

Preparation of critical incidents or tragic events: Supporting staff and children

For what age?	At what level?
All Key Stages	All levels

Why is preparation for Critical Incidents important for children and young people?

Critical incidents or tragic events happen when we least expect them and sometimes when we are least prepared. The routine of the school can immediately be disrupted. Staff and children/young people can emotionally be thrown into turmoil by the immediate impact of an incident. Staff within the school are expected to respond quickly and sensitively in order to ensure the safety of everyone in the school. Information needs to be contained and effective communication strategies need to be in place. You may be the part of the key management of the incident or you may be supporting your class of children, but whatever your role, you need to cope as best you can with your own reactions and difficult feelings as well as those of the staff or children/young people in your care. To be prepared for such an event in your school ensures you can make the best decisions quickly and have resources and tools available.

How does effective preparation for critical incidents support staff and children?

Experiencing or witnessing traumatic events or receiving shocking and disturbing news can affect us emotionally, physiologically, behaviourally and cognitively. Understanding common responses and reactions to trauma helps those in leadership and caring roles to identify with and acknowledge the range of presenting symptoms and then to make appropriate plans to support those in their care. Mental rehearsal of possible scenarios helps to ensure rapid and effective organisational decisions are made which contain as much as possible the disruption of school routines. Application of research informed principles of support to reduce stress and anxiety can form the basis of a range of approaches to supporting individuals or groups within the school.

How can schools help?

- Having a better understanding of the effects of trauma on adults and children/young people.
- Being better prepared in the event of a critical incident in order to plan and organise effectively and calmly.
- Being able to support staff and children and young people in coping as well as possible with the effects of experiencing, witnessing or hearing of critical incidents, tragic news or emotionally disturbing events.

What do children say and think?

Why has this happened?

It wouldn't have happened if I was there.

Why am I feeling like this?

Will these feelings go away?

How can I access training?

To access centralised training in Critical Incidents, including at the TaMHS Conference if appropriate, please visit: [LGSS I Learn booking website](#)

Training at your school, or within clusters, for your staff can be commissioned from the Educational Psychology Service by contacting the TaMHS Administrator:

tamhs@childrenfirstnorthamptonshire.co.uk or by speaking to your Link Educational Psychologist

Useful resources

- [NCC Critical Incident webpage](#)