

Young Parents' Centre Nursery

Critical Incident Policy and Plan

CRITICAL INCIDENTS DEFINED

Handling crises and dealing with difficult 'incidents' on a daily basis is viewed by some as a normal aspect of nursery life. However, there are occasions when Early Years Provisions will experience incidents of a significantly more extreme nature. What seems to distinguish these incidents is their nature and scale, and it is this type of occurrence, which has come to be termed a '**critical incident**'.

What is a critical incident?

Although the concept of a critical incident is difficult to precisely define, authors who research and write in this field have, in the past, attempted to define critical incidents as '**Unexpected occurrences, which may suddenly have a major impact on the Nursery**'.

However, in recent years some authors have noted that this type of description does not capture the relative nature of some critical incidents, which to some may seem relatively small-scale but, to others who experience them, can seem overwhelming. In this respect Gibson (1999) would suggest that an incident could be described in critical terms when it '**Overwhelms or overcomes the normal coping strategies and strengths of those involved**'.

It is also important to note that this approach, which views critical incidents as situations or crises that are beyond the everyday experiences of Nursery life, contains an implied understanding that these incidents would be markedly distressing to a significant number of adults and children.

Preventative and Precautionary Measures

Whilst no amount of planning can totally prevent accidents and problems occurring, it is hoped that some can be prevented and the effects of others minimised by taking sensible precautionary measures. It is expected that

- All staff, volunteers and young mums should be familiar with the Nursery's routines for fire and the evacuation of the Nursery building on hearing the fire alarm.
- All staff should be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies (as detailed in this Policy).
- All staff should be familiar with the Nursery's security procedures, in particular that all professional visitors are asked for identification and that other visitors are not left unsupervised
- All visitors to the Nursery must enter via Reception and not through Outdoor Play Areas . All visitors to the setting MUST sign the 'Visitors Book'.
- All staff organising Nursery trips and visits follow the guidelines and write a risk assessment to be signed off by the Manager at least 48 hours before trip or visit.
- All staff should sign in and out of the premises.
- All staff are aware of babies with medical needs or health problems.

- All staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children before carrying out an activity.
- All staff are aware that they are responsible for assessing risks to themselves before undertaking an activity.

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A major incident may be defined as:

- An accident leading to a serious injury or fatality;
- Severe injury or severe stress;
- Circumstances in which a person or persons might be at serious risk of illness;
- Circumstances in which any part, or whole of the Nursery is unable to function as normal due to external influences, and
- Any situation in which the national press or media might be involved.

As such, major incidents include:

- Death of a baby, parent, staff or volunteer; or serious injury, on a Nursery trip.
- The sudden death, in tragic circumstances of a member of staff; volunteer; parent or baby.
- A transport or road traffic accident involving staff; babies; parents; volunteers of the Nursery
- Epidemic in Nursery
- A baby missing from home; Abductions or disappearances from home or Nursery.
- Major fires or floods at the Nursery or adjoining school.
- Destruction or major/significant vandalism in Nursery; Arson attacks on the Nursery/ school.
- Incident involving an intruder, believed to be armed, on Nursery or school premises
- A hostage taken; Violent attacks on babies; staff and volunteers.
- A disaster in the community; A civil disturbance or terrorism (including bomb threats).
- Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against babies

In the event of such an incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the Nursery; activity; visit or trip at the time must be able to:

- Save life
- Minimise personal injury
- Safeguard the interests of babies; parents; staff and volunteers Minimise loss and return to normal working practices as quickly as possible

The above will need to be considered in terms of time and carried out either:

- Immediately
- In the Medium Term
- In the Longer Term

Critical Incident Management Team will comprise of the following:

Kath Formby, Manager
Julie O' Brien, Jane Scott – Nursery Nurses
Mike Gallafent, Chair of Management Committee
Dawn Hollingsworth, Business Manager

CRITICAL INCIDENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

The Nursery's reaction to a critical incident can be divided into the following categories:

- a) Immediate Action
- b) Short term Action
- c) Medium term Action
- d) Longer term Action

IMMEDIATE ACTION – i.e. within hours of the incident occurring

- 1) Obtain and collate information relating to the incident – uncertainty breeds rumour and accurate information is essential;
- 2) Gather and brief the CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) – brief the team, allocate roles and responsibilities;
- 3) Trigger support from the appropriate external professional organisations and other contacts on emergency list clearly identifying who is going to contact whom;
- 4) Set up an incident management room and dedicated phone line to deal with calls from anxious young mums/ grandparents etc.
- 5) CIMT will agree a factual statement and avoid speculation.
- 6) Contact families affected. Information will be consistent and sensitively disclosed. Emotional support will be given to those families.
- 7) CIMT to agree and make arrangements to inform other parents i.e. letter or leaflet. Advice is to be sought before other parents are informed in respect of legal liability.
- 8) Inform staff and volunteers. Staff to be reminded and/or briefed about talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters
- 9) Inform babies depending on their ability to understand using an age appropriate method. It is important that older babies receive a consistent account of the incident allowing for differences in their ability to understand.
- 10) Care needs to be exercised to protect both babies and adults closely involved in the incident.
- 11) People involved will be encouraged to talk.
- 12) Seek advice before agreeing to speak to or be interviewed by the media. If this is not an option then an agreed text for release should be prepared by the CIMT and a designated spokesperson briefed and prepared to respond on the Nursery's behalf.
- 13) Devise a plan for handling the reactions and feelings of people affected; denial, distress, guilt, anger and helplessness. CIMT need to consider outside professionals to support and debrief staff; parents; volunteers and babies affected by the incident. Those providing support also need support. At this point the CIMT will need to plan their short term reaction to the incident.

SHORT TERM ACTION – the next stage

1) Reunion of babies with their families – especially where the incident occurs outside the Nursery. Mostly babies will need to be taken home, but CIMT need to be aware that sometimes parents and families need to visit the scene of the incident to understand how they deal with repercussions in terms of their baby's fears etc.

2) Organise support for all Staff and Volunteers, preferably from within the Nursery but using outside agencies if appropriate. Staff monitoring should be a priority, even for members of the CIMT. If a crisis persists over many hours staff will become tired, weary and upset and this affects their powers to make sensible decisions.

3) Encourage young mums to talk. Use outside agencies if appropriate. Staff will be briefed about ways to help the young mums affected by the incident,

4) Debriefing Meeting – it may be appropriate to hold a debriefing meeting for staff, volunteers and parents to:

- clarify what has happened
- allow for sharing reactions
- reassure people that reactions are normal
- mobilise resources e.g. parental support groups

An experienced person, possibly someone from outside the school community, will lead this meeting.

5) Re-establishing Routines – Every attempt will be made to provide continuity for the babies. The return to Nursery of staff, young mums or babies directly affected by the crisis will be managed carefully and with sensitivity but the re-establishment of routine is an important stage in emotional recovery.

MEDIUM TERM ACTION

1. Return to Nursery for staff; volunteers or babies after long absence. Reintegration will be carefully planned and may involve home visits prior to return or part time attendance initially, reducing workloads, putting in place mentoring process etc.

2. Consulting Professionals – consideration will be given to consulting the Educational Psychology Service for support and guidance, especially to help those showing unusual or prolonged reaction to the incident.

3. Keeping young mums informed – the CIMT will consider whether it is appropriate to produce a leaflet for parents giving guidance on the possible delayed reactions of pupils to an incident and making suggestions to help them deal with these.

4. Support for Staff – on-going monitoring and support for staff is a major consideration. CIMT especially will not be immune to reaction from their ordeal.

LONG TERM ACTION

1. Monitoring the Vulnerable – the effects of a crisis can reverberate for years, and it is especially important that new staff and young mums are briefed in the Nursery's history to help them understand and deal with potential repercussions especially at anniversary times.

2. Marking Anniversaries – these difficult times will be treated with sensitivity.

3. Legal Processes – the length of time taken over some legal processes can prolong the recovery process following a critical incident. CIMT will plan for this

especially where staff may be involved attending legal processes, and facing extended emotional trauma.

4. Curriculum Implications – it may be appropriate to schedule INSET training for staff in loss counselling, bereavement etc.

Lock Down’ procedures

In the event of danger of violence and aggression to occupants of the nursery, staff and babies will remain in the nursery or nursery kitchen area. Staff will close curtains, block the door view and communicate via walkie talkie.

In the event of a Maple critical incident we will follow the Maple ‘Emergency Plan’ procedures

Date of Policy – January 2019

Date or Review – January 2021

Signed:

Nursery Manager.....

Chair of Management Committee.....

Action Cards

The CIMT has considered and devised a set of Action cards. The Action Cards give responsibilities for specified staff in the event of a critical incident

a. away from the Nursery b. in the Nursery environment

These should be used in the event of a major incident and be carried by staff on Nursery visits.

ACTION CARD 1.

GUIDANCE FOR NURSERY STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT ON NURSERY PREMISES

- **obtain facts and information**
- **call the emergency services using (9) 999 and at same time:**

PROCEDURE:

1. Evacuate the building if safe to do so and deemed necessary e and assemble in the small car park.
2. Staff to bring the register; mobile phones if they have access to them.
3. Office Staff to bring main phone and contact lists.
4. Inform Nursery and Maple PRU of evacuation
5. Inform and keep informed Nursery staff and volunteers
6. Retain any relevant equipment.
7. Contact Local Authority for advice.
8. Contact Chair of Management Committee.
9. Contact Health & Safety Authority.
10. Prepare to deal with the media.

ACTION CARD 2

GUIDANCE FOR NURSERY STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT OFF SITE

1. Administer First Aid where possible.
2. Establish a contact point with the emergency services.
3. Allocate responsibility to ensure other babies are safe and supported.
4. Travel with casualties to hospital.
5. Inform the Nursery. Nursery to contact parents/carers.
6. Complete Accident / Incident Forms.

ACTION CARD 3

GUIDANCE FOR NURSERY STAFF IN EVENT OF A MAJOR INCIDENT ON SITE – e.g. Fire and/or Flood

1. **Keep a record of incident; action taken; witnesses etc..**
2. **Keep others informed of situation.**
3. **Arrange for non-casualties to evacuate Nursery.**

PROCEDURE:

1. Evacuate the building, if safe to do so and assemble in the small car park.
2. Staff to bring the register; mobile phones if they have access to them.
3. Office Staff to bring main phone and contact lists.
4. Inform Maple PRU of evacuation.
5. Care for young mums at Nursery or alternative location.
6. Consider re-location to other premises.
7. Remain available to emergency services and take their advice.