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31st January 2003

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**To the Headteacher and Chair of Governors
All Norfolk LEA Schools.**

Dear Colleague,

**Implications for Schools of Possible Military Action in Iraq
Critical Incident Team**

Our Critical Incident Team has been approached by one school with strong Royal Air Force connections to provide guidance on how to support distressed pupils in the event of local personnel becoming involved in military action. It is possible that other schools would value LEA advice in preparation for such an event, or as a result of action having taken place, and so I am writing to you to make you aware that we have in place arrangements both to advise and support schools should such action take place.

The Critical Incident Team has provided the following information to help schools prepare support for pupils in case there is military action.

All Psychological Service School Support Teams (SSTs) have been provided with a 'Critical Incident Pack' which gives basic information on managing experiences of bereavement, trauma and loss. The key issues for some schools could be in breaking upsetting news; dealing with pupils' reactions to news of deaths of those in the community and frightening images of conflict broadcast by the media. Please therefore contact your SST if you require advice.

Our view is that all schools should, as far as possible, draw on their own resources and expertise with the SST providing support where this is needed. However, where there are casualties among the parents of children at our schools the Critical Incident Team may become involved in helping school staff to address the implications of that for children. The Critical Incident Team may be contacted through James Thatcher (01603 222574) or by ringing the LEA's emergency contact number (07710 105514).

There are some key facts that schools may find helpful:

- It is advisable for schools to have a Critical Incident Management Plan in place. Guidelines on establishing a plan can be accessed through: 'Critical Incidents: A Support Framework for Norfolk Schools' (Green Book), 4th edition, 2001. A copy

was sent to every LEA school in October 2001. If further copies are required contact James Thatcher or access it via the web link at www.esinet.norfolk.gov.uk

- If enquiries are made by the media, Marion Forsyth, Communications Officer for Education - 01603 224277 - is able to advise schools.
- Using the curriculum to discuss issues relating to military action can help pupils understand the circumstances and allow them to ask questions which help them to make sense of events.
- In talking to children it is necessary to present information at a level appropriate to their age, understanding and maturity. Guidelines which are sometimes distributed to schools staff following a critical incident, are attached.
- Pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are likely to be particularly vulnerable to traumatic events and will require special attention.
- Some school staff will have their own concerns and anxieties. It is important to bring to their attention the services of the County Council Staff Support Line.
- School staff may become concerned about the longer-term affects on children, especially those who have experienced the death of a parent or close relative. Other children may suffer the cumulative impact of frightening images and news items. Some basis indicators of abnormal reactions are attached. It is expected that most children who experience a family bereavement will be offered specialist guidance through their GP. Advice may also be available from the Child Bereavement Support Coordinator (Norwich Primary Care Trust) on 01603 711604.

You may also wish to know that a conference on dealing with trauma has been arranged for April 3rd, details are attached.

Also attached are:

- An updated version of the Critical Incidents Red Book
- Labels giving details of how to make contact with the Authority in an emergency
- Guidelines on communicating with children
- Guidelines on children's reactions to trauma

If you have any concerns about this matter or would like to discuss the issues that may arise, please contact James Thatcher (01603 222574) or Gerry Walder (01953 456545 or 01553 669215).

Yours sincerely,

Bryan Slater
Director of Education



Bereavement, Trauma and Loss

The impact on schools – how to cope

A conference designed to offer schools ideas on how to manage and recover from traumatic and tragic events

Venue: Ramada Jarvis Hotel Norwich

Date: Thursday 3rd April 2003

Time: 9:00 – 4:00 (lunch is provided)

Speakers: Trisha McCaffrey – Co-producer of the CD Rom 'A pocket full of Posies' Dealing with Death and Sudden Loss in Schools
Erica Brown – Author of 'Loss, Change and Grief an educational perspective'

Cost: £20.00 to Norfolk LEA Schools £90.00 to none Norfolk LEA Schools
✂.....

BOOKING FORM

Maximum of 2 delegates per school * Please return by **14/02/03** at the latest

Name: (1) Name:(2).....

Dietary requirement : Dietary requirement :
(vegan/gluten free) (vegan/gluten free)

Disabled access required: Yes/No Disabled access required: Yes/No

School:.....Post Code:.....

Please transfer by journal @ £20 per person (LEA school)

I enclose a cheque for £90 per person (None LEA school) payable to Norfolk County Council ☐

*I would like to be considered for extra places if they become available Yes/No number ☐

Headteachers signature:.....

Further details will be sent out with confirmation letter in March 2003

Please return the completed booking form to:
Irene Hoare, Greenwood Centre, Greenwood Rd Tuckswood, Norwich NR4 6BN
Any Queries – please telephone 01603 458191

WHEN SPECIALIST HELP IS NEEDED AND TEACHERS ARE OFTEN THE FIRST TO NOTICE THE SIGNS

- If a child appears anxious, is frequently crying, losing confidence, isolated from peers
- Intense longing for the dead person, unable to accept the death, talking as if they are still alive. Stuck with their grief
- Or finds it difficult to talk about the dead person and may avoid saying anything about them
- If the child is constantly unhappy and showing no enjoyment in activities that were previously enjoyed
- Aggressive behaviour or onset of behaviour problems. Consider how the child was functioning before the bereavement

STAGES OF CHILDHOOD GRIEF

Age 2 – 4 years

- The child may be aware of the word 'death' but has little concept of its implications
- The child does not understand that death is final. The temporary nature of death is typified by questions such as 'shall we dig the dog back up now'
- For the very young death is incomprehensible and in beginning to make sense of it they may exhibit anxiety, curiosity and a fascination
- Some children may have a degree of understanding through experience of 'big losses' such as divorce, family separations

*Even though children of this age
have a limited concept of death it is
important that when faced with this
they should be given simple, clear and truthful information*

STAGES OF CHILDHOOD GRIEF

Age 4 – 10 years

Children within this age range have an increased understanding that:-

- Death involves separation
- Death is irreversible
- Dead people cannot move
- Death will happen to all living creatures including humans
- Dead people cannot feel anything
- Some children have magical ideas about the causes of death, even thinking that something they said or did caused a particular person to die

*Children may need help understanding that
There is always a physical cause of death*

STAGES OF CHILDHOOD GRIEF

Age 10 onwards

Young people in this age range begin to have a more sophisticated adult understanding of death:-

- Understanding the permanence of death and experience sadness at the loss of future as well as the past.
- The concept of death can be seen as more abstract. Young people may question traditional beliefs about heaven/hell, the after-life etc.
- Physical and emotional changes of adolescence, combined with increasing independence may lead to confusing and conflicting emotions.

