead Officer, will be able to liaise swiftly to direct press/media interest away from the school and CIMT, to enable it to focus on internal response and support for the school community. • A member of the school CIMT should be identified to keep the local authority’s media representative well briefed at all times and especially as the situation evolves. <p>In developing your emergency/critical incident</p>		

A: Issues requiring immediate response by the school – the ‘Golden Hour’			
Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	Done or N/A
	management plan, you may wish to invite a member of the local authority’s Media Team into school to support any training sessions for CIMT members and provide coaching in dealing with the media. Once the initial response to the incident has been made, there is often a demand for a media statement direct from the school and the team can assist with relevant training and preparation.		

B: Issues that will need to be resolved as soon as possible				
Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	Done or N/A	
9. Ensure continuing support for needs of learners, staff and relatives of those involved in the incident is planned.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A member of CIMT should be identified as having responsibility for ensuring continuing support. • The local authority’s Lead Officer will have mobilised support from a range of agencies able to offer support and counselling to those immediately affected. These could include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Educational psychologists - Experienced counsellors - Social/Children’s Services personnel - Safeguarding professionals. <p>SLT will need to discuss likely continuing needs with relevant professional staff. Local religious communities may be able to contribute or take a lead in providing a longer-term focus for support.</p>			
10. Provide a focus for expression of sympathy and grief, if necessary.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The school may wish to place a table in the school foyer or a vase of flowers, with a book for tributes/ condolences. Sufficient space for items of remembrance may be helpful – the public and the school community may wish to place flowers or other tributes which can block fire exits or emergency service access points if not managed. • It may be more appropriate to negotiate a location away from school, e.g., church or public building. 			

B: Issues that will need to be resolved as soon as possible

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	Done or N/A
11. Provision of ongoing information.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In any statements to the press and letters/emails/ social media statements to the wider school community, the school should indicate when it expects to be able to give more information. Try to honour this even if the update is very limited. It will create tension or possibly aggravate recipients of your information if r timescales are not adhered to. • Clear all statements with the local authority Media Team and the police if necessary. 		
12. Acknowledge the consequences of the event on the school's community, their reactions, and feelings. Provide opportunities for learners and staff to express personal reactions (immediate and continuing need).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The incident may cause stress throughout the school. • Acknowledge openly that the incident may affect people (children and adults) emotionally in different ways and at different times. • Recognise that the behaviour, engagement and performance of children and adults may change. • Recognise that not all staff will feel able to support others. • Be aware of staff who are taking the brunt of supporting others, and ensure that they, too, receive support. • Learners should be encouraged to talk about their feelings in class, smaller groups, or individually, with active listening, ideally in their preferred language. • Some learners may show signs of needing support beyond the competence or confidence of school staff. Extended counselling should be identified (with parental permission). • Staff closely affected by the event should have opportunities for debriefing and counselling if they require it. • Staff responsible for managing the critical incident should be offered supervision and relief. • Some adults and children may need therapeutic help for an extended period after the event. 		
13. Further ongoing considerations.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The CIMT may need to consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attendance at a funeral. (It will not normally be appropriate to close the school – discuss with both the Chair of Governors and Director of Education and Inclusion Services). - Visit(s) of staff/children to hospital. - Expressions of sympathy and support to families affected. - An assembly or service to mark the event. - A memorial in the school or school grounds. It is advisable to consider this carefully and 		

B: Issues that will need to be resolved as soon as possible

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	Done or N/A
	ensure full consultation with all parties.		
14. Re-establishing normal routines.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Normal routines should be established as soon as possible as these provide security and stability at a time of stress and/or emotional upheaval. • Bear in mind the need to create time and space for thinking and grieving about the event. • Learners should be encouraged to resume normal attendance. • Learners who cannot attend school due to injury or distress may need other ways of maintaining contact with the school and school personnel. • Consider how/when personal effects of deceased learners should be sensitively removed/returned to parents/carers. 		
15. Stand down of critical incident.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The decision to stand down will be made by the head teacher in consultation with the local authority's Critical Incident Team's Lead Officer. Consideration will be given to the following: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Assessment of risk/development of situation. - When services return to essential levels. - When services return to previous (normal) levels. 		
16. Debrief.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Debriefing is an important part of the incident management process. All staff involved in responding to an incident will be debriefed after a disruption. This will normally be arranged by the headteacher in collaboration with the local authority's Lead Officer. The following principles should be discussed and noted: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The process should be open and honest and lessons learned should be identified and contribute to future planning. - Highlight what went well. - Discuss areas for improvement. - Discuss lessons identified. - Agree any changes to the emergency/critical incident management plan. - Update the school's emergency/critical incident management plan. 		

B: Issues that will need to be resolved as soon as possible

Action Point	Guidance Note	Action by	Done or N/A	

Initial Response, Ongoing Response, Recovery

Actions taken during the response to an emergency can have a direct impact on the recovery phase. When responding to an incident, staff should consider the long term implications of any decisions made.

Once the response to the incident has finished, all those who were initially notified of the incident should be informed and a recovery strategy should be initiated. This may involve remedial work to the property and support may be available from the Local Authority (LA). In addition, post incident support may need to be given to the pupils and LA assistance may be sought.

The recovery phase may last for a significant period of time and may involve reconstruction work, formal enquiries or police investigations. This will require the co-operation and support of school staff, pupils and parents/ carers.

General Advice (To be read in conjunction with Emergency Plan 2.2)

Immediate Actions to Safeguard Pupils and Staff

Unless lockdown procedures are initiated the first and most important action to take, is to ensure that everyone is removed from the area of potential danger.

Everyone should assemble in one place at the evacuation point of the site and the names of those present should be checked against the class register. The staff will also be checked against the Fire Register and Visitors Register.

Many of those involved will be extremely distressed, so reassurance will be needed.

CIMT must be informed of the issue if this hasn't already occurred.

No actions should be taken which will put staff or pupils in unnecessary danger. The responsibility for rescue rests with the Fire Service.

Summoning Assistance

The emergency services - Police, Fire and Ambulance must be summoned as quickly as possible. Whoever makes the call must ensure that they have the following information available

- **Which emergency services are required**
- **Nature of the incident**
- **Exact location of the incident**
- **Number of casualties (if possible) and the nature of the injuries**
- **Hazards which may be encountered by the emergency services at the site**
- **Location and telephone number where the call is being made from**

Informing Parents / Carers/Local Authority

In the event of a major incident, the Police will establish a casualty bureau where all calls for information will be directed. If there are no fatalities or injuries the Police may ask staff to advise

parents/carers of the situation/outcome. Where the incident is more serious and/or involves an investigation, the Police only will give advice.

The Media

The Police will usually coordinate the safety of the site, ensuring that rescue services carry out their work unhindered, whilst managing facilities that will enable the media to be provided with authoritative information and pictures. The Police will usually set up a media operation base at or near the site. However, the school must be prepared to make a contribution, in providing information, reflecting its involvement, interest and concern.

As soon as practical, the following action should be taken:

- Liaise with the emergency services and LA over setting up a media centre
- Equip the centre with a telephone
- Identify and brief an authorised spokesperson
- Anyone speaking to the press should demonstrate concern and NOT panic
- Any media contact should be dealt with via the Council Press Officer. The school should liaise with the press office for advice before responding to media questions or making statements
- All information to be given to the press must first be shared with the emergency services
- Agree the timing of the press conference/ releases

The school needs to cooperate effectively with the media to ensure that the key objectives of:

- Showing that it is controlling the incident and doing all it can to minimise the consequences
- Set minds at rest as far as possible and counteract false information
- To establish itself as caring, responsible and competent, are met.

These objectives can be met by being as co-operative as possible. Any information given to the Police or directly to the media must be controlled, authoritative and consistent.

Press Statement

The head teacher and or Governors may see a benefit in producing their own press statement as soon as possible. It is advisable that any communication with the media is made known to the Council's Press Office and advice on its suitability for release sought. When agreed all press statements should be on headed paper and contain the following information:

- Date, number and time of issue
- School contact telephone number, name and address
- Subject heading
- Basic facts as confirmed
- The number of an enquiry bureau for next of kin
- Either "more" or "end " should appear at the end of the page

In major incidents the Police will establish a central casualty bureau. In this case, only the bureau will issue information to the press on this aspect of the emergency.

Managing Critical Incidents - Summary

Task	Time Scale
Ensure learner and staff safety and contact necessary emergency support agencies	
Ensure the safety of learners and staff	Immediate
Obtain as much factual information as possible at start of crisis	Immediate
Alert Headteacher; Headteacher to alert the local authority	Immediate
Activate the Critical Incident Management Team and establish a base	Immediate
Start the Action Log	Immediate
Make arrangements for handling the media	Immediate
Carry out quick appreciation of immediate response required	Within first hour
Select and set up control arrangements	Within first hour
Call a staff meeting to give information	Within hours if practicable
Inform learners in a sensitive way – small groups if appropriate	Within hours if practicable
Arrange a debriefing meeting for staff involved in incident	Before leaving school
Arrange a debriefing for learners involved in the incident	Before leaving school

Even when the incident has ended, arrangements to return the school to normal could continue for some time.

	Time Scale
Facilitate support for vulnerable learners	Next few days, or longer
Funerals, rituals, and memorials	Next few days
Decide/agree a range of response and support measures. These have potential to run for many weeks/months	As soon as possible
Suggested reading and other resources	As soon as possible
Review and revise plans in light of experience	As soon as possible
Reflect on and evaluate response to incident. Complete Critical Incident Evaluation Form	Next few weeks

Appendices below are in collaboration with the appendices of the emergency plan.

1 – Post Incident Support

The effects of a traumatic event upon a school, such as the serious injury or death of a pupil, can be profound and have long term significant effects.

After an incident there will be a continuing need to support pupils, parents/ carers and staff. It is important to ensure appropriate monitoring procedures are in place so any individuals who require assistance can be identified and supported. This could include those who:

- Were injured
- Were uninjured but at great risk
- Witnessed the event

- Are related to those involved
- Are friends of those involved
- Blame themselves
- Are being blamed by others
- Have previously suffered bereavement or loss
- Have witnessed a similar incident before.

People involved in the incident, whether directly or indirectly will be affected in different ways. This could include:

- Sleep disturbance
- Recurrent dreams
- Disturbing images and memories of the event
- Impairment of memory
- Feelings of guilt
- Feelings of detachment
- Avoidance of activities which recall the event

Affected individuals may also experience renewed grief on the anniversary of the incident or on other significant dates.

Staff will play an important role in supporting pupils as they recover from an incident but they should not be expected to perform a counselling role. If counselling support is needed, advice will be sought from Eye to Eye Counselling and from Educational Psychology Service.

The Educational Psychology Service offers:

- Immediate support during the first few days following a major incident
- Advice to staff about how to help
- Advice to head teachers and governors on a school response both in the short and longer term
- Information on normal grief reactions and the bereavement process
- Short term counselling of individual pupils and staff for up to one month

- Support for staff who are supporting pupils
- Longer term counselling of pupils and staff for up to seven months
- Identification of pupils and adults most likely to be affected
- Advice on referral to other agencies

2 – Business Community

The aim of the Business Continuity Management is to ensure that critical services continue to be delivered during and after an incident.

Electronic Records

Electronic copies of records are backed up remotely by the LA.

3 – Site Information

Detailed information about the school site is important for the personnel involved in the response to an incident, particularly the emergency services.

Detailed maps of both sites are kept in the reception area at YTC and BYC.

4 – Evacuation

Evacuation, shelter and lockdown procedures are particularly important sections of the plan as they outline the initial actions that should be taken to safeguard pupils, and staff, from both external and internal hazards.

All staff must be aware of these procedures as warning signals may need to be triggered immediately, before advising others of the threat. In other situations, the emergency services may alert the school to a potential hazard.

The emergency services will advise on the best course of action regarding evacuating or needing shelter.

There are different signals for:

- Evacuation- fire or bomb threat (fire alarm)
- Shelter procedures- Code Blue
- Lockdown procedures- Code Red

The purpose of an evacuation is to move people away from danger to a safe place. This is likely to involve withdrawal from a hazard within a specific part of the school building but in some instances could require evacuation for the whole site.

If the entire site has to be evacuated, pupils and staff may need to move from an initial assembly point to alternative premises.

Contact the LA for advice regarding moving to a place of safety at alternative premises.

Telephone numbers of the nearest pharmacy are held just in case emergency medication is required.

The pupil's updated medical needs records are to be retrieved by the school nurse prior to leaving the building.

5 – Shelter

Some emergencies may require staff and pupils to shelter within the school; building. If this is an environmental hazard (such as a smoke plume) employees must ensure that all doors and windows are closed and ventilation/air circulation systems are switched off. A signal of Code Blue will be activated on teams. ~~These classes with no access to the tannoy will be contacted by telephone~~

All staff will have an important role to play in reassuring pupils and alleviating concerns which parents/ carers may have.

Depending on the nature of the incident it can be difficult for the emergency services to provide an accurate estimation of how long it will be necessary to shelter for. Every effort should be made to enable pupils to return home but only as long as it is safe to do so.

In very rare cases pupils and staff may become stranded at school. Pupils with medical needs would be assessed by the school nurse if they were to remain at school for an extended period of time or even in extreme circumstances may need to shelter overnight.

6- Lockdown

The purpose of a lockdown is to prevent an intruder from causing harm to pupils and staff. Entrances to the school must be secured in an effort to prevent the intruder from entering the premises and staff and pupils must find a suitable place to protect themselves.

In the incident of a lockdown, all doors are electronically secure, preventing access. Staff and pupils are to move away from windows and doors which lead onto the front part or any other external part of the school. If there are blinds/ curtains these should be closed.

The signal for a lockdown is clearly distinguishable from that of an evacuation and will be signalled as a Code Red over teams ~~the tannoy or loudhailer. Classes will also be telephoned as this is the most efficient way to communicate. The Post 16 department at the Tonteg site would be telephoned to ensure they comply with the signal and staff who are in the sensory garden will be telephoned.~~

Staff who are on school educational visits or in college will be telephoned/ **teams message** to ensure they know not to return to the site until they have been given further notice.

If pupils are outside when the signal for lockdown is sounded, staff will take pupils to the nearest building or part of the school which is secure.

During a lockdown it is important to keep in communication – ~~class phones may be used or~~ teams or email/ mobile/ sms message if it is safe to do so.

Although it is very unlikely that the school will ever need to implement a real lockdown, it is essential for staff to remain calm and reassure the pupils in order to reduce widespread confusion and panic.

7- Closing the School

Schools are expected to remain open in all but the most extreme circumstances as disruption to the school routine can have a detrimental effect on pupils' education. The decision to close the school will be taken by the Headteacher in collaboration with the Chair of Governors. In this event, the head teacher will inform the LA.

Occasionally the LA may also recommend this course of action.

Parents and carers will be notified of the school closure at the earliest opportunity- through Parent-mail and the website.

In some instances, it may be possible for the school to remain partially operational.

8- Communications

If there is an emergency the answer phone message will be updated regularly with information for parents.

Parents/ carers of pupils or emergency contacts for staff, who have been directly affected by the incident will be telephoned, particularly if there has been an injury.

A log of communications must also be maintained.

9 -Bomb Threats

Although bomb threats usually turn out to be hoaxes, they must always be taken seriously. All staff need to be aware of the actions to take if they receive a call from someone claiming to have information about a bomb and the procedure to be followed can be found in Appendix 9 of the Emergency Plan.

Bomb threats can come from a variety of sources, from people known to the school or strangers. A threat is more likely to be real if:

- A code word is used that is known to the police
- The police are aware of potential terrorist activity in the area
- The threat is specific rather than general
- The threat is credible

The threat level indicating the likelihood of a terrorist attack in the UK is currently rated as substantial (April 2024). This means an attack is likely. Staff have received training regarding the PREVENT agenda and are aware of the threat level. Prevent training is mandatory at the school. It is referred to in the safeguarding Level 1 training which is delivered annually.

Training is also found on Supporting People Vulnerable to Radicalisation Service <https://www.support-people-vulnerable-to-radicalisation.service.gov.uk/portal#awareness-course>. There are three parts to this training, all staff receive the training on Prevent, staff trained at Level 3 have training on referrals.

Whilst staff will not assess the accuracy or validity of a threat, employees will record as much detail as possible in order to provide information to the police.

Even if the call is a hoax, it must be reported to police as it is a crime. Follow police advice regarding evacuation following a bomb hoax and be aware about using the tannoy or mobile phone.

10 –Suspicious Packages

In most cases a suspicious package turns out to be a hoax or a genuine mistake. Nevertheless, all appropriate precautions must be taken if such a package is received. Any members of staff who handle school post are aware of procedures relating to suspicious packages and will follow Appendix 10 of the Emergency Plan.

11 –Log Keeping Guidelines

In an emergency, events can occur very rapidly and it is vital to keep an accurate record of events.

Whenever an emergency response is required, an incident log will be maintained. Within this log, staff will record decisions made, actions taken, significant conversations and any other information which may be required.

Any emergency affecting the school may become the subject of a detailed enquiry, therefore accurate written records must be kept and no piece of information related to the response mislaid. Information related to the incident must be copied, retained and archived for future reference. In addition, records of expenditure relating to the response must be kept.

Training and Exercise

It is important that staff and governors are aware of the emergency plan and their roles when responding to an incident.

Training events are held which provide an opportunity for staff to become aware of emergency procedures and discuss any queries or concerns they may have.

Members of the Critical Incident Management Team will be provided with more specific training and exercises.

The purpose of an exercise is to validate procedures documented within an emergency plan. Although they cannot fully replicate the pressure of a real incident, exercise can help to reinforce training, give confidence to staff that they have the necessary knowledge and skills to respond to an emergency.

Exercises may involve discussion-based exercises such as how the school would respond to a particular scenario. Staff will be provided the opportunity to talk about their roles and discuss what actions the school would take if an incident were to occur. This would develop greater awareness of the plan.

In addition to this members of the CIMT may take part in table top exercises, where a simulation of response to an incident is given.

Following the exercise, there must be a debriefing. This may result in the Emergency Plan being reviewed or extra training being given.

Reviewing the Plan

The plan needs to be reviewed annually, particularly with respect to ensuring accuracy regarding personnel and telephone numbers.

Health and Safety

The school follows the recommendations detailed in the Local Authority's Health and Safety Policy.

Any specific issues relating to Health and Safety must be brought to the attention of the Head teacher and the Health and Safety Officer.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding of pupils is given paramount importance. The school understands its duty to keep learners safe and adheres to the PREVENT agenda and broader safeguarding guidelines.

Staff Development

Staff will have access to in-service training as and when appropriate. This is in accordance with the school's policy for staff development.

The Role of the Head teacher

- To monitor Evolve risk assessments
- To discuss future developments for managing health and safety within the workplace
- To hold CIMT team meetings to discuss the policy
- To ensure budget provision for resources and materials
- To ensure budget provision for staff training.

Links to Other Policies and Guidance

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Safeguarding Policy
- Strategic Equality Plan
- Positive Behaviour Management Policy
- Online Safety Policy
- ESTYN Safeguarding Self-Assessment
- School Emergency Plan
- Visitors and External Speakers Policy
- Cwmtaf Safeguarding Board Immediate Response Protocol
- Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014

- Respect and resilience – developing community cohesion Self-Assessment Tool 2016 Welsh Government document (appended with this policy)
- Management of Health and Safety in the Workplace
- RCT Education and Inclusion Services Emergency/Critical Incident Planning and Response Guidance for schools and PRUS

Critical Incident Response Procedure (jointly developed by the Educational Psychology Service and the Eye to Eye Counselling Service).

2.1 The checklist for managing critical incidents

The checklist (Appendix 1) for managing critical incidents has been jointly developed by the Educational Psychology Service and the Eye to Eye Counselling Service.

Staff from both these Services have received specialist training in this area and are experienced in responding to schools and other services in the event of a critical incident. The checklist has been developed in light of the training and experience of both teams.

2.2 Preparation with school staff

Preparing how an organisation will react to and cope with a critical incident (sometimes referred to as 'crisis management') is extremely important.

As critical incidents happen suddenly and without warning, those involved usually experience shock when they occur. This shock, together with the emotional turmoil that may follow, can make it difficult to think clearly and logically at the time of the incident.

In order to ensure that all school staff act quickly and appropriately in the event of a critical incident, it is very important that individuals are well prepared for how they should respond. This preparation should include training and discussion based on the use of the checklist (Appendix 1).

The experience of schools who have been involved with critical incidents show that those who have made preliminary plans are able to act promptly and cope more effectively with the traumatic consequences of a critical incident.

Schools are advised to contact the Educational Psychology Service, who are able to offer training to staff in this area. Eye to Eye counsellors can also clarify their role to staff in schools.

2.3 Establishing a critical incident response team within school

No one person within a school should be expected to manage every aspect of a critical incident. In order to share the responsibility amongst staff, schools are advised to create a critical incident response team. This team will not necessarily comprise all of the senior management team within the school and could include representatives of the wider school community such as administrative staff or the caretaker.

The team may need to vary in size, depending on the nature of the incident. It will therefore be useful to have several staff members trained in managing a critical incident. It is suggested that the designated school counsellor be part of the critical incident team.

Inclusion in the team should be on a voluntary basis, as not all staff will feel comfortable in responding to a critical incident. For example, an individual may be feeling emotionally vulnerable at the time of a critical incident due to events in their own personal life.

On a day to day basis, the head teacher will act as leader of the critical incident response team. However, in the event of a critical incident occurring, the head teacher may wish to stand down and appoint an alternative team leader. ***The leader is not appointed until the incident has occurred, as until this time it is impossible to predict who would be available or who would be most appropriate in leading the team.***

The head teacher should call a meeting of the team at least twice a year to update names, contact numbers and procedures on the checklist. More frequent meetings for planning and staff training purposes will also be necessary.

Whilst it is expected that the school's Critical Incident Team will take the lead in coordinating the school's response following a critical incident, all school staff should be prepared to assist the team as much as they are able, when an incident occurs.



2.4 Using the checklist (Appendix 1) in the event of a critical incident

At times of crisis, emotions may be running high. It is therefore important that the checklist is easily accessible. Following the checklist step by step will help to ensure necessary actions are carried out. Ideally the checklist should be accessible to all school staff, for example, pinned to staff room notice boards. **All** staff should be made aware of the purpose and function of the checklist, regardless of whether or not they are a member of the critical incident response team.

2.4.1 Phase 1 - Immediate Action

The points in this section refer to each of the steps outlined on Phase 1 of the checklist (Appendix 1). They need to be carried out as soon as it is established that a critical incident has occurred. Ideally, the actions should be carried out by the identified members of the school's critical incident response team, as they will have prepared their responses in advance. However, the first few points may need to be carried out by the person who is first on the scene or who is first made aware of the incident.

1: Ensure safety of pupils and staff

Those first aware of the incident should ensure that all pupils and staff in the vicinity are removed from any immediate danger.

2: Assess situation and note known key facts of incident

Important factual information detailing what has happened, and to whom, will need to be noted.

: Contact emergency services as appropriate (Tel: 999)

The information recorded in 2 above should be reported to the appropriate emergency services if necessary. The police will convene an Immediate Response Group Meeting (an IRG), see point 7, if appropriate, to which school staff will be invited.

4: Inform head teacher and critical incident response team

Having dealt with the immediate risks, the head teacher needs to be informed of the facts of the incident, and help sought from the school's critical incident response team, including the school counsellor. A team leader needs to be appointed at this stage.

5: Ensure you have a dedicated emergency telephone number (NOT main school number) on which you can be contacted

The team leader ensures that there is a dedicated emergency telephone number on which the critical incident response team can be contacted. This number should only be given to the emergency services, other members of the critical incident response team and personnel working alongside the team, for example, council officers. It is important that this number is not the main school telephone number, as this tends to become jammed quickly with people ringing in to find out what has occurred.

6: Telephone RCT on 01443 744333 (08.00 – 17.00)

A member of the school's critical incident response team ensures that the following information is reported:

- *their name and designation;*
- *name, address and telephone number of school;*
- *name of head teacher and/or lead in critical incident team;*
- *a dedicated emergency telephone number;*
- *known facts relating to the incident; and*
- *whether assistance is required from council officers e.g. media officer, Educational Psychology Service.*

7: Liaise with Police, Local Safeguarding Board and Educational Psychology Service in respect of the necessity or an Immediate Response Group (IRG) being convened

- If the critical incident concerns the sudden/unexpected death of a child, the Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths in Childhood (PRUDIC) will be invoked. This will involve police and safeguarding teams from both Children's Services and the local health board.
- If the critical incident concerns the death of a child/young person under the age of 25 and is suspected to be a suicide, then an Immediate Response Group (IRG) will be convened by the police.
 - The group consists of representatives from the police, Safeguarding Board, Children's Services, Health Board (Safeguarding Team) and also representatives from the Educational Psychology Service, Eye to Eye Counselling Service and Youth Service. If the child or young person is of school age, then representatives from the child's school will be required to attend.

- If the critical incident is linked to an incident or series of incidents that may potentially impact on the wider community or requires multi-agency coordination to manage threat, risk and harm, then an IRG will be called under the Partnership Protocol for the Immediate Response to Critical Incidents Involving Children and young People and may involve representatives from a wider group of agencies to those listed above.
- Following the IRG meeting, schools will be offered assistance from the Educational Psychology Service and Eye to Eye Counselling Service in order to identify vulnerable staff and pupils who will need additional or ongoing support, either through their own pastoral system, or who require more specialist counselling intervention. Staff will be assisted to be alert to the signs and symptoms of distress.

2.4.2 Phase 2 - Short-term Action

The points in this section refer to each of the steps outlined on Phase 2 of the checklist. They need to be carried out before the end of the day on which the incident occurred. The critical incident response team should co-ordinate these actions, although other members of the school staff could be enlisted to help.

1: Identify vulnerable staff and pupils and offer support

Following a critical incident, a number of people are likely to require support. It is difficult to predict how individuals will react in a critical incident. However, those most vulnerable are usually:

- individuals who have been directly affected;
- individuals who are emotionally involved with those directly affected (e.g. parents, siblings, friends, boyfriend / girlfriend); and/or
- those who have recently experienced difficulty or trauma in their lives and may already be emotionally vulnerable.

In order to identify effectively those who are vulnerable and to organise and deliver appropriate support, assistance may need to be sought from agencies such as the Educational Psychology Service and Eye to Eye Counselling Service.

2: Contact families of identified vulnerable staff and pupils

The staff and pupils identified as most vulnerable are likely to require immediate support. Their families will need to be informed of the main facts of the incident, why the individual has been identified as vulnerable and how he or she is currently being supported in school.

3: Record names of individuals who have been allowed to leave site

It is necessary to keep a record of the whereabouts of all staff and pupils, as it may be vital to contact individuals at a later point in the day if new information arises.

4: Plan arrangements for the rest of day in liaison with key staff, council officers and support services

The critical incident response team will need to plan arrangements for the rest of the day, for example, how factual information will be shared with the rest of the school community, what

support will be available for other pupils and staff, whether or not it is appropriate for the school to remain open. Strategies for coping with media presence need to be confirmed.

5: Report known facts of incident to staff and pupils

All staff and pupils will need to be given succinct, factual information in order to prevent rumours from escalating. It may be helpful for the critical incident response team to **prepare a statement** that can be given to teachers which can then be read to pupils, in order to ensure there is consistency in the information given (an example of a possible script to use for an Assembly is included in Appendix 2).

6: Decide arrangements for the following day and the days ahead

It will be important to restore a feeling of continuity in the school as soon as possible, as this is comforting and reassuring for all. Consideration will need to be given as to how ongoing support will be provided for those in need. Plans will also have to be made with regard to the general organisation of the school.

7: Report known facts to parents / carers via letter or meeting as appropriate

Factual information regarding the incident and plans for forthcoming days will need to be communicated to parents /carers of all pupils before the end of the day. It may be useful to write a letter that can be sent home with pupils or to call a meeting that selected/affected parents / carers can attend (an example of a sample letter to parents/carers is included in Appendix 3).

8: After school, meet with all staff for debriefing and to share key information and arrangements with staff for the days ahead.

Details of the plans made by the critical incident response team will need to be shared with all school staff at the end of the working day.



2.5 Organisation of staff and pupils

All staff and pupils need to be removed from any immediate danger and kept safe, warm and together. Where practical, pupils should be gathered in familiar groups such as their class

The critical incident response team will need to prepare a statement of fact as soon as possible. Many details may not be clear or available at this point. However, it is important to focus on the known facts rather than speculation. This statement should then be circulated to class or groups to ensure that all staff and pupils are given the same information. Arrangements for the hours ahead will also need to be confirmed at this stage.

Pupils will need to be told simply and factually what has happened in a calm and reassuring way that takes account of their age. They will also need to be told what will happen next, which may depend on the nature of the incident. In some incidents it may be practical for the pupils to stay on site, whereas in other incidents it will be more appropriate for arrangements to be made for pupils to return home. This will need to be considered carefully as normal transport arrangements

may not be possible. Pupils will need to be told what to expect the following day, for example, whether or not school will be open.

At the end of the day, it will be very important for all staff to meet with the school's critical incident response team to discuss the events of the day. The meeting will provide an opportunity to recap on the known facts about the incident, how the day has developed and the plans for the days ahead.

It may be useful for all staff members to be given a contact number on which they can speak to a member of the school's critical incident response team during the evening if necessary.

2.6 Managing the media

In the event of a critical incident, the press will want to speak to those affected and some of those affected may wish to speak to the press. The wishes of those involved should be respected. However, there are officers employed by both the Local Authority and South Wales Police who are trained in managing the media. Following a critical incident, their advice and assistance **must** be sought before any information is passed to the press (Press Office, RCT, Tel: 01443 424007).

School staff are NOT advised to speak directly to the press following a critical incident. They are advised to direct all enquiries from the media to the Local Authority Press Officer. This should be made explicit to all frontline administration staff, particularly the School Secretary, who may be the first point of contact.

The council press officer will aim to co-operate effectively with the media in providing factual information. In some circumstances, the police may assume this responsibility.

2.7 Dealing with parents and members of the local community

Rumours are quick to spread following critical incidents and it is therefore important that, once the immediate family of those involved have been informed, factual information is given to all parents and interested members of the local community.

It is recommended that a statement be prepared and overseen by the head teacher and the critical incident response team. This statement should then be outlined to parents and local community members either in the form of a letter or in a meeting (please see Appendix A3 for an example letter). Depending on the size and nature of the incident, school staff may require support in this from council officers.

This statement should provide a brief outline of the incident, omitting any personal details of those involved and then focus upon organisational issues. For example, parents will need to be made aware of details such as whether the school remains open and if the normal time timetable is to be resumed.

All other enquiries should be directed to a central spokesperson, either the head teacher or the leader of the critical incident response team, in order to ensure that the same concise, factual information is given to all.



Chapter 3: Supporting those in need

3.1 Typical responses to a critical incident

Critical incidents happen unexpectedly



They break our expectations of continuity and confront us with uncertainty. In other words they destroy our understanding of what will happen tomorrow, next week or next year and as a consequence (at least temporarily) completely change our lives.

Individuals who are exposed directly to a critical incident may experience a wide range of thoughts and emotions including:

- an initial psychological numbing (thought to be the mind's way of coping with extreme trauma and stress);
- feelings of helplessness;
- guilt and blame;
- rejection of, or lack of faith in, help and support from others; and/or
- imprint (strong memories) of sounds, sights, smells that have been witnessed.

It is important to understand that these are common reactions to abnormal / unusual situations.



3.2 Identifying staff and pupils who may be affected by critical incidents

Research (Shacham & Niv, 2005) suggests that when a critical incident occurs typically:

- 10% of people will **breakdown** and be unable to help themselves, displaying very poor coping strategies. These people will require the greatest support;
- 20% of people will **cope well** and be able to do whatever is needed. These people can be used to help others; and
- 70% will be **temporarily bewildered and helpless**. These people are usually willing to listen, cooperate and follow instructions.

It is necessary to identify which members of the school community, staff or pupils fall into which category. This will ensure that those who are vulnerable can be offered appropriate support and those who are capable can be used to support others.

3.2.1 Circles of Vulnerability (Lahad, et al, 2013)

Schools may request assistance from the Educational Psychology Service, which has staff members trained to identify which individuals are likely to be most vulnerable; this is called a Circles of Vulnerability meeting. Such a meeting is most effective where staff members who know the pupils/staff involved are part of the meeting. In addition, the school's Eye to Eye counsellor, the pastoral team and any other professional who support the school with pupil and staff wellbeing should also be included.

Unfortunately, it is not possible to predict how people will react in advance as it is likely that people may find themselves reacting differently depending on the nature of the incident. However, usually those who are most likely to need support are individuals who:

- had direct exposure to or were nearest the incident when it occurred;
- are the family, close friend or are in a relationship with the persons directly involved; and/or
- have had a recent similar trauma or loss occur in their lives.

The completion of a Circles of Vulnerability meeting enables staff from the Educational Psychology Service to group pupils or staff members who have similar experiences, and offer Group Coaching and Coping (GCC) sessions. Parent/carer consent is necessary for pupils to be included within GCC.



3.2.2 Group Coaching and Coping (GCC)

The Circles of Vulnerability meeting highlights individuals/groups who would benefit from different types of intervention and support. The results of the GCC approach have shown a highly significant reduction in later post traumatic stress responses. Each group includes similarly affected individuals and is led by two Educational Psychologists. Pupils, and their parents/carers, consent to being a part of GCC. The GCC process involves allowing children and young people to discuss their reactions to the event which helps individuals to realise that their reactions are common reactions to unusual events. Individuals are encouraged to talk about their coping strategies and the next steps/future.

3.2.3 The role of the Eye to Eye Counselling Service

As soon as Eye to Eye are contacted by the school a response team is identified and will arrive at the school as soon as possible. The counsellors will require an accurate briefing from a senior member of staff before they commence any support. The counsellors will set up a support area, attend briefing assemblies and liaise with school staff. The lead counsellor and school counsellor will attend the circles of vulnerability meeting whilst other counsellors continue to support the school community. In addition to working with pupils who 'self-refer,' Eye to Eye are able to work with individuals who would not necessarily benefit or want GCC but who have been identified as vulnerable via the Circles of Vulnerability meeting; Pupils do not require parental consent to receive support from Eye to Eye staff.



3.3 What teachers can do.

If the critical incident concerns a death then please refer to the document 'A Guide to Dealing with Bereavement in Schools' developed by the Educational Psychology Service and Eye to Eye Counselling Service. As well as information about loss and bereavement, this document provides a useful insight into how children and young people understand death and grief reactions.

3.3.1 Providing safety, security and support

Normal routines provide security and stability at a time of stress and/or emotional upheaval. Children and young people often look to teachers as role models of how to deal with crisis. Be aware of the need to create time and space for thinking about and grieving about the event. In addition, the behaviour, concentration and performance of the pupils (and adults) may change. Teachers can support pupils by:

- providing opportunities to talk about the incident and share thoughts and feelings;
- providing the facts of the event. This will help to dispel rumours that may occur when

pupils who do not know the full story, attempt to piece together information (often inaccurately) for themselves;

- discussing the appropriate use of social media, and
- being aware of support mechanisms available in the school and that some pupils may need additional support which is beyond staff competence and confidence.

3.3.2 Providing classroom activities that facilitate coping

Individuals cope with events in different ways. One way to support effectively can be to help children (and adults) think how they have been coping with the thoughts and feelings since the event happened, and how they have coped with difficult situations in the past. It is thought that people cope with difficult situations in the following ways:

- B – beliefs. Some people will turn to their belief system to help them understand and process the event. Thus, it would be helpful if there is the opportunity to write prayers/thoughts, talk about beliefs and if in a faith school, there may be the opportunity for religious worship.
- A – affect. Some people will express themselves emotionally, for example, becoming angry or tearful. There should be the recognition that these feelings are common reactions to grief and may change over time. There should be a variety of avenues for expression such as, talking about thoughts or feelings, singing, dancing, sports etc.
- S – social. Some people will turn to each other at times of challenge and find comfort through being with others. Opportunities to work collaboratively, activities involving team work etc will support this need.
- I – imagination. Other people may find their coping strategies through their imagination, for example, art, music, writing stories, drama etc.
- C – cognitive. Some people find it helpful to think through the event in order to process the information; it will be important that factual information is provided for these individuals.
- Ph – physical. Other people cope by engaging in physical activities, such as sports.

The main emphasis on activities should be to elicit the pupils' coping strategies so that they can utilise them to support themselves through the difficult time.

Further ideas for classroom activities are outlined in section 3.4.2.



3.3 Identifying children who may need more help later

Some children and young people may experience ongoing symptoms of trauma following a critical incident. There are three main groups of symptoms associated with post-traumatic stress. These include where:

- the traumatic event is persistently re-experienced in thoughts, dreams or flashbacks where the individual thinks it is all happening again;
- there is persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the trauma, or there is a numbing of general responsiveness; and
- there are signs of increased physiological arousal such as disturbed sleep and poor concentration.

Post traumatic stress reaction

Most people, both adults and children, suffer some post-traumatic stress reaction after a disturbing incident. For example, sleep disturbance, nightmares, feelings of anxiety, intrusive memories of the incident, irritability and upset stomach. Other symptoms may include an unwillingness/inability to talk about the event to friends and family, guilt at surviving or not helping others enough, heightened alertness to danger and general fearfulness, panic attacks, grief, distress and depression.

Younger children may show regressive behaviour, such as clinging to parents, wetting the bed, becoming aggressive and destructive, becoming involved in repetitive play or drawing pictures repeatedly on themes relating to the incident.

The symptoms themselves can be frightening and distressing. However, the symptoms are usually short-lived, lasting from a few days to a few weeks; in the majority of people affected, they gradually reduce in intensity and gradually disappear.

Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

A few people, both adults and children, go on to develop post-traumatic stress disorder, which can last a few months or in some cases become severe and long term. PTSD is usually diagnosed if the symptoms of post traumatic stress reaction remain intense and last for more than a month after the incident. Support should be sought from counselling services, GP's and mental health teams (child and adolescent/adult) if PTSD seems to be developing.

The right kind of support after an incident can reduce the distress associated with the commonly occurring post traumatic stress reaction and the much rarer PTSD. Adults and children who seem to cope well in the initial aftermath of a crisis may go on to develop an emotional reaction some time after the event. Staff and pupil wellbeing therefore needs to be monitored over time. Ongoing support, advice and information will be available from the school counsellor and Eye to Eye counselling service.

3.3.3 Helpful / unhelpful language to use with children

It is important to use language with pupils that is factual and does not offer ambiguity; adults often try to hide death to protect children and will use language to 'soften' the experience for children. However, using language such as 'passed away', 'gone to sleep', or 'gone away' can leave children uncertain and potentially afraid. For example, children may think that if they go to sleep then they too will die etc. It is therefore important to be clear and concise with the language used. For example, say 'X has died'. Be careful with the term 'suicide' as even if the cause of death is suspected suicide, this cannot be concluded until the coroner has completed their report as to the cause of death.



3.4 After the event

3.4.1 Return to school: pupils and staff

The main aim is to return the school to normal functioning as soon as possible. Routines provide security and stability at a time of stress and/or emotional upheaval. Pupils should be encouraged to resume regular attendance. Those who are unable to attend due to distress or illness may need other ways of maintaining contact with school. Liaise with the school counsellor as it is possible for students to be seen in the community.

3.4.2 Formal and informal recognition (remembrance)

After a death we can be left with a strong urge 'to do something' which marks the significance of the death and which states its importance to us. For family members this is usually the funeral or a ceremony of some other sort. It is not always appropriate or possible for school children to attend these occasions though, so facilitating something within the school context is very important. However, discussion with the family of the deceased is advisable if an event or permanent mark in the school is to be created. Some ideas include:

- creating a memory box or book. Invite pupils to write a memory in the book about the person who has died, or place an object that means something about the person who has died in the box. The book/box could then be presented to the family of the person who has died;
- plant a tree in memory of the person (although it is important to recognise that trees need care and can die or be cut down which could cause distress in the future);
- create a plaque or wall display to celebrate their life;
- if the pupil was sporty, name a cup after them and hold an annual sports tournament to win the trophy or present it to the most improved sportsperson of the year;
- did they like singing? Hold a cabaret event in their honour;
- invite pupils to write poems, songs and letters to or about the person that has died;
- hold a balloon release event where pupils attach a message to helium filled balloons and release them together;
- hold a minute's silence;
- ask the school canteen staff to serve the person's favourite meal one day; and
- if the person died of an illness, raise funds to support an appropriate charity that works with sufferers of the illness.

Honouring the Space in the Classroom

In the event of the death of a pupil there will often be a physical space left in the classroom. This space should be acknowledged and staff will need to decide how to manage it in a sensitive manner.

In addition the Eye to Eye school counsellor has experience and training in this area and it is suggested they are included in any organised events as they will be able to identify and support the pupils according to their individual need and advise staff on emotional support required.

NB: In the event of a suspected suicide, the creation of a permanent plaque would not be advisable due to the messages this may communicate to the children and young people.

Chapter 4: Resource and training implications

4.1 Resource Implications

4.1.1 Prior to a critical incident

Schools will need to identify a critical incident response team of a minimum of 3 named staff (please see section 2.3 for details).

These staff will need to be released for a full day of initial training, as well as follow-up training sessions.

4.1.2 In the aftermath of a critical incident

Schools will need to provide meeting rooms for agency planning (with staff from the Educational Psychology Service, Eye to Eye Counsellors and Services for Children and Young People) and rooms in which to run the GCC interventions and Eye to Eye support

The GCC rooms will require a clipboard or whiteboard and pens, tissues, water and Post It notes.

A break out area is useful.

Eye to Eye will need a large room and at least two small rooms or offices to support pupils and carry out small group and individual work (see Appendix 7)

4.2 Training Implications

The Educational Psychology Service can provide a full day of initial training for critical incident response teams, as well as half yearly follow-up sessions.

REFERENCES

Lahad, M., Schacham, M. & Ayalon, O. (Eds.) (2013). *The “Basic Ph” Model of Coping and Resiliency: Theory, Research and Cross-cultural Application*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers.

Rosenfeld, L., Caye, J., Ayalon, O. & Lahad, M. (2005). *When Their World Falls Apart: Helping Families and Children Manage the Effects of Disasters*. Washington DC: NASW Press.

Schacham, M & Niv, S, (2005) from a presentation by S. Niv in Prague 2010. Further information available from www.espct.eu

RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

EDUCATIONAL PSYCHOLOGY SERVICE

In the event of a critical incident, should you wish to contact the Educational Psychology Service you should telephone one of the following numbers for assistance:

Educational Psychology Service

Rhondda Cynon Taf Tel: 01443 744333

Be prepared to provide the following information when you telephone:

- Your name and designation
- Your school
- A dedicated emergency telephone number (NOT the main school telephone number) on which you can be contacted
- Known facts relating to the incident

In the event of a critical incident schools should avoid dealing with the media directly. Schools are reminded that it is the responsibility of the Rhondda Cynon Taf press officer to liaise with all media interest at such times. In some instances the Police may decide to use their own press office to liaise and coordinate information.

Media and Press offices

Rhondda Cynon Taff: 01443 424007

Eye to Eye Counselling Service

01443 202940

info@eyetoeye.wales

Please telephone the number above for critical incident support

Checklist for dealing with Emergencies and Critical Incidents

Phase 1 - Immediate action		
Action	Persons Responsible	Completed?
1. Ensure safety of pupils and staff.		
2. Assess situation and record briefly key known facts of incident.		
3. Contact emergency services as appropriate. (Telephone: 999)		
4. Inform head teacher, school critical incident response team and school counsellor.		
5. Ensure you have a dedicated emergency telephone number (NOT main school number) on which you can be contacted.		
6. Telephone RCT Tel: 01443 744333 (08.30 – 17.00) or Eye to Eye Counselling Service Tel: 01443 202940 and give: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Your name and designation ● Name, address and telephone number of school, name of head teacher or person co-ordinating critical incident team ● A dedicated emergency telephone number ● Known facts relating to the incident ● Whether assistance is required from council officers e.g. Emergency Planning Department, media officer, Educational Psychology Service 		