

TREVI GLAS COMMUNITY COLLEGE**Bereavement Response Policy**

If school is affected by the death of a student, staff member, or someone within the school community, we will endeavour to respond in a way which enables our students and staff to understand the situation, and their feelings, as best we can.

Our policy is to provide honest, factual information, to students and staff appropriately and sensitively by:

- we will aim to follow the guidelines and recommendations within the 'REMEMBER ME' book, provided by the children's bereavement support charity Penhaligon's Friends
- we will seek further guidance and support from Penhaligon's Friends, the Local Authority, CAMHS and other organisations as required. We may call upon external agencies to provide immediate support to students
- we will make contact with the bereaved family/families to offer condolences and discuss the school's response. The wishes of the family will be respected and taken into consideration within our response to the situation
- we will aim to confirm the facts, from a reliable source, prior to giving the information to students. Wherever possible, and appropriate, we will give the students factual information about the death to avoid rumour and speculation. We will take into account those with special education and complex needs when giving bad news and information and ensure additional support is available to them.
- we will provide immediate pastoral care to affected students and staff and where appropriate, provide a safe place for them to come for timeout, comfort and reflection. We will ensure that on-going consideration is given to those affected
- we will notify the Local Authority of the death of a student immediately
- we will respond to any media enquiries about the death through our designated spokesperson and/or press officer from the Local Authority

In the case of death by suspected suicide or where there has been traumatic circumstances we will follow additional guidance as we recognise that the response will need to be coordinated together with Police and Social Care.

Bereavement Response Protocol

If a student, staff member, or someone within college community is affected by a death, our response will be guided by the table below. There may be situations where it is more appropriate for another person, in place of the one stated, to carry out that role.

| Action | If Student or Member of Staff | If Other |
|---|--|---|
| | <i>Insert name of person responsible into each box</i> | |
| If a member of staff receives information concerning a bereavement they should inform DUN without further investigation | All staff | HoH/Safeguarding |
| Confirm facts regarding death. If necessary involve Safeguarding team | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL | HoH/Safeguarding |
| Inform ALL Staff Consider absent staff | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL | Possible email/briefing notes - ECM Mgr/HOH |
| Brief all staff about possibility of press involvement and use of Facebook and other web forums | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher /DSL | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL |
| Contact bereaved family and send letter of condolence | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL |
| If appropriate, visit family | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL |
| Liaise with family regarding college's response, including funeral | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/DSL | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher/ DSL |
| Inform Students <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider smaller friendship groups/tutorial first • Use a prepared format • Identify any vulnerable students & those with any complex needs • Consider absent students | All SLT & HoH | HoH if applicable |
| Notify parents <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • By telephone • By letter | Headteacher/delegated person | N/A |
| Identify and contact "at risk" students/staff | SLT & HoH | SLT & HoH |
| Make contact with Local Authority and/or Penhaligon's Friends for additional support | Headteacher/Deputy Headteacher Local Authority HoH Penhaligon's Friends | HoH Penhaligon's Friends |
| For a child returning to college arrange a meeting with them to discuss return to college and support needs | HoH & SS | HoH & SS, ECM manager |
| Liaise with family regarding special remembrance event/memorial | Headteacher/delegated person | N/A |
| Monitor on-going needs of student/family | HoH & SS | HoH & SS, ECM manager |

Bereavement

Students should be told as soon as possible of a person's death. This is to prevent them learning from some other, possibly inappropriate, source. Whenever possible they should hear the news from someone close to them, in familiar surroundings. It is very important to tell the truth as far as it is known. Even 'white lies' will have to be renegotiated later on.

These points encapsulate the overall message in helping bereaved children:

- try to maintain feelings of security, of being cared for and loved
- maintain all the necessary practical care
- be honest at the child's level of understanding
- continue to talk and communicate
- do not pretend to believe what you don't believe
- try to understand the child's feelings and reassure where possible
- do not be afraid to say "I don't know"
- do not be afraid to share your own feelings
- remember there are others who can help
- do not be afraid to admit to colleagues and family that you cannot cope at any particular time

Breaking sad news to staff and students

When there has been a bereavement or traumatic event, the following steps will be taken when informing staff and students:

- It is essential that all staff are informed straight away, ideally before students
- identify ways of doing this sensitively. Don't forget part-time and absent staff
- students should be told as soon as possible. This is best done in familiar groups by someone they know. A large college assembly is usually not ideal. Staff may well need guidance on words to use and approach to take. Have something prepared
- a letter will go to families the same day if possible

Informing parents following an incident

Wherever possible, the parents of all the other children at the college should be informed that college has experienced an incident and that their child may be upset (and may want counselling).

It is difficult to give specific advice because of the many different ways an incident may occur, but there are some general pointers that will ensure information is passed on effectively and sensitively:

- Select several staff members who will be good at coping with a difficult and emotionally draining task
- get the calls done quickly: misinformation will spread informally among parents very quickly
- remember to keep to hand a hard copy of parents' contact details in case you are unable to access your PCs or electronic database for any reason (and think about keeping a second set at an alternative location in case you cannot enter your office)

- brief those who are selected to make contact, perhaps by writing a framework script and rehearsing the message first
- start with a clear list of who needs to be called and who does not. keep records of who has been contacted successfully
- give parents clear information and advice about what they should do (e.g. whether they are to follow their normal collection routine or collect their child immediately, or whether the college will be closed for a time)
- warn parents if there seems to be a lot of media interest: journalists may try to get interviews with parents or students. advise them to contact the college if they are approached (though it will obviously be up to individuals to decide whether they co-operate)
- offer help with the arrangement of transport, if necessary and feasible and check that the parents or children are not left alone in distress, perhaps suggesting that the person seeks support from relatives or neighbours
- offer useful phone numbers for support or for more information (e.g. the emergency helpline number or the hospital number)
- consider including guidelines for parents on supporting bereaved children with the letter

Psychological First Aid

Psychological first aid refers to the actions that can be taken by people without formal psychological or counselling training to provide emotional support for people following an emergency or critical incident.

Contact Social Care for advice on psychological first aid staff:

- Discretely observe. Ask simple questions to ascertain what help may be needed
- Emphasise the support available to the staff member
- Initiate contact only after you have observed the staff member and appraised the situation. It is important to make sure that contact will not be seen as intrusive or disruptive
- Review the situation and emphasise the positive actions taken by the staff member in managing the situation
- Listen with compassion
- Offer to make them a cup of tea/coffee
- Use physical contact if appropriate. Just holding a hand or a hand on the shoulder may convey concern and support. (Use discretion in this situation)
- Reflect the words of the person. Don't judge the statements a person makes. Ask non-intrusive questions (e.g. "Where were you during...?" "How did you find out...")
- Keep the discussion based on what happened. Avoid "What if ...?" or "I should have ..." statements. If the victim takes this line, bring the talk back to real events
- In some instances staff members may have an intense and lasting response and need professional psychological help, such as that available through the Department's Employee Assistant Programme. However, your interventions as a line manager or a colleague can do much to reduce or even remove the need for counselling
- Follow-up should be at a level appropriate to the relationship between the person and helper. In some instances it may be as simple as asking "How are you?"
- Remember that psychological first aid is about reducing distress, assisting with the current needs of the staff member and making sure the staff member is offered the support to allow them to function within their professional setting. It is not about revisiting traumatic experiences.

Do's & Don'ts for Dealing with the Media

"Do's" in facing the media:

- Do respond to 'what' and 'when' question
- Do tell your story quickly, accurately and get your key message(s) across
- Do consider, when possible, the needs of your audience
- Do choose your own time when to report to the media
- Do prepare and rehearse so that everybody has the same story
- If possible, agree an interview format and establish what the interviewer wants to ask. Try to have another person with you to monitor the interview.
- Be clear in your own mind what you want to say, and talk it through with a colleague first if possible. BUT you will also need to be prepared to think on your feet.

If possible, get statements checked by legal advisors and other

"Don't" in facing the new media:

- Don't reply to 'why' and 'how' questions
- Don't speculate
- Don't bluff or lie
- Don't make 'off the record' comments
- Don't make promises you cannot keep
- Don't make excuses or blame others
- Don't response to 'blind quotes' (e.g. "one of your staff tell me that – do you agree?")
- Don't say "no comment" – explain why you cannot comment
- Don't allow words to be put in your mouth – e.g. "would you agree that?"
- Refuse requests for photographs of college work, children or staff involved.
- Do not allow journalists to wander around college premises unescorted.

Dealing with the Media

Those designated with the role of dealing with the media must instruct other staff not to give interviews or comments on any written or printed material.

Make it clear to everyone that no such material should be handed out to the media. Ensure all staff members, and students if applicable, are aware that they should direct any media requests to you.

Make contact, if possible, with LA's press and PR support.

Wherever possible make a specific telephone number available for media enquiries and let everyone know this number. Remember that local radio in particular can help to keep people informed about what is happening.

Depending on the nature of the incident, the task of dealing with the media pressures may fall to the police. If this is the case then the police press officer will need to liaise closely with you to ensure that briefing is accurate and to arrange interviews if appropriate.

In the event of a major incident the police will take some actions immediately, such as:

- Controlling access to the site
- Establishing a media liaison point
- Dispatching a media liaison officer

If the police do not arrange a media liaison officer promptly then you should make contact with the Government News Network – they can supply experienced press-officers at any time (at no cost for the first 24 hours) who will arrive with their own communications facilities and technical support equipment.

Central Office of Information
Hercules House
Hercules Road
London SE1 7DU
Tel: 020 7928 2345

COI SOUTH WEST
Castlemead, Lower Castle Street, Bristol, BS1 3AG
Tel: 0117 917 5161

Contact List

| Contact | Name | Daytime Phone Number | Out of hours phone number |
|---|--|---|---|
| <p>Director of Children's Services Indicate to the PA that it is an emergency</p> <p>Out of normal office hours telephone FIRE CONTROL at County Hall</p> | <p>There is a fire officer there 24 hours a day; clearly indicate;</p> <p>* that it is an emergency * That you need to speak to a senior officer from Children's Services as soon as possible * Where you are, who you are and your telephone number (remain by the phone)</p> | 01872 322403 | <p>01872 320205 – FIRE CONTROL</p> <p>01872 322457 – Barry McIntosh (Transport, Commissioning and Service Lead)</p> |
| <p>Children's Schools & Families Bereavement & Critical Incident Support</p> | <p>Tamsin Dower (Dolcoath Admin Team)</p> <p>Mandy Owen - Principal Educational Psychologist</p> | <p>01209 615640</p> <p>07891 840354</p> | 07891 840354 |

| | | | |
|---------------------------------------|------------------|---------------|--------------|
| Emergency Planning | | 0300 1234 232 | |
| Police | | 999 | 999 |
| Fire Brigade | | 999 | 999 |
| Ambulance | | 999 | 999 |
| Chair of Interim Executive Board | Liz Brand | 07812 562524 | 07812 562524 |
| School Nurse | Ruth Counter | 07768033192 | |
| County Press Office | | 01872 322186 | |
| Educational Psychologist | Mandy Owen | 01736 336722 | 07891 840354 |
| Accident & Emergency, Treliske | | 01872 250000 | |
| Social Services (Children & Families) | | 0300 1234 101 | 01208 251300 |
| Penhaligon's Friends | Becky Thomas | 01209 210624 | |
| Telecoms | | | |
| Water | South West Water | 0800 1691133 | |
| Electricity | EDF | 0845 3663664 | |
| Gas | Conona | 0844 2252883 | |
| Fire Alarm contractor | Waldon Security | 01726 65635 | |
| Environment Agency emergency line | | 0800 365900 | |

Where no out of hours number is given an alternative contact should be available

SAMPLE LETTER FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

As many of you may have heard, two of our students were involved in a serious road traffic accident outside school yesterday afternoon. Unfortunately both have since died as a result of their injuries. We will be keeping in touch with the families of the two children involved and will pass our condolences on to them.

We are aware that several adults and students witnessed the accident and we would ask any of those who are not yet known to us to inform the college office. This will enable us to offer appropriate, on-going support to those who were involved.

During the next few days we will try to keep routines as normal as possible, whilst allowing adults and students alike to grieve in their own way and in their own time.

We will keep you informed about details of the funeral/memorial arrangements once these have been agreed by the families.

Yours sincerely,

Headteacher
Treviglas Community College

SAMPLE LETTER FOR PARENTS/CARERS

Date

Dear Parent/Carer

As many of you will have heard one of our student's/*insert name* was admitted to hospital with probable meningococcal infection, and tragically died on Sunday.

Meningococcal bacteria is carried in the back of the throat of about one in ten people at any one time but only very rarely cause illness. Most people who carry the bacteria become immune to them. The bacteria do not spread easily. Close/ prolonged contacts of known or strongly suspected cases are traced by the Health Protection Unit and offered antibiotics to reduce the chances of the bacteria spreading.

Although the risk of another case in this college is small it is sensible to be aware of the signs and symptoms which are detailed in the attached leaflet (*obtained from the health services*).

We will remain in close contact with the Health Protection Unit over the next few days to ensure that all necessary precautions are taken. We have been advised that no further action is needed at the present time. There is no reason to make any change to the college routine and no reason for students to be kept at home.

Enclosed is a fact sheet on meningococcal infection for your information (*enclose appropriate information as recommended by medical personnel*). The Meningitis Research Foundation has a 24hour helpline number to provide support and answer any questions you may have. If your child is ill you should consult your doctor.

Yours sincerely

Headteacher
Treviglas Community College