

Hemingford Grey Playgroup

Policy: Critical Incident

July 2015

Introduction

We recognise the importance of establishing clear guidelines and strategies to react to any playgroup related emergency or critical incident. It is equally important that the plan has enough flexibility to allow the playgroup to respond to any type of incident that may effect or interrupt the normal operation of the playgroup.

Planning, control and clear communications are all essential elements that allow the immediate situation to be managed effectively and then to minimise the long-term impact of an event. A detailed plan is needed to ensure that all involved have clearly stated roles of responsibility. This will ensure that actions, such as contact with parents, the media and any emergency agencies are catered for correctly.

Representatives from the staff will have a copy of the plan that will form a section in the Critical Incident Manual produced by the Local Authority.

Being on the site of Hemingford Grey Primary School the schools Critical Incident Management Plan will be followed - a copy of can be found in the Policies Folder on site.

The network of support will be clearly outlined using the recommended framework from the Local Authority.

Definition

A critical incident can be defined as an incident, which overwhelms or overcomes the coping strategies and strengths of those involved. (Gibson 1999).

This may include:

- ⑩ Death of a child, parent, staff or volunteer; Death or serious injury on a playgroup trip.
- ⑩ The sudden death, in tragic circumstances of a member of staff; volunteer; parent or child.
- ⑩ A transport or road traffic accident involving staff; children; parents; volunteers of the playgroup community.
- ⑩ Epidemic in playgroup or community
- ⑩ A child missing from home; Abductions or disappearances from home or playgroup.
- ⑩ Major fires or floods at the playgroup or adjoining school.
- ⑩ Destruction or major/significant vandalism in playgroup; Arson attacks on playgroups/schools.
- ⑩ Incident involving an intruder, believed to be armed, on playgroup premises
- ⑩ A hostage taking; Violent attacks on children; staff and volunteers.
- ⑩ A disaster in the community; A civil disturbance or terrorism (including bomb threats).
- ⑩ Allegations or actual incidents of abuse against children by staff and staff against children.

Procedures

Hemingford Grey Playgroup follows set preventative and precautionary measures in order to try and reduce the risk of accidents and problems occurring.

- ⑩ all staff, volunteers and children should be familiar with the playgroup's routines for fire and the evacuation of the playgroup building on hearing the fire bell.
- ⑩ Drills will be carried out termly, taking care that all sessions are included.
- ⑩ all staff should be familiar with the routines and procedures for dealing with emergencies (As detailed in this policy).
- ⑩ all staff and pupils should be familiar with the playgroup's security procedures, in particular that all professional visitors are asked for identification and that parent or other visitors are not left unsupervised within the setting. All visitors to the playgroup must enter via the Main Entrance and not through Outdoor Play Areas. All visitors to the setting MUST sign the 'Visitors Book'.
- ⑩ all staff organising playgroup 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.
- ⑩ all staff are aware of pupils with medical needs or health problems.
- ⑩ all staff are aware that they should assess associated risks to children and themselves before carrying out a curriculum or other activity.
- ⑩ All relevant contact numbers and addresses of personnel, Committee, children etc are held centrally at playgroup. Backup details of key, named Emergency/Critical Incident Support Team members are also held centrally within the setting.

In the event of a major incident the priorities of those adults in charge of the playgroup; activity; visit or trip at the time must be to:

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

The **Critical Incident Management Team** will comprise of the following:

Sharon Howse	- Manager
Andrea Thompson	- Deputy Manager
Kate Major	- Chair of Management Committee
Kirsty Beardell	- Chair of Management Committee

Critical Incident Procedures

Immediate Action - 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 parents etc. CIMT will agree a factual statement and avoid speculation.
- 5) Contact families affected. Information will be consistent and sensitively disclosed. Emotional support will be given to those families.
- 6) 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.
- 7) Inform staff, volunteers and students. Staff to be reminded and/or briefed about talking to the media or responding to questions from reporters. All staff in contact with children will be kept informed and feel secure in handling comments or questions from children.
- 8) Inform children depending on their ability to understand using an age appropriate method. It is important that children receive a consistent account of the incident allowing for differences in their ability to understand.

- 9) Care needs to be exercised to protect both children and adults closely involved in the incident.
- 10) People involved will be encouraged to talk.
- 11) 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 playgroup's behalf.
- 12) 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 children 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

- 1) Reunion of children with their families - especially where the incident occurs outside the playgroup. Mostly children 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 children's fears etc.
- 2) Organise support for all Staff and Volunteers, preferably from within the playgroup 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 children to talk using age appropriate strategies and activities to enable them to talk about the incident and their feelings. Use outside agencies if appropriate. Staff will be briefed about ways to help the children affected by the incident, and how to identify patterns of behaviour etc. This may have implications for the wider curriculum i.e. training in bereavement counselling for staff, provision of a range of books, PSE discussions etc...
- 4) Debriefing Meeting - it may be appropriate to hold a debriefing meeting for staff, volunteers, children 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 children. The return to playgroup of staff or pupils 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 playgroup for staff; volunteers or children 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 Parents 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 - ongoing 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 pupils are briefed in the playgroup'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.

Checklists are provided within Hemingford Grey Primary Schools Critical Incident Policy, along with details of Support Services. A copy of this Policy will be kept alongside the Hemingford Grey Playgroup Critical Incident Policy.

This policy was adopted at a meeting of Hemingford Grey Playgroup Committee, held on 1st July 2015.

Signed by the chairperson on behalf of the Committee:

..... (Chairperson's name - block capitals)

..... (Chairpersons signature)

..... (Date)

Appendix

Guidance for Staff following an Emergency on Playgroup Premises

Initial Actions:

- ⑩ Make every attempt to clarify exactly what has happened
- ⑩ Call the emergency services (999)
- ⑩ Open and continue to maintain a personal log of all factual information received, actions taken and the times of those events.

Procedure:

- 1) Evacuate the building if safe to do so and deemed necessary.

- 2) Staff to bring the register; mobile phones and contact lists if they have access to them.
- 3) Inform Hemingford Grey Primary School of evacuation.
- 4) Inform and keep informed playgroup staff; volunteers and children as appropriate.
- 5) Retain any relevant equipment.
- 6) Contact appropriate authority and/or organisation for advice.
- 7) Contact Chair of Management Committee.
- 8) Contact Health & Safety Authority.
- 9) Prepare to deal with the media.

Guidance for Staff following an Emergency off site

- 1) Administer First Aid where possible.
- 2) Establish a contact point with the emergency services.
- 3) Allocate responsibility to ensure other children are safe and supported.
- 4) Travel with casualties to hospital.
- 5) Inform the playgroup. Playgroup to contact parents/carers and Chair of Management Committee.
- 6) Complete Accident / Incident Forms.