

## **Mental health and emotional wellbeing for children and young people Information and resources to support schools during the Covid-19 pandemic**

The Coronavirus pandemic is affecting all of us in our personal and our working lives. People are having to live with uncertainty and worry, and face the possibility of personally distressing times ahead. Children, young people and their families may be feeling confused and upset, while school staff will of course be affected too.

This will undoubtedly impact on the vital role school staff and parent/ carers routinely play in supporting children and young people's wellbeing, not least by offering structure and routine. It is of course even more difficult for school staff to guide and support those pupils who are no longer attending schools whilst stringent social distancing is in place. Many pupils will be saddened by leaving their class or school for the last time without the expected celebrations and farewell as will their teachers who will undoubtedly worry about some of the vulnerable children who have been in their care.

School staff will already be offering continued support and interventions in the best way that they can. This letter is to let you know that Babcock LDP is working with Devon County Council to ensure that there continue to be clear systems in place for accessing additional help with teachers' and pupils' emotional wellbeing.

This includes access to online resources, and to telephone support during term time and school holiday periods.

The Babcock LDP website carries a growing range of recommended resources to support you with topics such as:

- How to explain the coronavirus to children, including those with special educational needs
- How to support children and young people's mental health and emotional wellbeing during these exceptional times
- Ideas for home based learning and importantly, play activities for parents/carers to do with their children during school closures.

We hope that you will share the link with local families, and consider printing and sharing where appropriate.

<https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/campaigns/coronavirus-support-for-schools-parents-and-pupils>

## Support for Covid-19 related critical incidents

Distressing though it is, all Head teachers and senior leaders are urged to consider a planned response to the inevitable bereavements and, potentially, other critical incidents which will happen in the coming weeks.

It is highly recommended that your school senior leadership team prepares clear plans, and considers the ways in which you will communicate with your local communities in order to be prepared in advance of any event.

A Critical Incident pack specific to the COVID-19 pandemic has been produced by the Educational Psychology Service and is available   
[https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/babcock\\_ldp/Core-Downloads/Covid/Covid--19-Critical-Incident-Pack-for-Schools-2020-27.03.20-v4-\(002\).docx](https://www.babcockldp.co.uk/babcock_ldp/Core-Downloads/Covid/Covid--19-Critical-Incident-Pack-for-Schools-2020-27.03.20-v4-(002).docx)

### What to do when tragic news arrives

The critical incident pack contains a guide to support the conversation you will have, and important information to gather when you are first alerted to tragic  (please see appendix to this letter).

As situations arise, please alert the Babcock Lead for your Learning Community in the first instance.

You can also alert the Educational Psychology Service, either directly or via the Babcock Lead, to seek further support.

The Educational Psychology Service will continue to be available to support schools and settings to manage critical events. We use approaches based on evidence based good practice founded on helping schools to manage, and can offer advice and support on communication, practical arrangements and managing emotions

Although colleagues are working remotely at present, support will be available over the telephone/ skype and email and could include consultation with individuals or groups of staff. It is expected that direct face to face support will become possible in the near future as restrictions are lifted.

We can offer:

- Help with communicating information to members of staff, children and families: Forms of words to express regret whilst mitigating against additional anxiety
- Support to staff, for example to talk about the range of responses to grief and loss and how to manage them.
- Advice on group support for students to share feelings
- Identification of and planning for vulnerable children
- Ideas about practical issues such as memorials / books of condolences.
- Follow up during the days following the incident to discuss any further issues that arise.

## Appendices

### Appendix 1:

## Guide for those responding to the first communication of tragic news

This conversation requires a calm, steady, quiet and sensitive approach. It will be important to allow the person to tell their story, and to listen.

You might want time to take a breath and steady yourself. It is okay to ask for a pause, for example to get something to note down contact details and important information.

Demonstrate that you are listening through occasional gentle responses. These could be empathetic sounds or short phrases like “Oh I’m so sorry”, “I’m listening”, “Take your time”.

Leave pauses so that the caller does not feel hurried and has time to gather their thoughts.

Allow the caller to tell their story in their words and in their own time and avoid asking questions.

You can check that you have heard and understood by paraphrasing back, for example “You said that he died at home last night, Is that right?” and again leave pauses so that the caller can correct you.

When the conversation reaches a natural break, explain that you need to take very clear notes of the important information.

Obtain as much **accurate, factual information** about the critical incident as possible. Bear in mind that it is very easy for rumours to spread: uncertainty or misinformation can greatly add to distress levels, create confusion and will take time and effort to correct.

Before ending the call, check that you have collected sufficient factual information and the personal and contact details of the person you are talking to. **(see the table below)**

As soon as the call ends inform the **senior management team**, who are advised to take actions in line with the planning checklist (page 5)

After alerting others it is important that you give yourself time to process the information and your own thoughts and feelings before getting back to work. It may be helpful to share your reaction with a colleague.

<p>Who has called?</p>	<p>First or given name: Surname:</p> <p>Position Relationship with the person or family affected</p> <p>Contact details for getting in touch later</p>
<p>What happened?</p> <p>What is the nature of the incident? When did it happen?</p>	
<p>Who has been affected? For example note the names and ages of children attending the school</p>	
<p>Who else has been contacted? Who else is offering support?</p>	
<p>Ask the caller "what else is it important for you to tell us?"</p>	