

# Schools checklist for Critical Incidents

## Updated Guidance during COVID-19

### (April 2020)

#### What is a Critical Incident?

A situation that has the potential to cause disruption and distress to the school, when members of the school community are affected by a significant loss, event or on-going situation/crisis.

During Covid-19, this may include the following:

Death of a member of staff

Death of a pupil

Death of a parent or close relative of a pupil in the school

A serious incident involving pupils or staff members

#### What should schools do initially?

1. When faced with an incident, look at the resources available on [Infolink](#).
2. If you have an incident in your school or setting which involves a death within your community, please complete the [Notification Form](#), indicating whether you require further support. Send the form to [Schools.Communication@essex.gov.uk](mailto:Schools.Communication@essex.gov.uk).
3. The Schools Communication Team will pick this up and pass it on to the relevant services for support and information. The services will contact with you within 24 hours.
4. If you feel like you need to speak to someone to discuss what support is available, please call Schools Communication Team: 03330 139880 (office hours 9am-4pm). They will contact the Educational Psychology Service to arrange appropriate support if required.

In the event of the sudden death of a child or young person, Schools Communication will inform other relevant professionals/services as required e.g. Safeguarding and EWMHS (particularly in the event of a sudden death or suspected suicide of a pupil)

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#### First steps and further considerations

- Inform the school governors and senior staff in the first instance and arrange a meeting to discuss next steps. The EP/s, if involved can support with this if needed. While schools are closed this can be done remotely by phone / virtual meeting.
- In the event of a child death, or that of a staff member, check the information is accurate and liaise closely with the family/families involved (and thereafter throughout) to ascertain their wishes. Ensure you have permission to share further information.
- If you have one, refer to your **School/Critical Incident Management Plan (S/CIMP)** and Bereavement Policy. You may already call this a School Emergency Management Plan – critical incidents should be part of this.
- Inform the Essex media team as required: 03330 132800 / 07717 867525 (out of hours)
- Identify particularly vulnerable pupils and staff – those who have been directly involved themselves in the incident, or are close to the person/people involved, those who may have witnessed the incident, those who have experienced issues on their own lives (which are evoked by the incident), those who have SEND and/or are emotionally vulnerable themselves. Use the **Circles of Vulnerability** document below as a guide; the EP service can provide advice if required. See final pages of this document
- Brief staff and pupils (this can be planned following advice from the EP service if involved). Some information on how best to do this is included within the **Sharing Sad News** section on the [Infolink](#). Be aware of the sensitivities around sharing information too early - this should always be done (where possible) with permission of the family involved. This will obviously need to be balanced with any potential risk in not sharing relevant information and you should seek advice on this if necessary.

During the COVID-19 situation when schools are closed (and during school holidays), parents (and pupils if appropriate) could be told of the event through letter or by email. The most vulnerable pupils might be told separately by phone or by their parent following a call to the parent, if this is felt to be better for them. Check in with these pupils regularly following the event.

- Inform parents of the event (this can be planned following advice from the EP service if involved); by letter may be best and some sample templates can be found within the **Sharing Sad News** section on [Infolink](#). Direct phone calls to parents of the most vulnerable pupils and those most closely involved would be advisable.

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### Supporting pupils and staff

Please see the **Information and resources for helping to cope with bereavement and loss** section on [Infolink](#).

During the current COVID-19 situation, arrange for key staff to be available to provide support for the most vulnerable pupils if possible. Whilst schools are closed it may be possible for some key staff to be available remotely by phone, skype, email etc to support pupils and each other. There should be arrangements in place to ensure this is undertaken within a framework which sets out how this will happen, to ensure pupils and staff are safeguarded. This framework should include:

- who will participate in the session (there should be no 1:1 contact);
  - location of the pupil when accessing learning (for example, not in bedroom);
  - appropriate clothing / dress for the pupil (and any adults present);
  - equipment to be used by staff;
  - arrangements for recording learning session and how / where this will be stored (if recording is to be used);
  - arrangements for pupils who do not have access to the necessary equipment or technology;
  - accessibility for pupils with additional needs;
  - staff and pupil conduct during the session.
- If the incident requires EPs to provide support for vulnerable staff or pupils, arrange for the EP and senior management team (or team identified in the S/CIMP) to discuss what needs to happen next and create a support plan. This is most helpful when done with other agencies together to co-ordinate any support for the school. When schools are closed this can be done remotely by phone or via skype.
  - The aim of EP support is to enable staff to be able to support their students and families of their school community. **School staff will be the most relevant people to support students in times of distress.** School staff should be available for the upcoming days, weeks and months and so can continue to share the key messages (as advised by the EP during emotional support conversations). Relevant resources can be found in the **Information and resources for helping to cope with bereavement and loss** section on [Infolink](#).

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- Allow time for 'check-in' meetings to share information and updates as events unfold and the situation moves forward. This enables key staff to be supported, for action plans to be adjusted accordingly and to identify what is going well and any issues that have arisen. While schools are closed this can be arranged remotely.
- Set a general plan with key staff for what will happen in first week and the next, (with regard to informing and supporting staff, students, parents) – in liaison with the EPs supporting your school if this is the case.
- Memorials and remembrance – agree with staff, pupils and the family/families how you will do this as a school within the context of the COVID-19, (e.g. a virtual space for writing messages, drawing pictures, sharing memories).
- Monitoring of individuals now and longer term - plan how you will do this, who will take responsibility in school and who else should be involved (e.g. EPs, EWMHS). Typically, we recommend a 'watch and wait' approach for pupils in the first instance, providing emotional support from key adults in school as needed. If pupils do not seem to be coping around 4 weeks later (allowing for normal grief patterns), they may require additional support from external services.
- Noting key dates for the future – plan how you will manage these once the event has passed (e.g. funeral, birthdays etc). Liaise with key staff, family and other professionals as appropriate.
- Review and monitor the process and check in with staff, pupils and parents following the event and throughout.

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#### Helpful links relating to Coronavirus

Anticipatory grief – Harvard Review: <https://hbr.org/2020/03/that-discomfort>

Winston's Wish: <https://www.winstonswish.org>

Cruse Bereavement Care: <https://www.cruse.org.uk>

Cruse Bereavement Care page for young people: <https://www.hopeagain.org.uk/>

Child Bereavement UK: <https://www.childbereavementuk.org> (helpline, live chat and email support available)

Child Bereavement UK video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SFm-SXeJwI8&>

Coronavirus: A book for children: [https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus\\_ABookForChildren.pdf](https://nosycrowcoronavirus.s3-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/Coronavirus_ABookForChildren.pdf)

Mencap - Easy Read guide to Coronavirus: <https://www.mencap.org.uk>

Place2Be – Guide to helping parents answer questions from their children and to support family wellbeing: <https://www.place2be.org.uk>

Young Minds - Talking to your child about Coronavirus and 10 tips from their Parents Helpline to support family wellbeing:  
<https://youngminds.org.uk/blog/talking-to-your-child-about-coronavirus/>

Covibook – an interactive resource designed to support and reassure children aged 7 and under, designed to help children explain and draw the emotions that they might be experiencing at the moment: <https://www.mindheart.co/descargables>

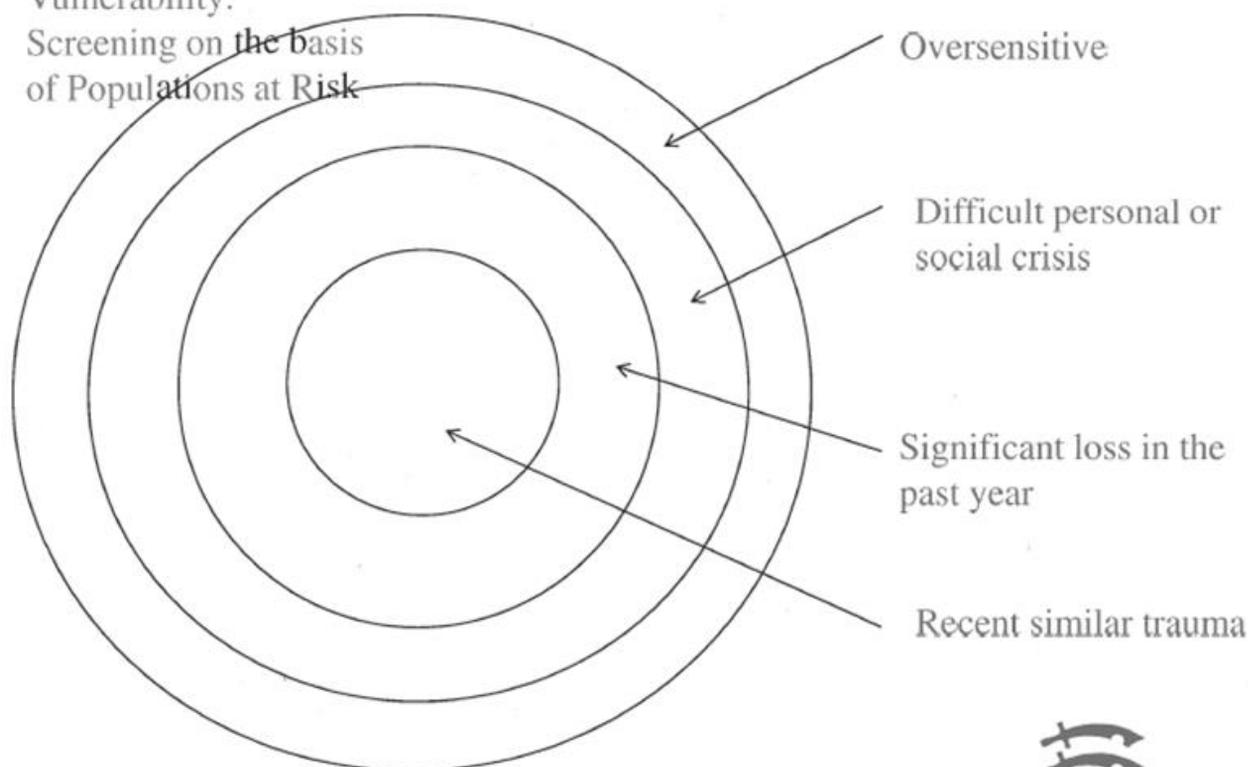
# Circles of Vulnerability

A tool for screening for vulnerability on the basis of three dimensions:

- The Physical Proximity Dimension
- The Social-Psychological Dimension
- Populations at Risk



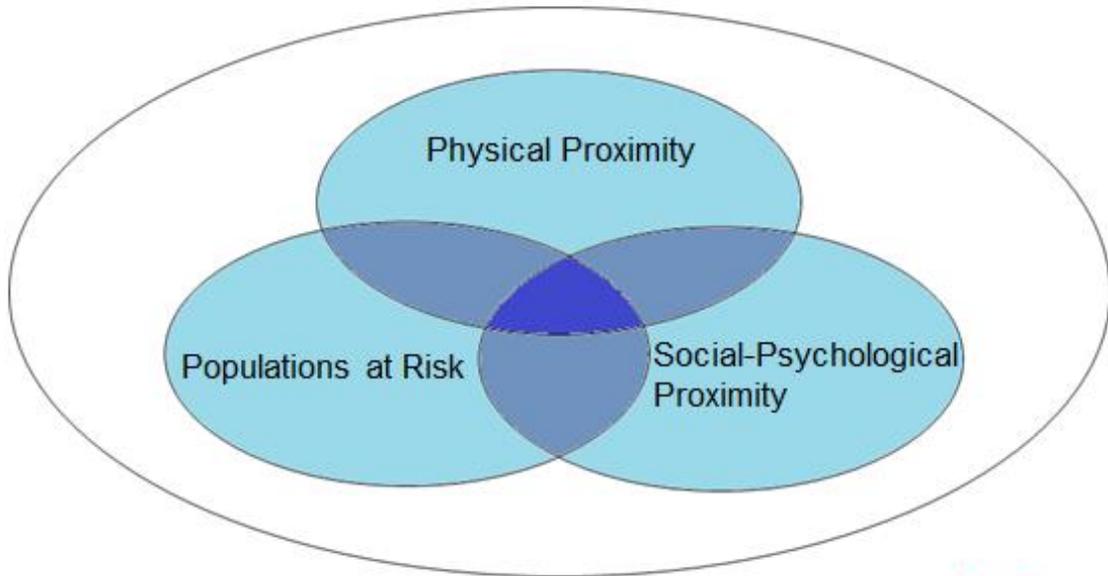
Circles of Vulnerability:  
Screening on the basis  
of Populations at Risk



Note that some children and young people will also be at risk on account of their SEN



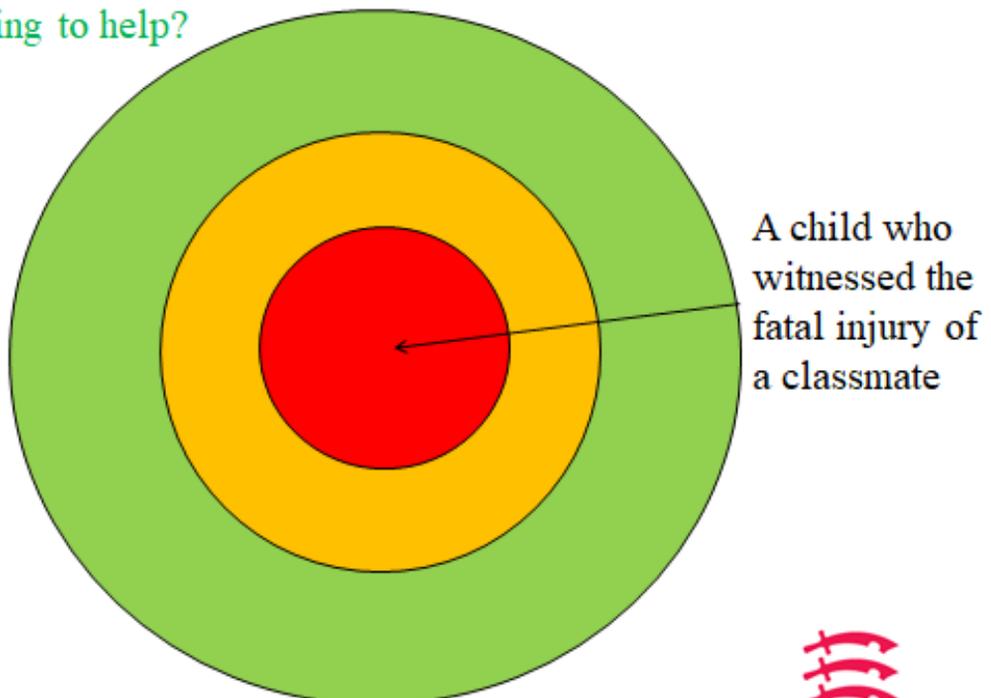
# Circles of Vulnerability: Mapping by 3 Dimensions



For example....

## Circles of Vulnerability

Who is going to help?



## Circles of Support

## Circles of Vulnerability

