

Corona Virus Related Critical Incidents in Schools and Early Years Settings – 8 Point Briefing from the Educational Psychology Service

*“A critical incident may be defined as any sudden and unexpected incident or sequence of events which causes trauma within a school(or Early Years) community and which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of that school (or setting).”
The current Corona Virus crisis is seen as a potential Critical Incident in our schools and early years settings.*

1. The current situation with Corona Virus means that there is an increased risk of critical incidents both within schools/ settings and the wider community. This is coupled with a general raised level of anxiety due to the uncertainty around the virus and additional complication of school/ pre-school closures and altered offers of provision for the vulnerable and children of keyworkers.
2. In the event of a critical incident, the Educational Psychology Service (EPS) will offer support to the school/ setting management team or childminder in order to appropriately manage the situation. The approach taken is based on research into best practice and is founded on helping schools/ settings manage the immediate aftermath of an event, including advice and support around communication, practical arrangements and managing the emotional response to it.
3. Whilst no two incidents are the same, responses to critical incidents follow a recognised pattern and with time, it is likely that most children and adults will come to terms with what has happened and recover without the need for professional counselling. Help and support is best given by trusted, familiar adults as and when it is needed. The EPS will support schools/ settings to facilitate this and feel confident about being in this role.
4. When an incident occurs, it is important that schools/ settings let the Local Authority know as soon as possible. There is one central contact person to inform depending on whether you are a maintained Early Years or school or Private, Voluntary or Independent Early Years setting:

For schools and maintained EY settings- Director of Learning and Skills, Pauline Anderson, on 01332 640358 or email Pauline.anderson@derby.gov.uk

For all Early Years Education and Childcare Providers, including childminders and Out of School Clubs - Early Years Quality Improvement Team Manager, Coral Golding, on 07812301035 or email coral.golding@derby.gov.uk

5. A senior member of the Educational Psychology Service will contact you to offer support, identify what steps have been taken so far and what needs to happen next. This will be by telephone or video call.
6. What happens next depends on the nature of the incident, but may include advice about:
 - How to communicate the information to children, families and staff; including help to develop text, email, letter wording to express regret but seek to reduce anxiety.
 - Share information with staff to talk about typical responses to critical incidents and how to manage them
 - Providing a focus for children/ young people to share feelings for example use of tutor / mentor groups; other sharing forums
 - Identification of and planning for vulnerable children
 - Practical issues such as planning community activities including books of condolence.
7. The Educational Psychologist managing the incident will support you in the immediate aftermath of the incident and they will also follow up with you over the next few days to support with any issues that arise. In the event that your school/ setting is shut, this will be done remotely using phone or email.
8. If after a period of time, there are members of the school/ setting community who are showing signs of continued distress the Educational Psychologist will discuss this and signpost to further support.

For further information, please contact:

Richard Lakin
Principal Educational Psychologist

Email: richard.lakin@derby.gov.uk
Phone: 01332 641379 or 07812301671