



Critical Incident Policy

This policy sets out the procedures to be followed to ensure the safety of the whole Pre School community in the event of a critical incident.

Definition

A critical incident can be a physical incident or psychological trauma that has a severe immediate impact and likely long term effect on children, staff or parents. This may include:

- Incidents that involve staff, children or Parents.
- People made disasters/emergencies
- Natural disasters/emergencies

Crisis management and recovery processes involve personal support, crisis intervention and a whole range of practical assistance.

This policy will name the people who will assume key roles (Critical Incident Team), the information and Procedures that will need to be in place. The communication framework required to handle any contingency and the support structures for staff.

The Critical Incident Team has responsibility for ensuring that procedures are properly addressed at times of high emotion and that if the manager is the subject of the incident then the response mechanism should proceed effectively. If the incident subsequently involves legal action, a precise response to the incident should be known and be able to be verified by more than one person.

Major incidents focused on people

Whilst all critical incidents are difficult for all concerned, incidents which involve serious injury or death are inevitably traumatic.

By their very nature and definition critical incidents tend to disorientate and may overwhelm those involved. Planning ahead is a necessary precaution and can be crucial.

Communication during and after the incident is, of course, of great importance.

Planning for an emergency

It is important that the Pre School know which people can be contacted immediately following an incident, what information is available and where it is stored. Therefore, the critical incident team will:

- Issue all staff with a Critical Incident Management plan.
- Review the Critical Incident Management plan at a staff meeting during the first term of each Pre - School year.

The critical incident team will consist of the Manger, Deputy Manager and health and safety officer. Others may be co-opted as necessary in light of the emergency and the availability of the people and personal involvement of those concerned.

In the event of an emergency all staff including temporary, volunteers and student placements should be notified as soon as possible.

The office should be used as the central liaison point for all incidents. However if this is not available another suitable location should be used.

The local Early Education and Childcare Unit (EECU) will be notified as soon as possible so they can assist in calling the necessary agencies that need to be informed of the incident.

The following information will be held at Woodcroft Pre School & Wrap Around Care:

- Telephone numbers of all staff
- Names of key holders
- All children's contact information
- Significant medical information relating to any staff or child

Responding to an emergency

Initial responses should be to:

- Contact all members of the critical incident team
- Assess that all children and staff are safe – During a critical incident the safety of all is paramount
- Build a profile of the incident, eg who is most affected by the incident and how it may have affected them
- Check to establish whether any individual or group needs any immediate attention
- Assess immediate practical needs.

Communication

Those dealing with in-coming calls should provide an agreed factual statement together with re-assurance of action being taken at the incident site.

Contacting Families Directly Affected

This should be done quickly and sensitively. Consistency of information is vital, so it is best to avoid a chain of communication in this instance.

If parents are to be invited to meet with Woodcroft Pre School & Wrap Around Care staff the venue should be secure and not made known to the media.

Staff should be prepared to suggest individuals, groups or organisations that can offer suitable relevant support.

Responding to Calls from Parents/Carers

Agree which staff will be delegated/permitted to talk to parents/carers, these members of staff should:

- Use language and tone that alleviates anxiety
- Anticipate questions relevant to the incident, eg 'Did my child witness the incident?' and be prepared to answer them

Information for Staff

It is vital that all adults in contact with children are kept well informed and feel secure in handling questions and comments. This ensures that knowledge is common and questions are answered.

Staff will be cautioned against talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters.

Informing the Children

Staff may need to be given advice or guidance on what the children should be told and how.

Some information may be given to all the children at once. Other types of information may be disseminated in small groups by staff who are closest to the children.

Our children may not understand the implications of any incident, so information given should be tailored to the cognitive and emotional levels of the children. Children must be given all the time necessary for them to understand or ask about the incident.

Families should be informed about the amount of information their children have been given as they will not be able to relay this information themselves.

Contacting Parents/Carers and others not directly affected

It may be sufficient to inform other parents/carers by letter. In other case's it may be more appropriate to call a meeting at Woodcroft Pre-School & Wrap Around Care premises, especially if the incident is one which could call into question aspects of the Pre Schools organisation that could affect all pupils.

A prepared verbal or written statement can provide necessary facts and expressions of sympathy and concern. It is essential to remember that a letter can be passed on to the media. Seek guidance from the setting manager before issuing any written statements.

Woodcroft Pre -School & Wrap Around Care will need to make a decision based on the nature of the incident whether a letter is sent out immediately or if it would be better to be delayed until all facts are known.

The Media

The media may contact any member of your staff however it is vital that staff:

- Are clear about who is and is not permitted to talk to the media on behalf of the Pre School
- Are able to accept that in certain circumstances it is not suitable for the permitted person to speak to the media and a substitute must be available
- Are accompanied by another member of staff whilst talking to the media to make a record of what is said
- Provide nothing but facts
- Give a prepared statement rather than an interview and anticipate the worst possible questions
- Immediately correct any incorrect or misleading information – by interrupting if necessary
- Are sensitive about personal information
- Do not apportion blame or liability to anyone even in 'off the record' conversations
- Remember to praise any person or service that have helped during the incident
- Treat all contact with the press with caution

Support for People

Particularly in the event of a critical incident, it is easy for the emotions and stresses experienced by the person managing the incident to be overlooked. It is important that the person managing the incident also takes care of themselves and that someone takes on the responsibility for ensuring this element is not forgotten.

It is important to acknowledge the emotional state of all the people involved – Staff, Children and Parents/Carers.

It must be recognised that, depending on the nature of the incident, not all staff may feel able to support others or the children's and that burden of support may fall to a disproportionately small number of staff.it is important that this is openly acknowledged and recognised as an acceptable and possibly inevitable position to adopt.

Recognise that a critical incident may have an impact on children and affect their behaviour or emotional state and be prepared to offer them support from appropriate professionals from inside and outside of the Pre School, Nursery and Holiday Club.

Staff closely involved in the incident in any way should be offered opportunities for debriefing and counselling, informally or through a more formal structure.

Be aware that there may be some long term effects on some people, staff and children may need to be offered professional therapeutic help.

Consider designating areas for parents/carers to meet so that support can be given but privacy maintained.

Formal and Informal Recognition Rituals

- Arrangements may be made to express sympathy to the families closely affected by the incident.
- Injured children can be visited in hospital and other children should be encouraged to send cards and letters
- Staff may attend funerals if they are sure of being welcome, Pre School, Nursery & Holiday club may be closed in recognition of funerals.
- Special memorial services may be held in Woodcroft Pre School & Wrap Around Care

Implications for training

- Must ensure all staff receive training in areas such as loss, change or bereavement

This policy was adopted September 2019.

Director

Company Secretary

Woodcroft Pre-School and Wrap Around Care