

**Planning for a Sad Event:** Guidance for

Schools

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**Children’s Services**

Educational Psychology Service

**Introduction**

During COVID-19 we would advise schools to plan ahead and prepare for such an event using the guidance below to identify issues that need to be considered. Generating a response plan specific to the school context will be useful, and identifying staff members to be responsible for each action.

**Preparation**

Schools are advised to consider the following issues in conjunction with the **Milton Keynes Educational Psychology Critical Incident Guidance** and information documents available as part of the universal EPS support (see **Milton Keynes Educational Psychology Service: Support during the Coronavirus Pandemic (April 2020)**.

***Communication***

* Who will contact the family affected?
* How will you communicate information to staff: what messaging systems are available? Who will lead on this?
* How will you communicate information re bereavement if necessary, to pupils/students. Will you contact the parents only? Plan a form of words to express regret but at the same time reduce anxiety.
* How will you communicate with parents? How do you normally communicate with parents? Will this be appropriate?

***Helpful information to share with staff in advance of an incident***

* + Share information with staff about typical responses to bereavement and how to manage this while recognising that this is a new situation for all of us.
  + Provide information that can be shared with parents about children and young people’s responses to bereavement.
  + Refer to the resources and guidance section of the EPS website for useful information sources.

***Identify vulnerable students and staff***

* + How will you identify those who may be made more vulnerable following a bereavement? Are there children/staff who had special relationships with the person who died? Who will do this? Consider a key worker approach to follow up regularly with those families during school closure.
  + Some staff may be more vulnerable in this situation ensure that you have support systems in place e.g. how can we support each other? What are our typical support networks? What resources don’t we have?

**Post event actions**

* + Senior leadership team to refer to the communication plan made and finalise roles (staff sickness may be a factor). Consider if anything needs to be adapted in light of the specific situation.
  + Consult the **Milton Keynes Educational Psychology Critical Incident Guidance.**
  + What is the family’s views on what can be shared / what they want to be shared?
  + Plan for vulnerable students. Do other agencies need to be informed?
  + Help and support for children and young people who experience bereavement is best provided by a trusted, familiar adult as and when it is needed. In time, most children and adults will come to terms with what has happened and recover without the need for professional counselling. We do not advise an immediate offer of counselling to bereaved families – grief is a normal process and those who are grieving may need to be reassured that whatever emotions they are feeling, are perfectly normal, there is no one process of grieving for all.
  + It is usually only when feelings remain overwhelming, over a period of weeks, when counselling support may become a more appropriate offer. Some families with less community support may wish to seek professional support earlier, particularly whilst we remain in social isolation.