



Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan Regional Safeguarding Board

Partnership Protocol for the Immediate Response to Critical Incidents Involving Children and Young People

Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Boards	Date Ratified: April 2021	Status: Final
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Introduction

The aim of this protocol is to provide support to manage the consequences of critical incidents in order to ensure that those who are affected, including friends, family, professionals and the wider community, are effectively supported.

This protocol is complementary and in support of other procedures and protocols such as Wales Safeguarding Procedures (2019), Procedural Response to Unexpected Deaths in Childhood (PRUDIC), and Emergency Planning Processes which should be used in the first instance.

With thanks to Gwent Safeguarding Board.

Critical Incident Definition

A critical incident (for the purposes of this protocol) is defined as an event, or series of events:

- which is sudden and unexpected; **and**
- that resulted in (or could have caused) death or serious harm; **and**
- impacting on individuals and / or the wider community; **and**
- where an effective response requires multi-agency co-ordination to manage threat, risk and harm.

Criteria and Timescales

An Immediate Response Group (IRG) should be convened for all suicides (suspected or apparent) of children and young people under the age of 18 years. For other critical incidents the following criteria should be considered prior to convening an IRG:

- Does the incident meet the above critical incident definition?
- Are there other processes / policies which should be implemented first (eg PRUDIC, etc)?

There is a standing group (Appendix 2) any member of which may request to convene an IRG. This must be discussed with and agreed by the IRG Chair (Police Superintendent) who is responsible for making the final decision about implementing the protocol. Consideration should be given to which other management processes may already have been implemented or will be simultaneously implemented as a result of this critical incident. (Appendix 4) There is a recognised need for there to be an interaction between the IRG process and other multi-agency fora.

The IRG should be convened as soon as practically possible but no later than two working days after the critical incident.

Process to Manage Critical Incidents

Notification of Incidents and Confirm Facts

- The organisation receiving notification of the incident must endeavour to clarify the facts of the situation as far as possible and consider the criteria for convening an IRG before discussing and confirming this with the IRG Chair.

Consult organisational policies and reporting mechanisms and act on accordingly

- Organisational policies and guidelines should be consulted and the appropriate action taken. This may include, for example, reporting mechanisms, collation of documentation, information sharing, etc.
- Appropriate referrals should be made under the Wales Safeguarding Procedures.

Convene Immediate Response Group

- The Police Public Protection Unit (PPU) will notify the Cardiff and Vale Regional Safeguarding Board of the critical incident and confirm the need to convene an IRG.
- An IRG will be convened to include standing group members and other key personnel that members identify need to attend.
- Any briefings prior to the IRG must be agreed with the Chair.

Identify those closest to the person, other people who may be at risk and those involved in the immediate incident

- Individual agencies should identify those closest to the person which may include, for example, family, friends, partners, work colleagues, club membership, teams, staff, etc.
- Individual agencies should also identify other people for whom this incident may be a trigger, potentially increasing their level of risk.
- For those people not known to services, consideration needs to be given to provision of support to the wider community, particularly for those groups highlighted as at increased risk.

Immediate Response Group Meeting

- The IRG Chair will outline the purpose and content of the meeting (statement included with agenda in Appendix 3).
- The Senior Investigating Officer (SIO) will provide information relating to the critical incident.
- Each agency present will share information relating to the person, their family, friends and others (including, for example, witnesses to the incident) who may require support following the critical incident.

- Identify significant dates or events.
- Level of risk should be identified for each individual discussed.
- Support needed for those identified should be determined and agreed including confirmation of person(s) responsible and timescales.
- Care of children and young people already subject to Care and Support Plans, Care Support and Protection Plans or within the Looked After System needs to formally be handed to their key worker to ensure that their individual needs are met.
- Children's Services will work with the Police Family Liaison Officer (PFLO) to establish contact with the family where appropriate.
- Agreement will be reached about information to be shared at briefings with staff, individuals and the wider community.
- Each agency should consider how they can contribute help and support to meet the identified needs either themselves or by enabling other agencies to do so.
- Organisations will also need to consider how they can protect front-line services so that services are maintained whilst providing support in response to local identified need following an incident.
- Telephone help-desks and similar should be aware of relevant services which they can signpost any queries to.
- Date and time of next meeting to be agreed.
- After each meeting actions should be undertaken as agreed at the IRG.
- At the final IRG meeting an exit strategy will be developed to address care for family, friends and staff where appropriate, to be managed by mainstream services.
- After the final IRG meeting, any outstanding actions should be notified to the Chair for sign-off.

Brief staff

- The decision about who will brief staff and content of the brief will be agreed by the IRG.
- All staff need to be briefed including support staff, admin, transport, volunteers, etc as they may also be affected.
- Staff will be informed about the incident, providing them with factual information as agreed by the IRG.
- An outline of actions to be taken and by whom, including an explanation of support to be made available, will be given.
- Information about supporting individuals will be provided including practical information about what to say, what signs of risk to look out for which may indicate the need for additional support, etc.

Brief young people

- This section relates specifically to incidents involving young people under the age of 18.
- The decision about who will brief young people and content of the brief will be agreed by the IRG.
- Formal support systems will be put in place prior to briefing.
- Young people will be informed about the incident, providing them with factual information as agreed by the IRG.
- Information about the support available will be provided as part of the briefing.
- Agencies need to consider cultural and religious issues / differences and significant / specific events and should consider the ramifications of possible blame.
- Information should be imparted to young people as early as possible (for example, not at the end of the school day).
- Staff should monitor initial reactions in young people and provide appropriate support, giving them the opportunity to talk through feelings, etc should they wish to.
- Agencies need to consider notifying people closest to those involved in the incident before telling others in order to lessen the impact and ensure ability to provide support.
- Staff should be aware that grief affects different people in different ways and therefore those closest to the young person may not necessarily be the most upset. (Information about grief reactions is included in Appendix 5.)

Briefing for parents / carers

- This section relates specifically to incidents involving young people under the age of 18.
- It may be necessary in some circumstances to brief parents / carers about the situation and the support being made available for their child(ren), for example for incidents affecting a school community.
- The decision about briefing parents / carers and content of the brief will be agreed by the IRG.
- Parents / carers will be provided with factual information as agreed by the IRG together with an outline of the support that is being made available.
- Contact information will be included should they want to talk to someone themselves or to access support for their child(ren).
- Contact information will also be made available using alternative media such as websites and press releases.

Debrief Staff

- Individual agencies will need to debrief staff in order to review their response to the critical incident and to clarify lessons learnt and further action to be taken.
- Individual services need to be aware of their staff's input and how they feel about providing that support, ensuring that staff can access support for themselves.

Collate information for Practice Reviews

- Child Practice Reviews are required where a child / young person under the age of 18 has died or suffered serious impairment to health, and abuse or neglect is suspected.
- Adult Practice Reviews are required where a person has died or suffered serious impairment to health, and abuse or neglect is suspected.
- Agencies are responsible for collating any information they may have relating to the person which will be used in a Practice Review.
- Form A for the All Wales Child Death Review will need to be completed at the initial IRG meeting (if not already agreed by the PRUDiC) by the Regional Safeguarding Business Unit for all deaths of a child / young person under the age of 18 years.
- Agencies should maintain accurate records in order to collect relevant information to facilitate review if required.

Management of a Cluster of Suicides
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- Identification of a cluster of suicides will be agreed by the IRG.
- Identification will be based on the number, timescale and proximity (geographically and socially) of incidents occurring locally.
- Consideration will need to be given to suicides occurring in neighbouring areas and the possibility of a single case locally being part of a cluster in a bordering area or vice versa.
- Upon identification of a cluster of suicides the IRG will meet on a more frequent basis, with frequency to be established by the IRG.
- In some cases the IRG may need to meet daily to monitor the situation and ensure that appropriate support and prevention services / activities are in place.
- Work will focus more intensely on providing support for those identified as at risk and for the wider community as a whole.
- A cluster of suicides would trigger a more senior interagency response requiring strategic level staff to meet on a regular basis in addition to the IRG.
- The strategic group will review information provided by the IRG including action(s) taken and will consider, for example, resource allocation to ensure that services are available to support local need and to work proactively to prevent further incidents.

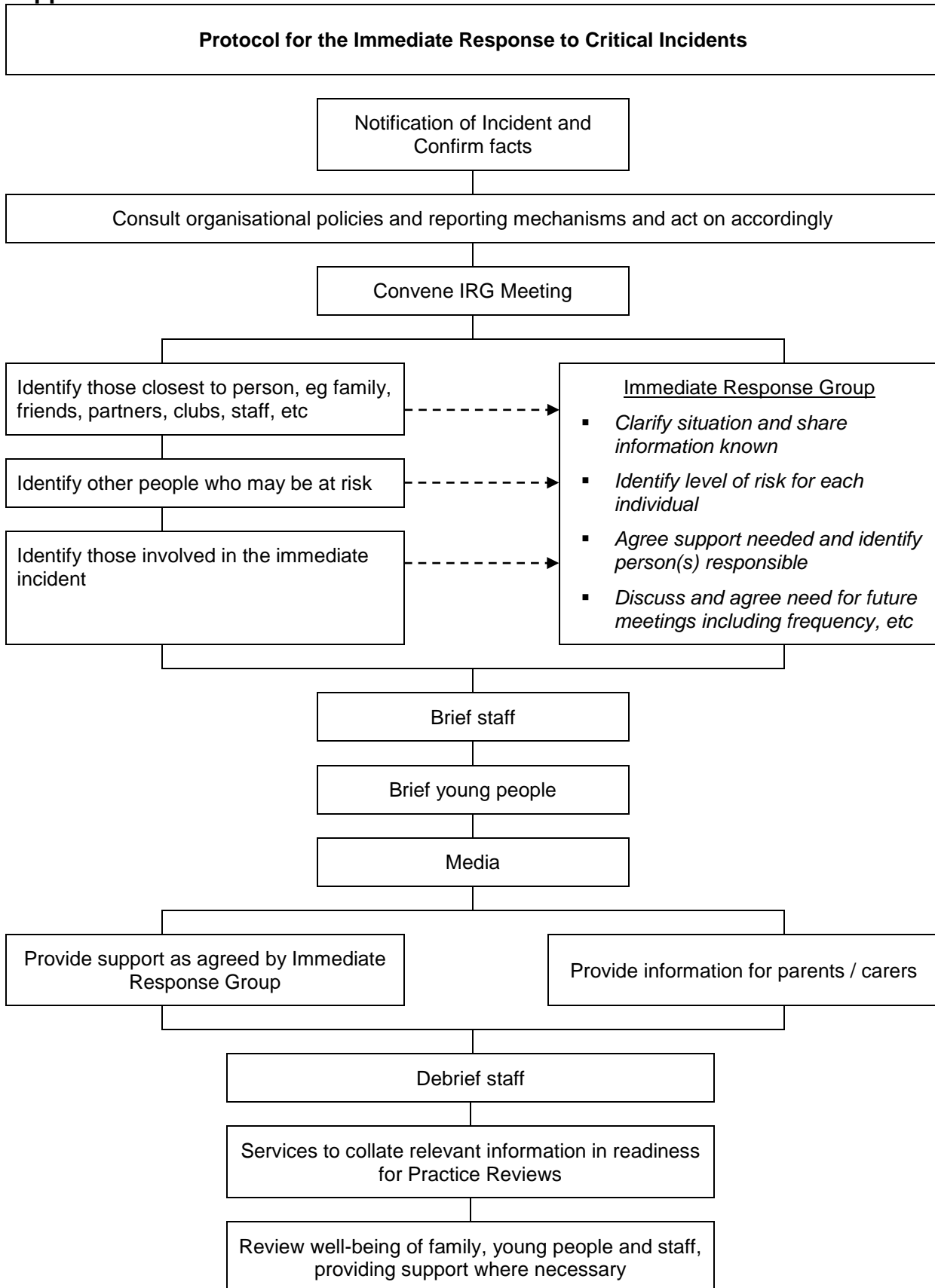
Media

- IRG's will discuss and agree issues relating to the media.
- A single point of contact for all media queries will be agreed.
- Press releases should include information about appropriate help-line numbers and websites.
- It is important that there is liaison with the family before any information is released to the media so that they are aware and agree with information provided.
- In the case of a cluster of suicides the strategic group will agree how to manage media relations.

Governance and Accountability

- The Regional Safeguarding Board will maintain all the records of each IRG meetings including the storage of all minutes. Disclosure of content of the minutes will be with permission of the Chair.
- The standing members of the IRG should meet regularly to identify lessons learnt and to consider the need to alter / add to the Immediate Response Protocol.
- Lessons learnt should be fed into the Quality Assurance Sub Group of the Regional Safeguarding Board.
- Information relating to drug-related deaths can also be fed into meetings as part of the Drug-Related Deaths Protocol.
- An IRG may need to be reconvened at future dates which coincide with significant events, eg anniversary of incident, etc.

Appendix 1



Appendix 2 - Contact details

Agencies notified of critical incident should, in the first instance, contact the following:

	Name	Telephone Number	Email address
Police			
Health Board (Safeguarding Team)			
Children's Services (Safeguarding Team)			
Regional Safeguarding Board Business Unit			

The following is a list of agencies that will form the standing group which need to be involved in the Immediate Response Group.

	Name	Telephone Number	Email address
Police - Chair (Superintendent) Investigating Officer Detective Inspector (PPU)			
Head of Safeguarding (Health Board)			
Safeguarding Board Business Coordinator			
Head of Children's Service (Cardiff) Head of Children's Services (Vale of Glamorgan)			
Head of Adult Service (Cardiff) Head of Adult Services (Vale of Glamorgan)			
Safeguarding Manager (Cardiff) Safeguarding Manager (Vale of Glamorgan)			
Emergency Duty Team Manager			
Youth Counselling Service Lead			

Head of Youth Service			
Educational and Child Psychology Service			
CAMHS regional lead			
Adult Mental Health Services			
Welsh Ambulance Service NHS Trust			

Appendix 3 – Agenda and Confidentiality Statement

Immediate Response Group Meeting Agenda
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	Date	Venue
1.		
2.		
3.		
4.		
a.		
b.		
5.		
6.		
7.		
8.		
9.		
10.		
11.		

1. Welcome and Introductions
2. Outline purpose of the meeting (overleaf)
3. Senior Investigating Officer to give report
4. Share information known
 - a. Consider links to other recent incidents to identify potential cluster development
 - b. Consider links to other processes (eg Safeguarding Procedures)
5. Identify level of risk for each individual
6. Determine the need for briefing, counselling and other support
7. Identify and agree person(s) responsible and timescales for individual tasks
8. Protection of front-line services
9. Media response
10. Any Other Business
11. Time and venue of next meeting

Purpose of the Meeting

The purpose of this meeting is to consider [*critical incident*] and to manage any threat, risk or harm to individuals and / or the wider community.

The content of this meeting is confidential and should not be shared outside this meeting without the permission of the Chair and this includes the content of any minutes.

The meeting will aim to reflect that all individuals who are discussed should be treated fairly, with respect and without improper discrimination. Everyone present needs to share all details that they have in relation to the individuals discussed in order to ensure that we are able to identify levels of risk and to agree appropriate support to meet their needs.

Everyone present should be mindful that anything disclosed during the meeting could be used as part of a criminal investigation.

During the course of the meeting you may hear information which some people may find difficult or upsetting to hear. As part of this work we all acknowledge that we cannot always get things right but will endeavour to get things least wrong.

The meeting will make recommendations for agencies to complete.

Immediate Response Group Attendance Record

Case

Date

Time

Confidentiality Statement

- This meeting has been convened to manage the consequences of a critical incident involving a child / young person under the age of 18 years.
- The content of this meeting and the minutes are confidential and should not be shared without the permission of the Chair.
- The minutes may be subject to requests for disclosure under the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) 2018. Each request will be considered on its' merits.
- The meeting will aim to reflect that all individuals who are discussed should be treated fairly, with respect and without improper discrimination.
- The meeting may make recommendations to agencies.

When you sign the attendance sheet you are signing up to this confidentiality statement. All agencies should ensure that the minutes are retained in a confidential and appropriately restricted manner.

Appendix 4 – Examples of Critical Incidents and Their Management Processes

	Protocol
▪ Sudden unexpected death	PRUDIC
▪ Death at own hand	IRG Protocol
▪ Death by abuse / neglect	Child or Adult Protection / Practice Review
▪ Domestic Homicide	Domestic Homicide Review
▪ Missing child or young person	Safeguarding Board Protocol
▪ Repeat self harm posing significant risk to self and significant impact on agencies	IRG Protocol
▪ Incident with direct impact on more than one individual (eg near miss involving suicide pact, multiple substance misuse incidents, accident whilst on trip, etc)	IRG Protocol
▪ Multiple deaths (accidental)	IRG Protocol
▪ Multiple events (eg PRUDIC and suicide)	IRG Protocol
▪ Natural or man-made disasters	Emergency Planning
▪ Acts of terrorism	Emergency Planning / Prevent Strategy
▪ Serious illness of a group of children / young people (eg outbreak of meningitis)	IRG Protocol
▪ Kidnapping of a child or young person	Police Response
▪ Near fatal overdose with direct impact on more than one individual	IRG Protocol

Appendix 5

Communication Checklist

(Regional Safeguarding Business Unit to ensure completion)

Critical incident involving:	Name:	
	DOB:	
	Address:	

Date of initial IRG:	
Venue of initial IRG:	

Please indicate below the services contacted to ascertain knowledge of person involved in the critical incident and invited to attend the initial IRG meeting.

	Name of person notified	By whom and when	Contact Details (Tel / Email)
Head of Safeguarding (LHB)			
Adult Mental Health			
CAMHS			
Children's Community Nursing Team			
General Practitioner			
Health Visitor			
Midwife			
School Nurse			
Safeguarding Team (LA)			
Emergency Duty Team			
Head of Adult Services (relevant LA)			
Head of Children Services (relevant LA)			
Safeguarding Board Business Unit			
Head of Youth Service			
Mental Health Service			
Adult Services			
Youth Counselling Service			

	Name of person notified	By whom and when	Contact Details (Tel / Email)
Youth Offending Team			
Police			
Superintendent			
PPU			
Investigating Officer			
Education			
Educational Psychology			
Head teacher			
Probation			
Probation			
Other			