



## Guidance for Educational Settings Following the Death of a Child or Staff Member

**WCF Educational Psychology Service**

January 2024

## Contents

Guidance for Educational Settings Following the Death of a Child or Staff Member .....	1
WCF Educational Psychology Service .....	1
January 2024 .....	1
Contents .....	2
Purpose of this guidance .....	3
Checklist for considerations in the event of the death of a pupil .....	4
Further information, guidance and support: .....	8
Checklist for considerations in the event of the death of a staff member .....	9
Advice and guidance on breaking the news of bereavement to staff, pupils and families .....	13
Breaking bad news .....	14
What can you say to someone who is experiencing bereavement and grief? .....	14
Further resources and information for death through suicide .....	15
Further information for death through homicide .....	16
References .....	16
Definitions: .....	16
Acknowledgements .....	16
Appendix A: Circles of Vulnerability .....	18
Appendix B: Terms of Reference for a Suicide Postvention Action Group (SPAG) .....	19
Appendix C: Register of suicide attempts and unexpected/more intense self-harm .....	21

## Purpose of this guidance

When a death occurs to a close member within a school community there is usually a profound sense of shock, even if the death is expected. It is, therefore, important to have already thought through a plan of action as it is sometimes difficult to think clearly at the time of receiving such news. You may find the following guidance helpful when considering how to respond to the death of member of staff or close member of the school community.

This resource is structured into two sections. The first section provides checklists to help guide you in the event of a death for the following:

- [Checklist for considerations in the event of a death of a pupil](#)
- [Checklist for considerations in the event of a death of a staff member](#)

Within each checklist, areas of consideration are noted to help staff members reflect and identify possible actions and ways forward. This resource is not a step-by-step manual but provides a framework to help aid thinking with regards to how to support children, staff member and young people during these difficult times.

The second section includes further information on:

- [Advice and guidance on breaking the news of bereavement to staff, pupils and families](#)
- [Further information, support and resources if death was from suspected suicide or homicide](#)

Within this document, links to external websites and documents have been included as potential resources for schools, families and young people. While every effort has been made to check them of their suitability, external sites are not under our control and their content may change without warning. We provide these links as a service and cannot guarantee their continued suitability.

This document should be read in conjunction with the [Trauma Council guidance on Critical Incidents](#) in Educational Communities. Informed by research and best practice, these resources support educational communities in providing a comprehensive and compassionate response to traumatic events that affect children and young people in their care.

## Checklist for considerations in the event of the death of a pupil

Area of support and guidance	Considerations	Resources/Further information (click on underlined text to open links to resources)
<b>IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATIONS</b>		
<b>Identification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the key people that are affected?</li> <li>• Take account that the impact may be felt across the community and could include students, teaching staff, families, governors etc.</li> <li>• Identify a team that can support you.</li> <li>• Inform WCC through the Emergency Planning Duty Officer: 07624 909756</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Guidance on the first 30 minutes</a>
<b>Communication</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who is the best person to break the news e.g. Class teacher or Head teacher?</li> <li>• How far through the school does the news need to spread and have the family’s views been sought in this?</li> <li>• Use the Circles of Vulnerability tool (Appendix A) to identify key pupil groups or members of staff who then might need to be told first (primary school class, form group, key friends), then school, or partial school dissemination (i.e. year group) is required.</li> <li>• What are the most appropriate channels for this sensitive news to be given to people? Consider people that may be absent from school and the potential impact of social media.</li> <li>• What are the key messages that you want to give to the school and the wider community?</li> </ul> <p>Please see ‘support for children’ section below with regards to communication with students.</p>	<a href="#">Information on the importance of communication during bereavement in schools</a>  <a href="#">Guidance to help education professionals, parents and carers tell a young person that someone has died</a>  <a href="#">Guidance on telling a young person with SEND that someone has died</a>  <a href="#">Guidance on communication during a sudden death</a>  <b>If the death is a suspected suicide:</b>  <a href="#">Guidance on talking with children and young people about suicide</a>  <a href="#">Guidance for taking steps to effectively</a>

		<a href="#">communicate the news of a suicide</a>
<b>Communication with the bereaved family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who is the most natural member of school staff to maintain contact with the family? (Allocate a key adult with an existing good relationship who can field and filter queries to the family).</li> <li>Is there a direct telephone line for the family to contact the school?</li> <li>What support will this person need from the wider staff, and who will do this?</li> </ul>	<a href="#">What to say when someone is bereaved</a>
<b>School response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How should the school respond? Should cards/flowers be sent, a doorstep visit made? By whom? Staff, governor?</li> <li>Have cultural and religious factors been taken into consideration?</li> </ul>	
<b>Communication with the staff team</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who needs to know? (Consider everyone who would have had interactions with the family and pupil when schools were in session) how will they be informed?</li> <li>What support needs do they have? Is anyone vulnerable and in need of additional support?</li> </ul>	<p>Access to supervision for staff could be sought from the <a href="#">WCF Educational Psychology service</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guidance on supporting school staff when a pupil dies</a></p>
<b>Communication with parents and carers of other students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In the event of a death, with the family's agreement, how many parents/carers should receive school communications giving information about <i>what has happened</i> and what action the school has taken to support the pupils? Class/whole school?</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Social media considerations at school in the event of a death</a>
<b>Support for parents/carers who have been bereaved</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Have there been discussions as to what networks can support the family and the level of contact the family want?</li> <li>How will siblings/cousins be supported if they attend the school?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Guidance for parents/carers:</b> <a href="#">Grieving for a child at any age</a></p> <p><a href="#">Support for parents whose baby/young child has died</a></p>
<b>LATER CONSIDERATIONS</b>		
<b>Support for parents/carers of other students</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should there be communication to parents/carers telling them what support is available in school for pupils and what reactions parents/carers might expect from their child so that they are prepared and can offer support at home?</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">What to say when someone is bereaved</a></p> <p><a href="#">Guidance for parents to support them talking to children about death</a></p>

		<p>Videos for Parents/carers:</p> <p><a href="#">Child Bereavement UK supporting a bereaved child video</a></p> <p><a href="#">Child Bereavement UK explaining a funeral to a young child</a></p> <p><a href="#">Child Bereavement UK should I be worried about my bereaved teenager</a></p>
<p><b>Support for children</b></p>	<p>Children like adults will grieve in their own ways and very often what they need is:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To have the bereavement acknowledged and have the opportunity to talk about the person who has died if they wish.</li> <li>To understand that what they are feeling is normal, and whatever they are feeling is accepted by those around them.</li> <li>To know that there is someone in school who will support them if they get upset.</li> <li>To have their questions answered honestly, in a way that they can understand.</li> </ol> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How can these considerations be addressed within the school community?</li> <li>What class-centred activities can be organised to allow for the class or group to come together?</li> <li>Initially it may be necessary to waive timetable/learning expectations for those pupils badly affected by the news.</li> <li>Including time to be together as a group with support, talking, remembering, making cards, creating memory boards or books which could be added to over the coming days, may be most helpful for some. Others will want the 'routine' of school/ home teaching to continue. If possible, offer choice.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Information for adults supporting and communicating with children:</b></p> <p><a href="#">How to talk to bereaved children</a></p> <p><a href="#">Supporting a bereaved child through a difficult time video</a></p> <p><b>If the death was a suspected suicide:</b></p> <p><a href="#">How to talk to children and young people about suicide</a></p> <p><b>Information for young people to access:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Website for young people</a></p> <p><a href="#">Resources, links, and access to support for young people</a></p> <p><b>Books/resources:</b></p> <p><a href="#">Cruse Booklist</a></p> <p><a href="#">Child Bereavement Booklist</a></p>
<p><b>Suspected suicide postvention</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Undertake a circles of vulnerability exercise to identify those who may need specific support or be at additional risk. Liaise with outside organisations such as sport clubs/activity groups. Appendix A.</li> </ul>	<p>Refer to the WCC Emergency Response Information Card (ERIC) for the death of</p>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a Suicide Prevention Action Group (SPAG) with the objective of preventing suicide attempts and unexpected/more intense self-harm, Appendix B provides, terms of references, membership and an agenda example.</li> <li>• Maintain a register of suicide attempts and unexpected/more intense self-harm across the whole school population until at least the first anniversary of the death or the inquest whichever is the later. See Appendix C.</li> </ul>	a pupil or staff member.
<b>Commemoration</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pupils/staff should be supported to attend the funeral and attendance records should not be impacted as a result of their attendance.</li> <li>• Should the school hold its own special memorial? If so, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Who should be involved?</li> <li>○ What form should the service take e.g. favourite stories, poems, music, display of work, remembrance table, or friendship tree?</li> <li>○ This should be done in collaboration with the class and family.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Is a lasting memorial appropriate?</li> <li>• If so, what would this look like? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ E.g. tree, trophy, book, fundraising event?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Who should be involved with decision – family/pupils?</li> </ul>	If death was a suspected suicide: <a href="#">Guidance on managing a memorial following a suspected suicide</a>
<b>The little things</b>	What will happen to the child's desk/chair/peg? It would be as shock to return to school to see them removed without discussion and consideration and therefore let the class have some input.	
<b>Getting further support</b>	<p>Grief is a normal and natural response and most people will manage their grief responses through existing networks of support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sometimes emotions can be intense and persistent, impairing day-to-day life and leaving people feeling that they cannot cope.</li> <li>• Some people have found it beneficial to access help during these times through bereavement support/counselling services.</li> </ul>	

## Further information, guidance and support:

**WCF Educational Psychology Service:** This service will provide free immediate psychological support to a setting following the death of a child or staff member. If you have not been contacted by them, please email [edpsych@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk](mailto:edpsych@worcschildrenfirst.org.uk)

**Trauma Council Guidance:** Informed by research and best practice, these resources support educational communities in providing a comprehensive and compassionate response to traumatic events that affect children and young people in their care. [Trauma Council Guidance](#)

**Winston's Wish:** Support grieving children and young people after the death of someone important: [Winston's Wish - giving hope to grieving children \(winstonswish.org\)](http://winstonswish.org)

**Child Bereavement UK:** Help children, young people, parents and families rebuild their lives when a child grieves or a child dies: [Child Bereavement UK](#)

**Cruse UK:** Providing bereavement support and guidance: [Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](#)

**Samaritans UK:** A range of support and guidance following the loss of someone important: [Samaritans | Every life lost to suicide is a tragedy | Here to listen](#)

## Support following an attempted or suspected suicide

**Worcestershire Bereaved by Suicide Service:** A free and confidential signposting service for those bereaved and affected by suicide is provided in Worcestershire by Victim Support. [Worcestershire Bereaved by Suicide Service](#)

**Suicide Bereavement UK:** Resources for those bereaved or affected by suicide and for the professionals supported them. [Suicide Bereavement UK](#)

**Samaritans:** The Samaritans Step-by-Step programme supports schools to recover from a suspected or attempted suicide: [Samaritans Step-by-Step programme](#)

**Papyrus:** UK Charity for the prevention of suicide: [Papyrus UK Suicide Prevention | Prevention of Young Suicide \(papyrus-uk.org\)](#)



## Checklist for considerations in the event of the death of a staff member

Area of support and guidance	Considerations	Resources/Further information (click on underlined text to open links to resources)
<b>IMMEDIATE CONSIDERATIONS</b>		
<b>Identification</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who are the key people that are affected?</li> <li>• Take account that the impact may be felt across the community and could include students, teaching staff, families, governors etc.</li> <li>• Identify a team that can support you.</li> <li>• For sudden or unexplained death, inform WCC through the Emergency Planning Duty Officer: 07624 909756</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Guidance on the first 30 minutes</a>
<b>Communication with the family</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expression of condolence is the priority.</li> <li>• Who should maintain contact with the family and is there a direct line for the family to contact the school? What support will the person contacting the family need from the wider staff, and who will do this?</li> <li>• Agreement with the family about communication with the staff and the wider school community should be explored, within the first day where possible.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">What to say when someone is bereaved</a>
<b>Communication with the staff and the wider school body</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who will break the news to the wider staff body? Have you thought of everyone; part time, peripatetic staff, those on sick/family leave?</li> <li>• What are the most appropriate channels for this sensitive news to be given to people?</li> <li>• Give time for everyone to absorb and process the news before coming together or discussing things further.</li> </ul>	<a href="#">Death of a staff member guidance</a>  <a href="#">Information on the importance of communication during bereavement in schools</a>
<b>School response</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• How should the school respond? Should cards/flowers be sent, a doorstep visit made? By whom? Staff, governor?</li> <li>• Have cultural and religious factors been taken into consideration?</li> </ul>	

<p>Communication with parents/carers of students attending the school</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the consent of the family, a letter can go home for parents/carers to explain what has happened and what actions the school will take.</li> <li>• See also support for parents/carers section below.</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Social media considerations at school in the event of a death</a></p>
<p>Communication with parents and carers of other students</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In the event of a death, with the family's agreement, how many parents/carers should receive school communications giving information about <i>what has happened</i> and what action the school has taken to support the pupils? Class/whole school?</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Social media considerations at school in the event of a death</a></p>
<p>Supporting those members of staff most deeply affected</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• You will need to identify those who require time and additional support to grieve. Who is the most natural contact for them?</li> <li>• How can staff support be channelled through this person?</li> <li>• Consider peer support.</li> </ul>	<p>Access to supervision for staff could be sought from <a href="#">WCF Educational Psychology Service</a></p>
<p>Breaking the news to pupils</p>	<p>Example scripts that may be useful:</p> <p>"I have got something very sad to tell you. You all know that X has been ill with cancer for a long time and has not been well enough to come to school much lately. As you know sometimes people with cancer do not get better, and sadly yesterday X died. He was at home with his family."</p> <p>e.g. "You may have heard about the accident on the motorway yesterday. Well Mrs Y was involved in the crash and was taken to hospital. I am sorry to have to tell you that her injuries were bad/severe and she could not survive the accident. She died last night."</p>	<p><a href="#">How to tell a child someone has died</a></p> <p><a href="#">Telling a child with SEND that someone has died</a></p>
<p><b>LATER CONSIDERATIONS</b></p>		
<p>Staff support and coming together</p>	<p>In the coming days and weeks, you will need to find ways as a team to address the enormity of the feeling and what has happened.</p> <p>It may be that some team members want to talk and some do not.</p> <p>It will be helpful to have a smaller group of people who come together to try and co-ordinate ideas that arise as you progress through the term.</p>	<p>Access to supervision for staff could be sought from the <a href="#">WCF Educational Psychology Service</a></p> <p>See self-care for those coordinating the response to loss and grief section of this document</p>
<p>Support for parents/carers</p>	<p>There should be communication to parents/carers telling them what support is available from school for pupils and what reactions parents/carers might</p>	<p><a href="#">What to say when someone is bereaved</a></p>

	<p>expect from their child so that they are prepared and can offer support at home</p>	<p><a href="#">Guidance for parents to support them talking to children about death</a></p> <p><b>Videos for Parents/carers:</b>  <a href="#">Child Bereavement UK supporting a bereaved child video</a></p> <p><a href="#">Child Bereavement UK explaining a funeral to a young child</a></p> <p><a href="#">Child Bereavement UK should I be worried about my bereaved teenager</a></p>
<p><b>Support for children</b></p>	<p>Children like adults will grieve in their own ways and very often what they need is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• To have the bereavement acknowledged and have the opportunity to talk about the person who has died if they wish.</li> <li>• To understand that what they are feeling is normal, and whatever they are feeling is accepted by those around them.</li> <li>• To know that there is someone in school who will support them if they get upset.</li> <li>• To have their questions answered honestly, in a way that they can understand.</li> </ul> <p>How can these considerations be addressed within the school community? What class- centred activities can be organised to allow for the class or group to come together?</p> <p>Initially it may be necessary to waive timetable/ learning expectations for those pupils badly affected by the news.</p> <p>Including time to be together as a group with support, talking, remembering, making cards, creating memory boards or books which could be added to over the coming days, may be most helpful for some.</p> <p>Others will want the 'routine' of school/home teaching to continue. If possible, offer choice.</p>	<p><b>Information for adults supporting and communicating with children:</b>  <a href="#">How to talk to bereaved children</a></p> <p><a href="#">Supporting a bereaved child through a difficult time video</a></p> <p><b>If the death was a suspected suicide:</b>  <a href="#">How to talk to children and young people about suicide</a></p> <p><b>Information for young people to access:</b>  <a href="#">Website for young people: resources, links and access to support for young people</a></p> <p><b>Books/resources:</b>  <a href="#">Cruse Booklist</a>  <a href="#">Child Bereavement Booklist</a></p>

<p><b>Suspected suicide: postvention</b></p>	<p>Undertake a circles of vulnerability exercise to identify those who may need specific support or be at additional risk. Liaise with outside organisations such as sport clubs/activity groups. Appendix A.</p> <p>The school may decide to maintain a register of suicide attempts and unexpected/more intense self-harm across the whole school population until at least the first anniversary of the death or the inquest whichever is the later. See Appendix C.</p>	<p><b>Refer to the WCC Emergency response Information Card (ERIC) for the death of a pupil or staff member.</b></p>
<p><b>Commemoration</b></p>	<p>Pupils/staff should be supported to attend the funeral and attendance records should not be impacted as a result of their attendance.</p> <p>Should the school hold its own special memorial? If so,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Who should be involved?</li> <li>• What form should the service take e.g. favourite stories, poems, music, display of work, remembrance table, and friendship tree?</li> </ul> <p>This should be done in collaboration with the class and family.</p> <p>Is a lasting memorial appropriate? If so,</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What would this look like? E.g. tree, trophy, book, fundraising event?</li> </ul> <p>Who should be involved with decision – family/pupils?</p>	
<p><b>The little things...</b></p>	<p>What will happen to the member of staff's desk/chair/mug? It would be a shock to return to school to see them removed without discussion and consideration.</p> <p>Let staff and the class or group have input</p> <p>How will the staff member's items be returned to the family? Will this be done in person?</p>	
<p><b>Getting further support</b></p>	<p>Grief is a normal and natural response and most people will manage their grief responses through existing networks of support.</p> <p>Sometimes emotions can be intense and persistent, impairing day-to-day life and leaving people feeling that they cannot cope.</p>	

	Some people have found it beneficial to access help during these times through bereavement support/counselling services.	
--	--	--

## Advice and guidance on breaking the news of bereavement to staff, pupils and families

When a death occurs to a close member within a school community there is usually a profound sense of shock, even if the death is expected. Finding what to say and how to say it is never easy in such situations. There are several overriding principles to bear in mind:

- Acknowledging the bereavement by saying or doing something is important. However you choose to, reach out to the person who is bereaved. It is better to say something than do nothing or avoid that person.
- Prepare yourself and take care of yourself throughout. Being alongside people's pain and distress is very difficult. You cannot shoulder people's burden and take it from them; but you can be there to help them with their journey. Such strong emotions will mean you will need to create time and space for yourself (please see self-care section of this document).

Remember (Guidance Adapted from Schonfeld & Quackenbush, 2010)

- Be present and be authentic. Speak about your feelings. Avoid manufacturing an emotional response. For example if you did not know the person it would not be appropriate to say that you will miss them but you can empathise with the feelings and let that person know you recognise that they were important to that person
- Grief lasts beyond the delivery of the news. It may be a good idea to put important dates in your calendar now so that you remember in the lead up to these events that some people will be finding things difficult.
- You cannot make someone cry. If it happens it is because the person was feeling that way already and it is important not to avoid these situations. These emotions can feel very intense for us and you will be tempted to want to 'fix' the situation. Try to resist this temptation.
- Allow for emotional expression. People are too often told to 'be strong' or 'toughen up' to cover their feelings. A more helpful form of support is to allow them to express and talk through their emotions
- Listen. This can be enough. Allow the person affected to talk, to reminisce and express their emotions.

- Try to be comfortable with silences. Do not feel you have to talk and/ or try to make people feel better. Remember it is often enough that you are there.
- Monitor your own non-verbal communication. If you begin to feel stressed it will show; try to stay calm and relaxed as much as you can.
- Demonstrate empathy. As Brené Brown (PhD) notes “empathy has no script. There is no right or wrong way to do it. It’s simply listening, holding space, withholding judgement, emotional connecting and communicating that incredibly healing message that you are not alone”.

## Breaking bad news

- This is often best done as soon as the family have said it is okay to do so.
- What happened should be told simply and factually – don’t stray into conjecture and try to avoid clichéd phrases.

e.g. “I have got something very sad to tell you. You all know that X has been ill with cancer for a long time and has not been well enough to come to school much lately. As you know sometimes people with cancer do not get better, and sadly yesterday X died. He was at home with his family.”

e.g. “You may have heard about the accident on the motorway yesterday. Well Mrs Y was involved in the crash and was taken to hospital. I am sorry to have to tell you that her injuries were so bad that she could not survive the accident and she died last night.”

People will naturally ask for more information and more details. You can remind people that it is still very soon and not all information is known and not all decisions have been made yet.

For children, it is likely that you will need to check their understanding.

## What can you say to someone who is experiencing bereavement and grief?

There is no right or perfect phrasing. Be honest and share your thoughts about the person who has died. Share your condolences and your thoughts on how hard this loss must be for their friends and family.

If you are stuck for words, here are some phrases that you may find useful (with thanks and acknowledgements to Cruse Bereavement Care):

- I don’t know what to say but I am so sorry to hear this news
- I’m so sad to hear this and I’m here if you need to talk.
- He/she was such a wonderful person/so selfless – full of positivity/kindness [whatever feels appropriate] – they will be hugely missed.
- He/she will be missed so much – they were an important part of our team. You are in my thoughts
- I am so very sorry to hear this sad news. I cannot imagine how devastated you are.

- I cannot imagine the hole that she/he will have left. If you need anything, let me know.
- So very shocked and saddened by this sad news. Hard to believe [name] has gone. I am here when you need me.
- This is so heart-breaking – I wish I could be there to give you a hug.

Remember that it is always better to say or do something, but here are some phrases that may **not** be as useful (Morris, 2008; Schonfeld & Quackenbush, 2010):

- They had a good life.
- At least...
- They are in a better place now.
- You have to pull yourself together.
- You have to get on with your life.
- It's been six weeks, I thought you'd be better by now.
- You've got to be strong.
- You've got to snap out of it.
- I know how you feel/exactly what you are going through.
- Both of my parents died as well when I was your age/another student's brother died last year
- I know it is difficult but you need to remember the good things in life as well.
- You must be feeling [name of feeling]

For children, avoid ambiguous phrases such as 'they have gone to a better place' or 'they have gone to sleep' 'we have lost'. Younger children in particular will be very concrete and literal in their thinking, and they may try to find that person or believe that the person will wake up (Understanding Childhood, 2020).

## Further resources and information for death through suicide

- [Worcestershire Bereaved by Suicide Service](#) - a free and confidential signposting service for those bereaved and affected by suicide is provided in Worcestershire by Victim Support.
- [Winston Wish](#) – includes information such as resources, how to talk to a child about suicide and the potential impact of suicide
- [Child Bereavement UK](#) – includes information on supporting children who have bereaved by suicide or possible suicide including an [information sheet](#) and [video](#) and recommended [books](#)
- [Survivors of Bereavement of Suicide](#) – includes information of how to talk to a child about suicide, possible changes in behaviour, returning to school and links to resources
- [Papyrus](#) – charity dedicated to the prevention of young suicide
- [Support After Suicide](#) – information and practical guidance for those bereaved by suicide which also includes guidance booklet [Help is at Hand](#)

## Further information for death through homicide

- [Winston Wish](#) – includes information for those supporting children bereaved by murder and manslaughter.
- [Child Bereavement UK](#) – includes information for those supporting children bereaved by homicide including an [information sheet](#)

## References

Griese, B., Burns, M. R., Farro, S. A., Silvern, L., & Talmi, A. (2017). *Comprehensive grief care for children and families: Policy and practice implications*. *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry*, 87(5), 540.

Morris, S. (2008). *Overcoming grief a self-help guide using cognitive behavioural techniques*. London: Constable and Robinson

Schonfeld, D. J., & Demaria, T. P. (2018). The role of school psychologists in the support of grieving children. *School Psychology Quarterly*, 33(3), 361.

Rolls, L (2019) UK childhood bereavement services: A reflection on their development and cultural influence, *Bereavement Care*, 38:2-3, 91-103.

Schonfeld, D. J., & Quackenbush, M. (2010). *The grieving student: A teacher's guide*. Paul H Brookes Publishing.

Understanding Childhood (2020) *Bereavement helping parents and children cope when someone close to them dies*, Kent: Understanding Childhood

## Definitions:

### **Suicide ideation**

Thoughts of suicide which can range from ideas about ending your life to having a specific plan.

### **Suicide attempt**

When someone harms themselves with an intent to end their life.

### **Unexpected/more intense self-harm**

Self-harm is when someone deliberately hurts themselves as a way of dealing with their emotions. Unexpected/more intense self-harm is a change in the pattern of someone's self-harm – this may be the self-harm becoming more acute, more frequent or both.

### **Suicide contagion**

Where one or more than one person's suicide influences another person to engage in suicidal behaviour or increases their risk of suicide ideation and attempts.

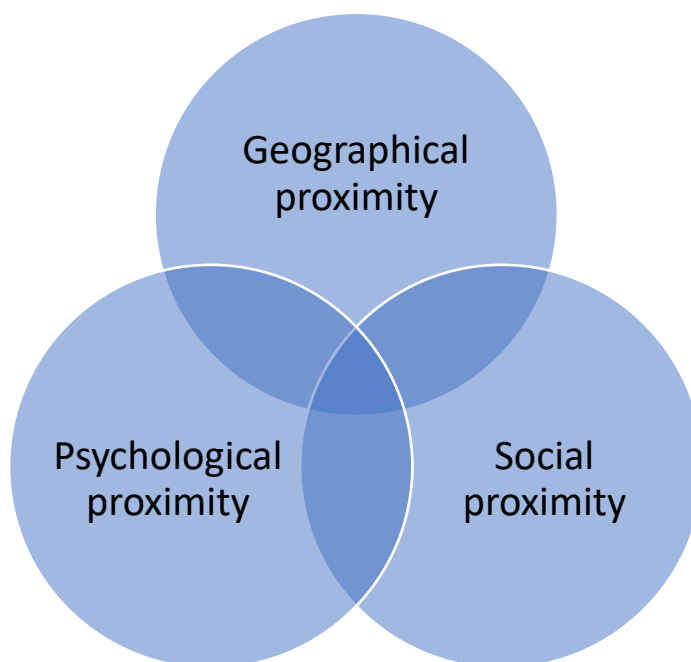
## Acknowledgements



This guidance is based on the guidance produced by Solihull Community Educational Psychology Service which was written in consultation with the following services; Seesaw Oxfordshire, Cruse Bereavement Care, Winston’s Wish, Child Bereavement UK and the following people; Joanna Luxmore-Brown (Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council), Paula Thompson (Specialist Inclusion Support Service), Jo Green (Northern House), Nicole Fowles (Coleshill Heath School) and Fiona Edward (Windy Arbor Primary School)

## Appendix A: Circles of Vulnerability

The Circles of Vulnerability tool is a way of identifying which individuals or groups may require additional support or monitoring (see Appendix C) due to multiple risk factors. While originally designed for use in the case of suicide, or critical incidents, it remains a useful tool for structuring thinking.



First, consider who was geographically, or physically close to the deceased (if an incident happened for example on school grounds), or who were close to the bereaved when they found out. This may not be relevant in the case of a non-critical incident bereavement. One example is of a pupil killed by a car; who was physically present at this time?

Psychological proximity refers to those who relate to the deceased through cultural connections, shared experiences (e.g. fellow victims of bullying, team members, classmates, etc.) or the perception of having similar characteristics.

Social proximity refers to the relationships someone has with the person who died. This can include family, friends, social circles, or a romantic interest.

The more circles an individual is in, the more likely it is that they are at increased risk of vulnerability and may require additional support.

## Appendix B: Terms of Reference for a Suicide Postvention Action Group (SPAG)

### Terms of Reference

#### Aim

To prevent a further suicide, self-harm or a cluster of responses from developing. To minimise the longer term mental and emotional distress, and its impact, that arises from a suspected suicide.

#### Objectives

- To decide what action needs to be taken to minimise the chance of further injuries or deaths – particularly protecting vulnerable and impressionable individuals.
- To oversee and co-ordinate the action needed to support young people impacted by a suspected suicide of a pupil.
- To co-ordinate this response across agencies.
- To escalate any concerns to Public Health on [rts@worcestershire.gov.uk](mailto:rts@worcestershire.gov.uk) (Real Time Surveillance) or telephone 01905 768053 and ask for the Suicide Prevention Team, Public Health.

#### Membership

- WCF Safeguarding lead (Chair)
- Headteacher
- School DSL(s)
- Senior Mental Health Lead
- Mental health support (WEST or Act on It worker)
- Educational Psychologist
- SUDIC Nurse
- Bereaved by suicide service
- CAMHS
- School Nurse
- Note taker

#### Optional

- WCF Comms

If a possible cluster of self harm or attempted suicide is of concern as a result of using the tool in Appendix C, contact [rts@worcestersire.gov.uk](mailto:rts@worcestersire.gov.uk) and invite to the SPAG:

- Primary Care rep e.g. GP
- Public Health rep

#### Frequency of meetings

This will be dependent on the planned action and timescales. It is suggested meetings be initially more frequent but at least once a term and at least until after the first anniversary of the death or the inquest whichever is the later.

## Notes

Action notes will be kept and circulated after each meeting.

## Accountability

- The WCF Safeguarding Lead is responsible for initiating the SPAG but all members are expected to respond and attend meetings. WCF will chair the meetings via the Safeguarding Lead.
- The SPAG will report on action taken (maintaining confidentiality) to the Board of Governors and Director of Education.

# XXXX School Suicide Prevention Action Group Agenda

**Date: Time:**

Online joining details

Introductions		Lead By:
Meeting confidentiality statement	<p>Information shared by agency representatives within the remit of this meeting is strictly confidential and must not be disclosed to third parties without the agreement of the partners and the consent of the Chair of the meeting.</p> <p>Information will be shared on a 'need to know' basis and a clear distinction should be made between fact and opinion. If there is any doubt about its accuracy this should be stated.</p> <p>All agencies should ensure that the minutes of the meeting are treated as confidential material and that they are retained in an appropriately secure manner.'</p> <p><b>By attending this meeting we, as participants, agree to abide by these principles.</b></p>	
Local situation		
Background	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Context around the suspected suicide</li> <li>• Report on monitoring of CYP who have expressed suicidal ideation, suicide attempts, unexpected or more intensive self-harm (Appendix C record)</li> <li>• Evidence of contagion?</li> <li>• Confirmation about information sharing and password protection</li> </ul>	<p>SUDIC nurse/school School</p> <p>All</p>
Action taken to date	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safeguarding (WCF &amp; school)</li> <li>• School</li> </ul>	

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Education Psychology</li> <li>• SUDIC Nurse</li> <li>• Bereaved by suicide service</li> <li>• CAMHS</li> <li>• School Nurse</li> </ul>	
Bereavement Support		
Comms		
Outstanding concerns and actions needed		All
Wider-system issues		
Possible system-wide response/support needs e.g. process change, wider health promotion, wider surveillance needs, additional monitoring.		
Opportunities for preventative action		
AOB		All
Next meeting		

Ref: [Identifying and responding to suicide clusters \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

## Appendix C: Register of suicide attempts and unexpected/more intense self-harm

Confidentiality, no names, password protection, restrict sharing.

[Please use this spreadsheet \(available to download via Google Drive\)](#) to record cases of suicide attempts or self-harm that are or maybe related to the original suspected suicide.