

Children's Services

Pastoral Support following a Traumatic Work Event

1. Purpose

This guidance sets out how we will identify and meet the support needs of colleagues following a traumatic work event. This guidance applies to Children's Services Employees only.

2. Traumatic work events

2.1 In this guidance, a 'traumatic work event' means an incident that is likely to cause significant distress to one or more Children's Services employees.

2.2 Examples of traumatic work events include, but are not limited to:

- Death or serious injury of a colleague
- Death or serious injury of a child in our care
- An investigation of alleged serious misconduct by a work colleague
- A major disaster affecting one or more communities with which we work

2.3 A traumatic work event may also be classified as a Critical Incident or as a Need to Know event. Dorset Council has a procedure for Critical Incidents and Children's Services has a Need to Know procedure. Where either of these applies, the implementation of this procedure will need to align.

2.4 Stress too may be part of a 'normal reaction to an abnormal event'. There is helpful guidance on managing stress, and useful resources, in Dorset Council's [Employee Wellbeing Guide](#).

2.5 Many people do not develop Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) after a traumatic event, even without intervention. A person should seek guidance if they still have distress symptoms 1 month after the event. This may raise the possibility of a PTSD diagnosis. The National Institute for Health and Clinical Excellence (NICE) guidance recommends monitoring symptoms for 1 month after the traumatic event. This helps to judge if further intervention is required.

2.6 Those who have experienced a traumatic work event may go on to experience:

- Fear
- Helplessness
- Increased alertness for danger
- Fatigue

- Intrusive thoughts or images of the event
- Nightmares
- Avoidance of places that may remind you of the event
- Anger
- Anxiety
- Memories of previous traumatic events¹

2.7 If an employee has symptoms that last more than a month, or their symptoms are severe, they may have Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD).² If we identify and respond promptly to PTSD, it can be treated effectively in most cases.

2.8 An employee who has symptoms more than a month after the incident or is otherwise concerned that they may have PTSD should consult with their GP. They should also notify the Pastoral Support Lead (see next section) in order that they can receive the correct support (including referral to Occupational Health where appropriate). If a Pastoral Support Lead has not yet been appointed, they should raise their concerns with their line manager.

3. Identifying the Pastoral Support Lead

3.1 The first step in our response to a traumatic work event is to appoint a Pastoral Support Lead. They will ensure that we identify the needs of all those affected and develop a plan to meet these needs.

3.2 If Dorset Council's Critical Incident or Children's Services Need to Know procedure is being used, the Pastoral Support Lead will be identified through these procedures. In all other cases, the manager who identifies the need for Pastoral Support is responsible for identifying the Pastoral Support Lead, and for promptly notifying CSLT who this is.

3.3 In some cases, the line manager of those most affected by the incident will be the most suitable Pastoral Support Lead. However, this may not always be the case, for example where the line manager has themselves been adversely affected by the incident, or where employees wish to keep conversations about their health and wellbeing separate from routine performance conversations.

3.3 CSLT will confirm the choice of Pastoral Support Lead; they will make sure that the Pastoral Support Lead has the correct level of experience and authority for the role. For a very serious incident, a Corporate Director may be most appropriate.

¹ [NHS England — London » Help and support after a traumatic event](#), viewed Feb. 2023

² [Overview - Post-traumatic stress disorder - NHS \(www.nhs.uk\)](#), viewed Feb. 2023

4. Identifying the need

- 4.1 The Pastoral Support Lead should develop an initial action plan (see template at Appendix 2 below). They should notify the Wellbeing Service of their role and consult with the Wellbeing Service as they develop their action plan. They should also consult those affected as they develop the action plan. They should agree the initial plan, and any reviews, with their line manager.
- 4.2 For incidents that occur outside of normal working hours, the on-call Senior Manager for Children's Services will be the temporary Pastoral Support Lead and will also notify CSLT of the incident. They will hand over this role on the next normal working day when the manager responsible will appoint an ongoing Pastoral Support Lead (see s3).
- 4.3 Individuals' response to trauma may only become fully apparent over time, so the Pastoral Support lead should review and update the action plan, as new needs emerge and existing needs change.
- 4.4 The Pastoral Support Lead should prepare a monthly report on the progress of the action plan for CSLT and provide any other information that CSLT requires.
- 4.5 The Pastoral Support Lead and their line manager should regularly review the plan with the employee, with support from HR as appropriate.
- 4.6 It is a key principle that support following a traumatic work event should be offered, not imposed.

5. Responding to the need

Each action plan will be different, varying according to the nature of the incident and its differing impacts on those affected. It may help in building the plan to think about the different kinds of support that can be offered. These include:

5.1 Dorset Council Employee Wellbeing Offer

Employees can access support through the Employee Wellbeing service via:
employeewellbeing@dorsetcouncil.gov.uk / 01305 224266

The Wellbeing Offer includes a range of talking therapies, including Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, counselling, trauma-focussed therapy, and mindfulness. It is offered in partnership with the NHS provider, Steps 2 Wellbeing. You can self-refer to this service using the online referral form on the intranet Employee Wellbeing pages. The service is offered on a confidential basis.

5.2 Tavistock Relationships

Tavistock Relationships is offering free relationship support to employees of Dorset Council Children's Services concerned about stress on their relationship, and other anxieties such as health, money, loneliness, feeling low or being overwhelmed. [Find out more](#) about the support available.

5.3 Mulberry Bush Consulting

[Mulberry Bush Consulting](#) is providing a number of Children's Services teams with face to face therapeutic support, if you feel your team would benefit from this additional support, please do not hesitate to discuss this with your Head of Service/Locality.

5.4 Connection

24 hr helpline for those who are experiencing mental health problems and need support: 0800 652 0190

5.5 Cruse

Offers bereavement support, information, and campaigning: [Home - Cruse Bereavement Support](#)

5.6 Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide

This group exists to meet the needs and break the isolation experienced by those bereaved by suicide: [Survivors of Bereavement by Suicide – Overcoming the isolation of people bereaved by suicide \(uksobs.org\)](#)

5.7 Samaritans

24 hr helpline 116 123 Email jo@samaritans.org

Text **SHOUT** on 85258

5.8 distrACT

This is a free app that can help anyone who has thoughts of self-harm and/or suicide

5.9 The Retreat

The Retreat is run by Dorset HealthCare and the Dorset Mental Health Forum. It is in Maiden Castle Road, Dorchester, and offers people aged 18+ the opportunity to talk with a mental health worker or someone with previous experience of mental ill-health. It is open from Sunday to Wednesday, from 4.30-11.30pm.

5.10 Community Front Rooms

Community Front Rooms (CFRs) are open to anyone over 18 who needs face-to-face support. Mental health professionals and people with personal experience of mental health issues will offer you help. Community Front

Rooms are there for you if you are struggling to cope and feel you are approaching a crisis point.

Wareham: Unit 1, Leanne Business Centre
Shaftesbury; Hope Offices, Longmead Ind. Est.
Bridport: The Assembly Rooms, Gundry Lane
Weymouth: 56 St. Mary Street

5.11 Dorset Open Door

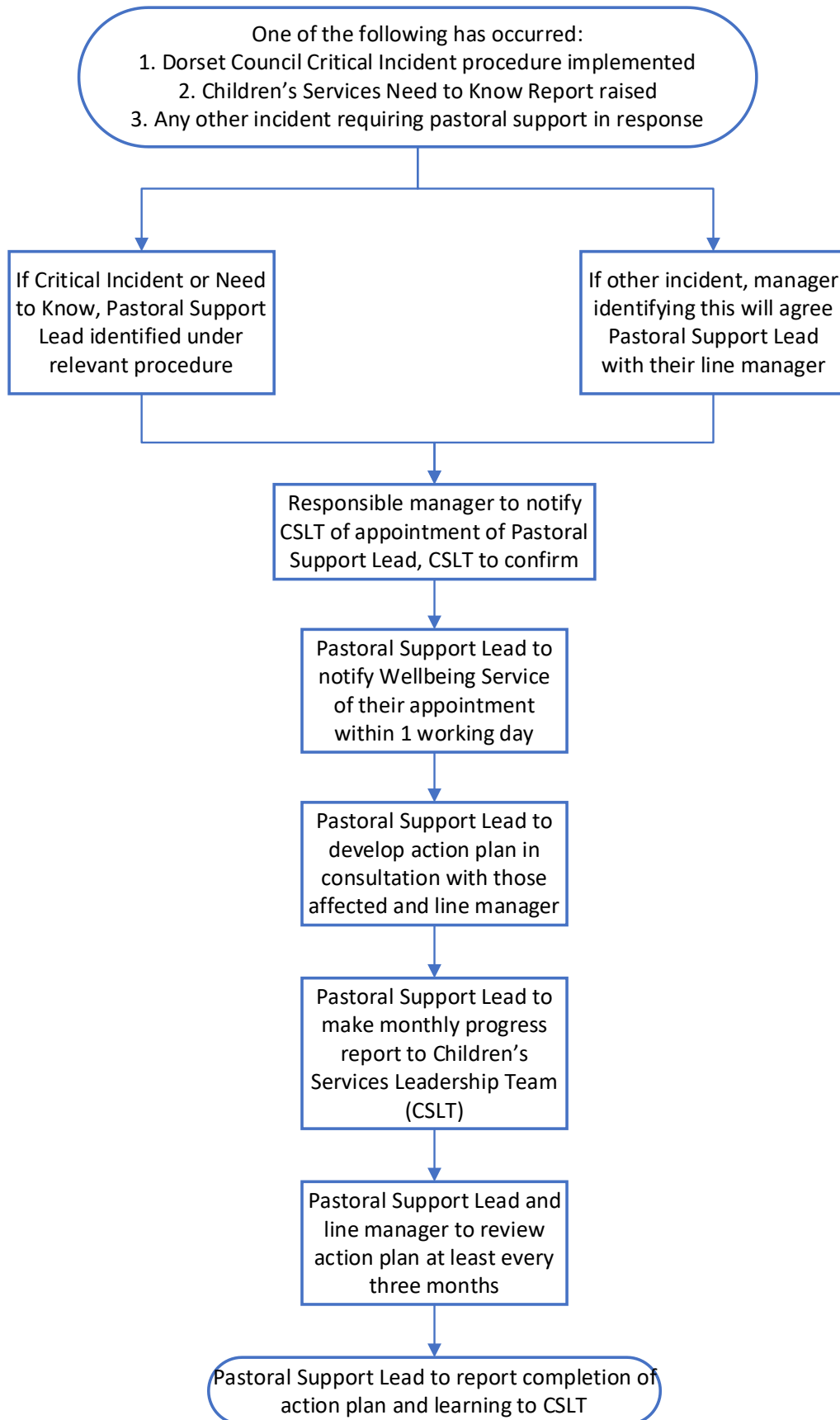
This service supports adults who have experienced a traumatic bereavement.

Contact Dorset Open Door by calling 01305 361 361; or emailing dhc.dorsetopendoor@nhs.net

6. Monitoring and reporting

- 6.1 Each incident is different and is therefore likely to bring different reporting requirements. These should be set out in the outline response plan and reviewed every 3 months until the completion of the plan.
- 6.2 Progress reports using the data identified in the plan should be shared with xCSLT monthly.

Appendix 1: Identifying the Pastoral Support Lead (ss3-4)



Appendix 2

Pastoral Support Action Plan Template

1. Key details

Name of employee	
Name of Pastoral Support Lead	
Date action plan commenced	
Summary of incident	

2. Identifying needs

How does the employee describe the impact of the incident on their wellbeing?	
What forms of support does the employee feel would benefit their recovery? (please list individually)	
Any further types of support suggested by the Pastoral Support Lead?	

3. Action Plans and outcomes (For each form of support identified at s2, please complete an outcomes box. If a requested form of support cannot be provided by Dorset Council, please briefly state why not)

3.1 Action and outcome

Form of support (from list developed at s2. Above)	
Actions implemented	
Outcome of actions	

3.2 Action and outcome

Form of support (from list developed at s2. Above)	
Actions implemented	
Outcome of actions	

3.3 Action and outcome

Form of support (from list developed at s2. Above)	
Actions implemented	
Outcome of actions	

Further outcome boxes can be created if required using copy and paste. Please make sure you number each box correctly.

4. Reviews

4.1 First review of Pastoral Support Plan

Date of review	
Those attending	
Employee's observations	
Pastoral Support Lead's observations	
Any changes to the original plan?	
Date of next review	

4.2 Second review of Pastoral Support Plan

Date of review	
Those attending	
Employee's observations	
Pastoral Support Lead's observations	
Any changes to the original plan?	
Date of next review	

Further reviews can be created by copying the above table. Please add correct numbering to all reviews.

5. Record of plan closure

Date of meeting	
Those attending	
Employee's views of progress made, and confirmation they are willing to close the action plan	
Pastoral Support Lead's views of progress made, and confirmation they are willing to close the action plan	
Does the employee require any ongoing support or arrangements (for example, for anniversaries of the incident?)	

The plan should be kept on the employee's file. Its closure should be accompanied by email confirmation from the employee that they agree to this.