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Thank you to London Borough of Islington for sharing guidance on Emergency Planning.

Barnet Educational Psychology Service
Critical Incident Policy

Date: May 2016

1 - Introduction:

As part of Barnet's Educational Psychology Service's ongoing commitment to providing support to Barnet's educational settings and young people, we offer psychological support to settings in the event of a critical incident. This support is available to all Barnet's schools and is a free service.

A critical incident is an event, usually sudden, that has the potential to cause high levels of distress and which may be overwhelming. Fortunately, such events are relatively rare and unpredictable, but they do occur intermittently and it is important for the service to be prepared to respond.

Such critical incidents may include:

- The death of a member of the school community (usually, but not always sudden)
- Traumatic incidents in the local community affecting the school

A flexible and sensitive range of responses is required based on sound psychological understanding of the variety of reactions and needs of both children and adults at such times. The service should aim to ensure sensitivity to and awareness of the diversity of the community.

This document outlines the role that Barnet Educational Psychology Service may take in supporting those having important responsibilities and those directly experiencing such incidents.

2 - How Barnet Educational Psychology Service will respond in the event of a critical incident.

Barnet EPS critical incident work will be coordinated by the critical incident team (senior EP leadership team) and may involve the link EP who has an allocation for the particular setting / provision / school. Critical incident work should take priority over other arrangements made by the Educational Psychology Service. Accordingly, it is the service's expectation that individual Educational Psychologists will re-arrange most commitments if they are required to provide support following a critical incident (an example of an appropriate exception may include having to attend a tribunal, an important Social Care Case Conference etc – but this will be in negotiation with and at the discretion of the Educational Psychology Service management).

When alerted to a possible incident, the EPS will assess the nature of the incident, advise on the right level of response, and offer appropriate support to the school. The EPS will try to assist in the process helping the school to recover.

2.1 – Communication between EPS and school:

Direct requests for involvement related to bereavement or trauma are made by schools, either to the Head of Specialist Inclusion Services & Principal Educational Psychologist, Phil Stock (Philip.stock@barnet.gov.uk 020 8359 2681), to a Senior Educational Psychologist (as below) or to your 'link' Educational Psychologist. There will be an initial response as soon as possible, with further work planned as required. Involvement is likely to be time limited.

Contact details for network Senior EPs are as follows:

Marina Costa	(020 8359 7661, marina.costa@barnet.gov.uk)
Sarah Geiger	(020 8359 7662, sarah.geiger@barnet.gov.uk)
Amanda Ryzman	(02083597153, amanda.ryzman@barnet.gov.uk)

This initial communication should gather important information as to the nature of the events, respond to any immediate questions that the school may have, and to arrange a convenient time for the identified educational psychologist(s) to attend the school (this would be prioritised and be as soon as possible).

2.2 – Who will provide the follow up?

The follow up to the critical incident would normally be provided by two members of the EP team, with the school 'link EP' being one of the two. Depending on timeframes and capacity, if these persons are unavailable then other EPs would be expected to provide the support.

2.3 – How the service will support the school:

It is important to have a clear sense of what response the EPS can provide to schools. The exact nature of the support needs to be flexible and responsive – and negotiated individually with schools in respect to the details of the incident, and the individual and institutional needs of the situation.

This support may consist of:

- **Consultation** to school staff and other professional colleagues working with children and young people, which may lead to joining colleagues for particular pieces of work with staff groups or pupil groups.
- **Individual consultation** with staff or professional colleagues who work directly with children and young people.
- **Staff development** sessions can be offered, to schools and other organisations, regarding information and strategies for coping prior to or as a result of bereavement or trauma.
- Occasionally the EP may work with individual or groups of children (the aim is to support the adults to manage the school response) and this support will be negotiated with individual schools and agreed following a specific request for involvement at this level.
- EPs maintain close liaison with Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (**CAMHS**), particularly the Primary and Secondary Project and can undertake joint work following incidents where appropriate. EPs may also make a referral on to the CAMHS Teams where this is needed and where parents are in agreement.

While our immediate aim is to help people to come to terms with the initial and sometimes overwhelming feeling of shock, distress, disbelief and grief and to support school responses, a longer term objective is to reduce the likelihood of Post Traumatic Stress Syndrome.

Forward planning may help a school community cope better if a crisis occurs, and this could help to reduce the distress for pupils and staff. EPs can help schools to develop a school plan to deal with critical incidents.

All schools have received a copy of the practical and concise guide "Wise Before the Event" by William Yule and Ann Gold, which remains an excellent reference.

3 – The setting for support

Psychological support involves providing a safe space for the people involved to talk about their feelings and experiences.

It is important that a setting is provided that can enable the above. This will be:

- A place that is pleasant and comfortable
- A place that is quiet and free from interruption
- A place that offers privacy

4 –Support for Educational Psychologists involved in critical incidents

It is acknowledged within our service that involvement in critical incidents work may provoke a variety of emotional responses. We will therefore endeavour to ensure that:

- After each piece of work a debriefing session will be available if required with an experienced colleague to explore any issues that have arisen and reflect on the process.
- There will be sensitivity towards colleagues who feel they are not in a position to partake in critical incident work and therefore there will be a 'right to withdraw' (this would need to be discussed with service management).

Helpful Publications and Resources:

Smith, S. (1999). *The Forgotten Mourners: Guidelines for Working with Bereaved Children*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 1853027588

Ward, B. (1995). *Good Grief: Exploring Feelings, Loss and Death with Under 11s*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 1853023248

Ward, B. (1995). *Good Grief: Exploring Feelings, Loss and Death with Over 11s and Adults*. London: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. ISBN 185302340X

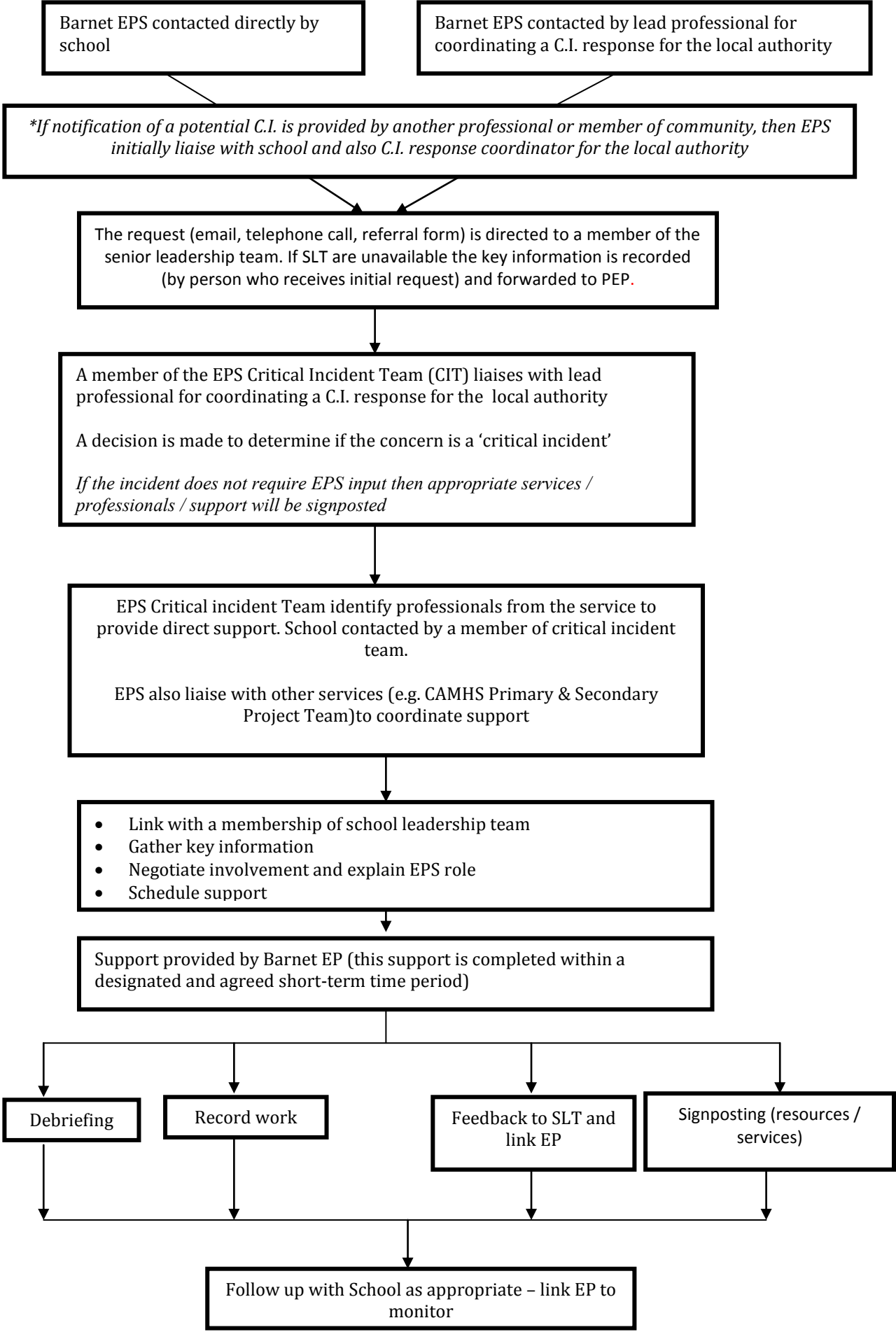
Barnet Bereavement Project, 177 Leicester Road, New Barnet, EN5 5EB (020 8441 3572.) Free bereavement counselling service for adults. No referral necessary.

Child Death Helpline (0800 282 986) For anyone affected by the death of a child.

Grief Encounter Project, PO Box 49701, London N20 8XJ (020 8446 7452, www.griefencounter.com). Helping children through bereavement.

The response that the service makes will follow the steps outlined in the diagram below:

Assistant Director and lead coordinator for CI responses kept updated throughout process



Schoolsafe Advice

Schoolsafe is a system that enables schools to share information regarding student safety in the school's vicinity. Education and Skills have created a generic inbox, schoolsafe@barnet.gov.uk, which we will use to monitor incidents/concerns relating to school safety and where applicable offer support and advice.

In the event of an incident please follow these instructions:

1. The school must report any incident to the Safer Schools Team (please e-mail both addresses)

Schools Office - 020 8733 5857

[SX-Schools@met.pnn.police.uk](mailto: SX-Schools@met.pnn.police.uk)

[SXMailbox-.Schools@met.pnn.police.uk](mailto: SXMailbox-.Schools@met.pnn.police.uk)

You will need to give police:

- A full description of the incident
- The name and contact details of the person who alerted the school
- The name of the school, who the Lead in the school is for this incident and their contact details

NB If you are unable to raise the Safer Schools Team please contact and report the incident to telephone number 101 where you will receive a CAD number.

2. After contacting the police the school should then send an e-mail to Schoolsafe@barnet.gov.uk. This e-mail to Schoolsafe must contain:
 - The police incident number or CAD number
 - The name and contact details of the Police Officer involved
 - A description of the incident
 - Your preferred method of communicating with parents regarding this issue e.g. text/letter
 - The contact details for the person dealing with the incident at the school for Barnet Schoolsafe to liaise with
3. On receiving a Schoolsafe message, the Schoolsafe Team will contact the Safer Schools Team and the Council Press Office to ensure clarity and consistency of information sharing.
4. You will then receive a statement from Schoolsafe that can be distributed to your school's parents.