



## Bereavement Policy and Procedures

However unfortunate, it is a fact that we may have to deal with the circumstances that follow the death of a young person, staff member or volunteer. Due to our work with children with complex needs, the likelihood of this happening to a child in our community is unfortunately higher. We recognise that through Flamingo Chicks CIO's activities genuine and strong professional relationships grow between our staff, volunteers, children and families. The aim of this policy is to outline a procedure to follow should a bereavement occur and to give guidance on how to best support the community through this tragic event.

Throughout this document the term *establishment* refers to an organisation such as a Special School where Flamingo Chicks staff lead classes or activities. The term *community activity* refers to classes, trips or visits which are hosted by Flamingo Chicks where parents/carers are present and classes are led by Flamingo Chicks staff.

We recognise that much of our work takes place within schools. Our staff and volunteers should at all times adhere to guidance given by staff from these establishments, which should be in line with the establishment's own bereavement policy.

### Dealing with Bereavement

Certain procedures **MUST** be followed in the event of a sudden death but, in general terms, procedures will vary dependent upon where the death occurs and the age of the victim. The aim of this document is to set down those procedures and so this guidance has a number of sections.

1. Coping with a sudden death during community activity
2. Working with the Police
3. Coping with a sudden death when working within an establishment
4. Telling young people when working in an establishment
5. Telling staff and volunteers when working in an establishment
6. Telling young people and families who take part in community activity
7. Telling Staff
8. Dealing with the Media
9. Helping the Community Recover
10. Coping with an Expected Death

#### 1. Coping with a sudden death during community activity

Unless it is plainly apparent, do not assume death. Dial 999 and seek immediate medical help. Whilst waiting, the designated first aider should administer first aid and life support. When paramedics

arrive, allow them to take over and let them decide on action needed or whether death has occurred.

If anyone falls significantly ill during community activities, the rest of the children, families and volunteers should be taken away from the incident, preferably in to another room. When possible this should be instigated as a game such as 'follow my leader' to keep the group calm. Gather children with their parents and carers so they may offer support. Tell everyone that there has been an emergency and that the class is cancelled, ask them to take their children home immediately. Ask them not to speak to anyone about the event or comment on social media and reassure them that we will give them more information when it is clear what has happened. This is to actively control the developing situation and limit rumours.

If death is obvious, dial 999 and ask for immediate police attendance. Preserve the scene in case the police wish to investigate.

As soon as it is safe to do so inform Flamingo Chicks Senior Management (Katherine Sparkes CEO or Sam McCormick Head of Dance – see below for contact details) of the event.

## **2. Working with the Police**

The police will normally investigate every case of sudden death, although procedures will vary according to circumstances.

As previously indicated, take steps to preserve the scene and evidence it may contain.

Be prepared to provide a room, or a space in which the police can work, if requested.

Normally, the Police will inform the child's parents/carers, or the member of staff's next of kin of the death. The police are specially trained in delivering this type of news in a difficult and traumatic situation.

The police will want to speak to the person(s) who discovered the body. This will be difficult and traumatic and it is likely that they will need someone with them, and they will probably have to stay at the establishment or site of the event.

The Police will almost certainly tell you that you must not speculate on the cause of death. But remember that the media are under no such restriction.

## **3. Coping with a sudden death when working within an establishment**

Unless it is plainly apparent, do not assume death. Dial 999 and seek immediate medical help. Whilst waiting staff of the establishment will administer first aid and life support. Do not administer first aid when working in an establishment. There will be trained first aiders at the establishment and they will be trained in the medical needs of the children that they support. Flamingo Chicks teachers should assist other staff to lead the other children away, preferably to a different room.

Ensure that senior staff at the establishment are notified as soon as possible and follow their guidance.

Once you and the rest of the group are in a space or room away from the incident, you may be asked to remain there and asked not to communicate with anyone using a device or mobile phone. This is in order to actively control the developing situation and prevent rumours from being spread

When it is safe to do so notify Katherine Sparkes/Senior Management and give details of the event. The FC team will work with the establishment to deal with the repercussions of the event in line with their bereavement policies and procedures.

#### **4. Telling young people when working in an establishment**

Carefully follow the guidance you are given by senior staff. No Flamingo Chicks member of staff or volunteer should speak to the press or comment on social media about a bereavement or serious incident.

The senior staff of an establishment will gather their community together and tell them about an incident. They will do this as soon as possible, but they will need to do this in communication with the police.

It is not the responsibility of our staff to break the news to any young people or family members.

Note that even pupils with the most profound needs will take the news of a death on board at some level, usually on a basic emotional level (noticing the change in people's mood etc), Staff at Special Schools will have tools to tailor their approach to telling their pupils about a bereavement.

#### **5. Telling staff and volunteers when working in an establishment**

As Flamingo Chicks CIO staff and volunteers are not present for the full day it is likely that they may miss hearing the news of a bereavement. We expect that all establishments we work in will inform Flamingo Chick's core staff if a bereavement occurs, so that we may sensitively break the news to our staff and volunteers. However, particularly following a sudden death, staff at establishments are under significant pressure, so it is possible that this may be missed.

Staff and or volunteers who hear news of a bereavement during a work visit to an establishment should speak to FC Senior Management as soon as possible after their class. The FC team will offer support and will also inform any other staff or volunteers who may be affected.

No Flamingo Chicks member of staff or volunteer should speak to the press or comment on social media about a bereavement or serious incident.

Flamingo Chicks recognises that due to the nature of our work staff may be significantly affected by the death of children with whom they work. Counselling support can be provided for teachers and can be requested by contacting Katherine Sparkes.

#### **6. Telling young people and families who take part in community activity**

Actions will be dependent on the circumstances.

In the event of a sudden death or a bereavement Katherine Sparkes will communicate with the affected family and any relevant organisations, to ascertain whether it is appropriate to officially inform the Flamingo Chicks community. It is not the responsibility of any other staff member to

break the news to the community and all staff and volunteers should refrain from making announcements via social media and speaking to the press.

It may be appropriate to inform our community in writing. This will be done in consultation with the family as soon as possible after the event. The letter sent home to parents/carers of all the young people should be on Flamingo Chicks CIO headed paper and should express sympathy and give factual information about the death. This will reduce the likelihood of rumour which could be intensely hurtful.

Flamingo Chicks will send or hand deliver a letter or card to the parents/carers or next of kin of the child, staff member or volunteer who has died, the following day or as soon as possible. Ask to be kept informed of the funeral arrangements so that the company can be represented. However, if the parents/carers do not tell you of the funeral, carefully consider whether you ought to attend (much will depend on the circumstances).

## **7. Telling Staff**

In the unlikely event of the death of a child, staff or volunteer, staff and volunteers who work alongside them will be informed as soon as is practicable after the event. Staff and volunteers who are nearest to what has happened should be informed first.

Advise staff and volunteers to avoid answering questions or making comment on social media or speaking to the press.

## **8. Dealing with the Media**

Katherine Sparkes is the designated Press Officer and will deal with all media communication. No other Flamingo Chicks member of staff or volunteer should speak to the press or comment on social media about a bereavement or serious incident.

Media coverage and speculation may cause distress to children and families. Psychological support can be sought if needed.

If the media broadcasts any such report, you may be approached for comment; this could be with little or no warning and you may have no time to prepare. If you are faced with this situation, keep expressing sympathy for the parent/carers/next of kin so that editor will find it hard to cut this part of your statement.

If there is a post mortem, this may happen very quickly and almost certainly within 48 hours. If you are in communication with the police they may inform you of the facts. The best way to stop media speculation is with the use of facts.

## **9. Helping the Community Recover**

Accept that recovery will take some time. Following a death Flamingo Chicks will consult the affected family to arrange the most appropriate way to acknowledge the bereavement.

This may include providing resources and opportunities to express thoughts, memories and emotions e.g. setting up a memorial table with a book or art materials to write or make something in memory of the person who has died.

In the case that we are informed of a child losing a family member recognise that they may have intense needs that appear later. The class teacher should work with the family to support the child to engage in Flamingo Chicks activities and seek advice if necessary.

### **10. Coping with an Expected Death**

In the unfortunate event that this may affect a child or staff member within an establishment, the establishment will be following policies and procedures to support the child, their family and the wider community. If any concerns arise relating to coping with an expected death when working within an establishment discuss this with the staff responsible for pastoral care. Contact Katherine Sparkes for further support.

The pastoral staff members of special schools will have tools and expertise in meeting children's social, emotional, physical and spiritual needs and will work closely with families too.

Should coping with an expected death become a concern during community activity Flamingo Chicks staff should inform Katherine Sparkes. Katherine will seek the advice of special school staff and experts in this field when necessary.

### **Useful Links and Further Information**

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/child-death-reviews-year-ending-31-march-2016>

[https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/file/----internal-documents/Lullaby-CDR\\_Booklet.pdf](https://www.lullabytrust.org.uk/file/----internal-documents/Lullaby-CDR_Booklet.pdf)

<https://www.bristol.gov.uk/births-deaths-marriages/bereavement-support>

### **Key contact:**

Katherine Sparkes 0796 808 1152 and [katie@flamingochicks.org](mailto:katie@flamingochicks.org)

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