

DRAFT GUIDANCE

Amended 15th November 2011

**GUIDANCE TO SCHOOLS ON RESPONDING AND MANAGING LOW LEVEL
EMERGENCIES AND/OR CRITICAL INCIDENTS**

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Section 1: CONTEXT: MANAGING A SCHOOL EMERGENCY OR CRITICAL INCIDENT

Parents and carers trust schools and providers to keep their children and young people safe. Thanks to the efforts of staff and governors, schools normally remain a safe haven for children. Schools can become involved in an emergency or critical incident at any time. The Department for Education (DfE) recommends that schools create and maintain an emergency plan to deal with such situations. Stockton-on-Tees Local Authority also understands its role in co-ordination, communication and support at such times.

The LA recommends the adoption of an on-line password protected form to inform the Local Authority of unplanned school closures 'Tell us once, tell everyone' at: www.stockton.gov.uk/schoolclosureinform or tel: 01642 XXXXXX

This guidance aims to support Head Teachers and Governors in dealing with school emergencies and critical incidents in school such as a child death and includes;

Section 2 Corporate Communications

Section 3 Unplanned School Closures due to
(a) Adverse Weather
(b) Other Emergencies

Section 4 Managing a Critical Incident in School

Section 5 Health & Safety

Section 6 Local Authority Contacts

The guidance also provides links to best practice at the date of publication.

Guidance from DfE on how to handle emergency situations at:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/planning/a0010635/managing-crises-in-schools

Information from the DfE regarding emergency plans can be found at:

<http://www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/planning/a0010615/school-emergency-management-plan>.

Developing Community Resilience through Schools Coping with a School Emergency: Practical Resources for Schools at www.schoolemergencies.info

Department for Education guidance for adverse weather can be found at:

www.education.gov.uk/schools/adminandfinance/emergencyplanning/a0069425/advice-on-severe-weather

Should a larger scale emergency or critical incident occur the school will be part of the appropriate planning by the Local Authority and will be advised accordingly.

Section 2: CORPORATE COMMUNICATIONS

In the event of an incident, it is essential that schools notify Stockton Council's Corporate Communications Team as soon as is possible so that appropriate steps can be taken to manage information being issued both internally and externally and support can be offered.

Contact details:

Vince Rutland, Public Relations Officer

T: 01642 526097

Email: vince.rutland@stockton.gov.uk

Support from the Media Relations team

The Media Relations team is available to support all schools in the case of any emergency which gains media attention or is likely to gain media attention.

- Schools are strongly advised not to speak directly to the media without first liaising with the Media Relations team.
- Schools are advised to pass any media enquiries directly to the Media Relations team who will issue the statement on behalf of the school.

The Media Relations team will;

- Help you to prepare a proactive or reactive press statement on behalf of the Head Teacher for the School/Council to issue as requested
- Will contact the Head Teacher for further information and prepare an appropriate response if necessary
- Will make the appropriate checks with the legal department and other agencies, for example the police if necessary, to ensure any response given is not prejudicing any potential future inquiry
- Will also work with the school should the media request interviews about any incident. If the Media Relations team deems an interview with the Head Teacher or another school representative to be appropriate they will help the Head Teacher prepare by providing the necessary briefing which will include developing potential questions and answers.

In the event of an incident which has or is likely to generate significant media attention at the school grounds, the Media Relations team will consider whether a presence at the school is necessary and act accordingly.

Support from the Web Team

The Web Team work with services across the Council and external agencies to ensure accurate, timely and up-to-date information is available digitally to meet a range of audience needs.

- The team is responsible for the authority's public-facing digital communications channels including the www.stockton.gov.uk website and social media (Twitter, Facebook and Google+) channels.
- The web team collate school disruption information, such as school closures or changes to the school day, and present this online via www.stockton.gov.uk/schools and on social

media. The team will also monitor comments and queries made online and look to answer/direct these as appropriate.

Support from the Internal Communications team

The Internal Communications team can help distribute important information to Council and neighbouring schools' staff during a school emergency or critical incident, in the following ways;

- Via the School's Extranet, Council's staff notice board and the Council's staff newsletter KYIT which is published every Friday on the Council's Intranet and in electronic format for those without access to the Intranet. Schools can register to receive a copy of KYIT by emailing internal.communications@stockton.gov.uk
- The Internal Communications team can distribute school disruption information to Council staff who may have children attending the affected school(s.)

The role of the school when informing Stockton Council of a school closure or disruption

A solution for informing the Local Authority (LA) of school closures/disruptions has been developed within the Corporate Communications team, based on the principle of '**Tell us once, tell everyone**'. A password protected form has been set-up with named contacts at all Stockton Borough schools. The '**Tell us once**' form can be found at:

www.stockton.gov.uk/schoolclosureinform or Tel: 01642XXXXX. Schools will be asked to give details of closure and the reason why as soon as possible. This will allow the Council to help wherever practicable – either through advice, resource or communication to the general public.

In the case of closure or a late opening due to adverse weather overnight it is recommended that schools log details as early as possible on the morning of any closure. Where possible, information should be provided by 7.30 am, to allow the Local Authority to manage transport issues. Where this is not possible schools should log details by 8.00 am at the latest.

Schools should keep their own websites up to date with closure information. Where amended information is published this should be logged via the 'Tell us once, tell everyone' form mechanism described above to ensure parity.

As part of the '**Tell us once**' process the Corporate Communications Team will ensure local radio stations are kept up to date. This information will also be published on Stockton Borough Council website and social media (Twitter, Facebook and Google+) channels.

Section 3: UNPLANNED SCHOOL CLOSURES (a)Adverse weather (b)Other emergencies

Advice from the DfE in December 2010 was clear about the responsibility for closure stating that *'the decision whether to close must be for Head Teachers. They know their schools and the surrounding areas.'*

The Local Authority understands that the decision to close a school is not taken lightly and that extensive school closures can have a detrimental impact not only on the education of children but also on the community at large because of the likelihood of parents staying off work to look after their children.

As recommended by DfE, having an emergency plan prompts schools to consider the various types of emergency and how they would deal with them giving the school community confidence when faced with a crisis.

Schools can also access resources from the 'Developing Community Resilience through Schools' project. This information provides sufficient guidance to schools without further duplication from Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council.

In the event of a school closure the local authority will ensure that internal colleagues are informed so that providers of school transport are aware of any closures. However, where the timing of a decision to close could mean that children or young people are already being transported to school the school should ensure youngsters safety arriving at the school.

(a) Adverse weather

The decision to close a school due to adverse weather rests with the Head Teacher and governors. Schools should follow the guidance provided in the Corporate Communication section, **'Tell us once, tell everyone'**.

(b) Other emergencies

Contact details:

Russell Smith, Consultancy Practice Manager
T: 01642 526935,
Bberry: 07825 582597
Email: russell.smith@stockton.gov.uk

Ian Hodgson, Maintenance Services Manager
T: 01642 526889
Bberry: 07733307905
Email: ian.hodgson@stockton.gov.uk

Emergencies can take various forms ranging from critical incidents - fire, flood, loss of utility supply, a public health incident or structural damage. Services can be provided by the Local Authority Consultancy Practice in the event of an emergency.

The Local Authority holds a database of information about the building including:

- Building Plans
- Electrical layouts
- Mechanical Plant layouts
- Security systems
- Asbestos management plans
- Condition information



In addition to this, the Local Authority has a comprehensive list of contractors/professional consultants that we can call on to carry out emergency repairs/provide services.

Section 4: MANAGING A CRITICAL INCIDENT IN SCHOOL

Contact details:

Alison Cartwright, Principal Educational Psychologist

T: 01642 527110

Email: alison.cartwright@stockton.gov.uk

In relation to people, a critical incident can be described as a situation that has a significant impact on the welfare or wellbeing of staff or children and young people that might require support in dealing with the trauma. This could include;

On the school site

- A deliberate act of violence, such as the use of a knife or firearm
- An unexpected death of a child or member of staff through natural causes or accidents
- An unexpected accident causing bodily or emotional harm
- Abuse or assault causing bodily or emotional harm
- A pupil or teacher being taken hostage
- The destruction or serious vandalising of part of the school/setting.

Off the school site

- The unexpected death of a children or member of staff through natural causes or accidents
- Abuse or assault causing bodily or emotional harm
- A transport-related accident involving children and/or members of staff
- Death or serious injuries on school/setting journeys or excursions.

The effects of a traumatic event upon a setting, such as the serious injury or death of a child or member of staff, can be profound and have long-term effects. Dealing with such a crisis can be stressful and the effect on staff should not be underestimated as in some cases it may be more significant than the impact on pupils.

'Local authorities have professional educational psychologists available to provide the necessary support and assistance to children who have experienced trauma or other problems following an emergency. Their expertise should be sought at an early stage of the response to any emergency where children and young people are involved or affected.' Emergency Response and Recovery Document, HM Government 2010

This could include:

- Advice on short-term and long-term support arrangements
- Guidance on the grieving process
- Advice on identifying particularly vulnerable individuals
- Links to other organisations which can provide assistance.

For further advice and support in the management of critical incidents please see the additional guidance published by Stockton Borough Council Educational Psychology Service.

Following a critical incident as a consequence of a serious or fatal road traffic accident the Local Authority can provide advice guidance with regard to future planning; such as Health and Safety or Road Safety, see Local Authority Contacts in Section 6.

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Section 5: HEALTH & SAFETY

If you require any advice or guidance on health and safety as a result of, or in preparation for an incident, please contact the team.

Contact details:

Derek MacDonald, Health and Safety Manager

T. 01642 528195

Email derek.macdonald@stockton.gov.uk

Bberry 07824529665

The role of the School

Planning and Preparation;

- ensure there is appropriate health and safety documentation containing details of named individuals with identified responsibilities
- ensure that individuals know that they hold specific responsibilities for identified health and safety issues and what they should be doing
- understand what risk assessment entail and make sure that there are copies of current policies approved by the Governing Body and safe working procedures available in the correct places. This documentation should be kept up to date and evidentially communicated to those that have a need to know and that they are understood
- ensure policies accurately reflect what is actually going on and how people are expected to respond to health and safety issues
- ensure adequate training is provided to those that require it and that training records are up to date and readily available.

Strong and effective leadership is essential to ensure that the right systems are in place, that best practice is shared and that learning is disseminated from previous incidents.

The primary responsibility for this lies with the employer, however, employees have a duty to take reasonable care for their own health and safety and for others who may be affected by their actions.

The role of the Health and Safety Unit

Initial advice following an incident.

The Health and Safety Unit will provide initial advice following notification of a reported work related near miss, an incident or accident, to protect employees and others that may be affected by the activities of the employer.

Where necessary, a member of the health and safety team will visit the scene of the incident as soon as practicable and conduct an initial assessment to ensure the safety of people.

An investigation into the incident may commence once the health, safety and well-being of people or assets, has been consolidated, with support from other professional colleagues providing specialist advice.

This may involve ensuring the preservation of physical evidence, establishing exclusion zones or taking photographs or photocopies.



Statements may need to be taken from people at the earliest opportunity, they should be factual, articulate, complete and a truthful recollection of the events leading up to and surrounding the incident.

The Health and Safety Manager will where necessary, notify the relevant reporting authority, usually the Health and Safety Executive as soon as practicable.

Details of further actions that may need to be taken are available within the document **Practical Advice for Managing a Serious Workplace Incident or Fatality**. To access

Click [here](#) (KYIT Intranet User).

Click [here](#) (School Extranet System User)

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Section 6: LOCAL AUTHORITY CONTACTS

Service	Name & Role	Contact details
Corporate Communications	Vince Rutland Public Relations Officer	T: 01642 526097 Email: vince.rutland@stockton.gov.uk
Health & Safety	Derek Macdonald Health & Safety Manager	T: 01642 528195 Email: derek.macdonald@stockton.gov.uk Bberry 07824529665
Assets/buildings	Russell Smith Consultancy Practice Manager Ian Hodgson Maintenance Services Manager	T: 01642 526935 Email: russell.smith@stockton.gov.uk Bberry 07825 582597 T: 01642 526889 Email: ian.hodgson@stockton.gov.uk Bberry 07733 307905
Road Safety/ General Transport	Simon Milner Network Safety Manager	T: 01642 528709 Email: simon.milner@stockton.gov.uk
School Transport	Elizabeth Bird Community Transport Manager	T: 01642 527115 Email: elizabeth.bird@stockton.gov.uk
Educational Psychology Service	Alison Cartwright Principal Educational Psychologist	T: 01642 527110 Email: alison.cartwright@stockton.gov.uk