



Management of Critical Incidents

Children's Services Policy 2.19

Date issued: October 2008

Replaces issue/policy: Critical incident policy

Date effective: October 2008

Date revised: December 2010, March 2012, October 2014, April 2015, November 2015, May 2019, October 2020; and January 2023

Aim:

- To prevent where possible, and appropriately manage all critical incidents which may affect the Centre, staff, visitors and children and in doing so provide support and reduce the effect that the incident may have.

Relevant Legislation:

- [Education and Care Services National Amendment Regulations 2020](#)
- [Education and Care Services National Regulations](#)
- [Public Health Amendment \(Review\) Act 2017](#)
- [NSW Work Health and Safety Regulation 2017](#)
- [NSW Public Health Regulation 2012](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Act 2011](#)
- [Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011](#)
- [Children \(Education and Care Services National Law Application\) Act 2010](#)
- [NSW Public Health Act 2010](#)

Resources:

- [Australian Childhood Foundation, Managing Critical Incidents to Protect Children](#)
- [Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse, Final Report](#)
- [Australian Children's Education and Care Quality Authority - National Quality Standard](#)
 - **Quality Area 2:**
 - Standard 2.2 - Element 2.2.2

Note: In this policy "staff" and "educators" refers to staff employed by Willoughby City Council.

Strategies:

In meeting its' obligations under relevant legislation, guidelines and industry codes of practice, Council's Children's Services will:

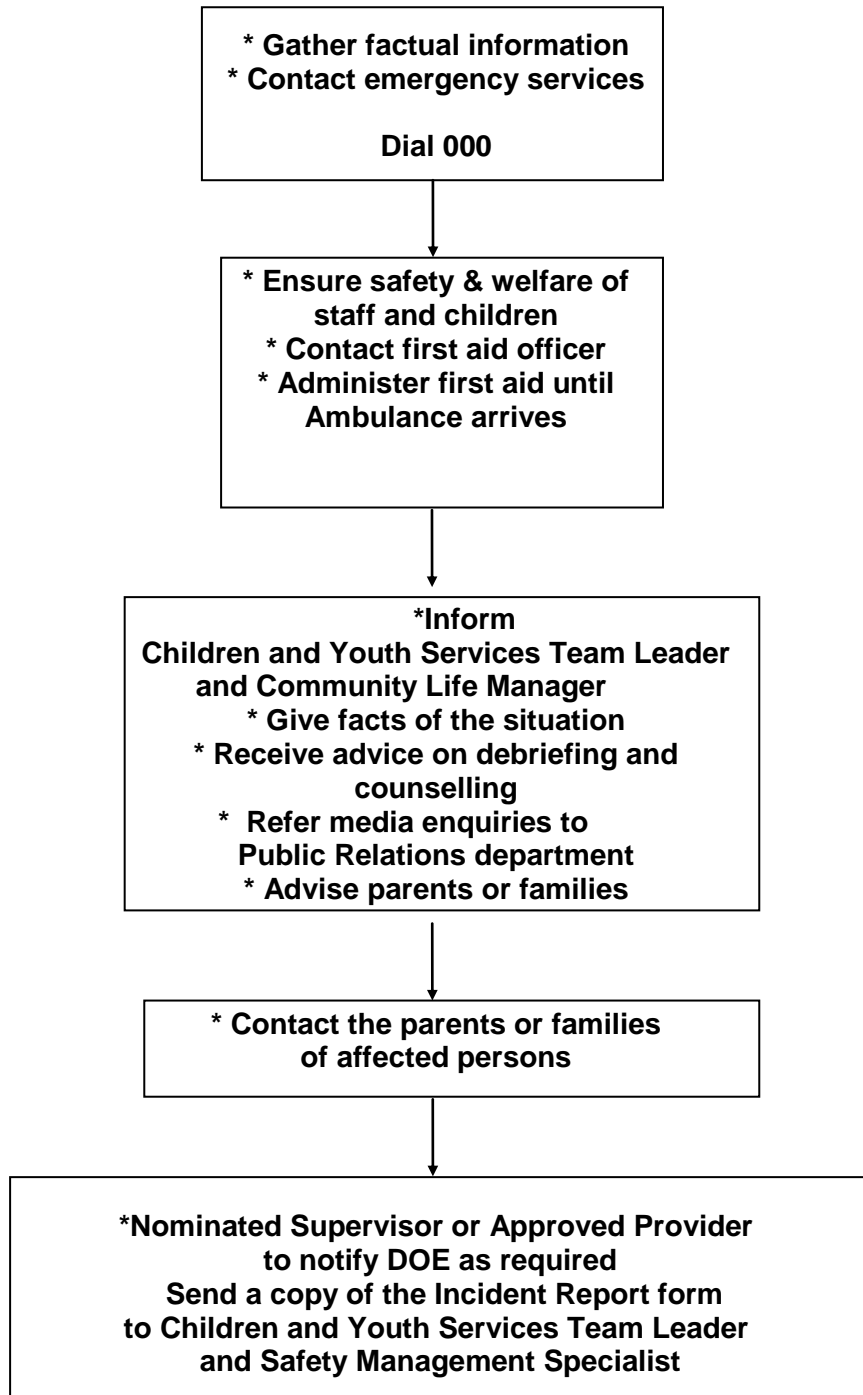
- Develop, implement and regularly review procedures and plans of action for the management of critical incidents and emergencies to ensure they reflect the highest possible standards;
- Allocate individual responsibilities to specific staff;
- Ensure all staff are aware of and familiar with these procedures;
- Identify and reduce risks and hazards through regular assessments;
- Organise and monitor regular practice drills;
- Establish close liaison with all local emergency services; and
- Organise staff development activities, where necessary.

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1. CRITICAL INCIDENTS - SPECIFIC INFORMATION

1.1 Immediate Actions

The Nominated Supervisor is to allocate responsibility for each of the following steps:



1.2 Immediate Key Contact List

Organisation	Details	Telephone
Emergency Services Emergencies Only	Police Ambulance Fire Brigade	000 000 000
Local Police	Chatswood	9414 8499
Poisons Information	24 hours	13 11 26
Electricity (Ausgrid)	24 hours	13 13 88
Gas Leaks and Emergency Services	24 hours	1800 427 532
Sydney Water	24 hours	13 20 92
Telstra	24 hours Corporate Services	13 22 00
Child Protection Helpline (for reporting of Child Abuse to Department of Communities and Justice)	24 hours	132 111 (For mandatory reporters)

1.3 Later Actions

- convene brief meeting of Nominated Supervisor with the Community Life Manager and Children and Youth Services Team Leader to:
 - discuss intervention plan
 - obtain Executive support
- contact local support personnel
- convene a full staff meeting to:
 - present information
 - discuss the action plan
 - allow staff response
 - decide how children will be informed or given additional information
- if appropriate contact other Centres for assistance
- set up a recovery room in the centre:
 - provide fluids
 - comfortable chairs
 - support personnel
- inform children of:
 - facts of the incident
 - Centre actions
 - allow children's discussion or response
- identify "at risk" staff and children
- contact parents or families of "at risk" staff or children
- arrange a debriefing for "at risk" staff or children
- inform all parents by letter with:
 - the facts of the incident
 - the Centre's response plan
 - possible reaction of children
 - sources of help for families
 - encourage 2 way communications between parents and the Centre
- restore the Centre to regular routine ASAP
- obtain updated factual information
- continue to inform staff, children & parents
- continue to monitor the well-being of staff and children

2. EVACUATIONS

Inform the Nominated Supervisor, Responsible Person or Room Leader of the threat who will then call:

- relevant emergency services
- Children and Youth Services Team Leader/Community Life Manager

EVACUATION PROCEDURES

In the event of an evacuation:

1 REMOVE anybody from immediate danger.

2 RAISE the Alarm

Notify the Nominated Supervisor/Responsible Person or Room Leader and ensure that emergency services have been contacted.

3 EMERGENCY signal will sound!

EVACUATE to the nominated assembly area remaining clear of danger.

Remember: TAKE THE ROOM/CENTRE ROLL!

4 REMAIN at the assembly area until the “all clear” has been given by the emergency services.

ACCOUNT for all staff and children.

Remember: only if it is safe to do so, fight the emergency!

3. FIRES

Signal: Fire alarm is activated or emergency whistle is blown

Actions:

- implement the Evacuation Procedures if necessary. Doors and windows should be closed.
- on departure of rooms in order to prevent spread of fire and smoke, a staff member should wait at the front driveway to direct Emergency Services to the location of the fire; and
- fire extinguishers and hose reels should only be used if staff are confident in doing so and there is no additional risk to them or children OR in the case of potential entrapment.

3.1 BUSH FIRES

If evacuation of staff and children is required, it should take place under the direction of authorised Emergency Personnel (Bush Fire Brigade, Fire Brigade or Police). If it is apparent that lives will be endangered unless evacuation occurs immediately and the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person is unable to contact the Emergency Officer in Charge, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should make immediate arrangements to evacuate to a place of safety.

If the organised movement of staff and children is impossible:

- direct staff and children to remain within the buildings;
- if time allows, and it is safe to do so, block gutters, fill with water and hose down buildings;
- all windows and doors should be closed (BUT NOT LOCKED), block under doors to prevent smoke entry;
- children should be assembled away from the part of the building that will be initially exposed to fire;
- when the fire has passed, children should leave the building in an orderly manner assembling away from the building and fire.
- Carry out a roll call; and
- if it is safe to do so, attempts to extinguish any remaining fire may now be carried out.

4. BOMB THREATS

Procedures

- If you receive a threat via phone, **REMAIN CALM.**
- Try to complete as much of the form as possible, trying to keep the caller on the telephone for as long as possible.
- Note any background noises.

All of this information is vital for the Police and their investigations.

Procedures

1. On receipt of a bomb threat **IMMEDIATELY NOTIFY POLICE AND IF DIRECTED IMPLEMENT EVACUATION PROCEDURES.**
2. On evacuation, staff and children should only take their personal belongings that are in their immediate area and then proceed to the evacuation area.

3. After the evacuation, notify the Children and Youth Services Team Leader and Community Life Manager of the threat.
4. The person who received the threat should complete as much of the Bomb Threat Report form as possible **AFTER EVACUATING**. Give this form to the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person and then the Police.
5. The Senior Officer of the Emergency Services is the only Authorised person to give the “all clear” for the return of staff and children to the Centre.

6. SUSPICIOUS DEVICE RESPONSE

Suspicious devices may take the form of a suspect article, either found in the building or grounds, or an article being delivered by messenger or mail.

**SUSPICIOUS DEVICES SHOULD NEVER BE TOUCHED, TILTED OR
TAMPERED WITH**

Procedure

1. The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should contact the Police as soon as possible, providing the following information:
 - exact location of the device; and
 - description of the device, if known exact location of Nominated Supervisor or person who can assist in the investigation on Police arrival.
2. The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must assess the threat and make the decision to evacuate. Staff and children should evacuate the area or building to the evacuation area. The designated area should be one that affords safety in respect to the detonation of the device. This may be a different location to the normal evacuation area, dependant on the location of the threat.
3. The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person, if possible, should ensure that confidential documents or valuables are secured.
4. Ensure that all staff and children reach and remain at the evacuation area.
5. Place responsible staff at all entry points to the Centre to prevent visitors or others approaching the suspected danger area, until the arrival of the Police.
6. Where required, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should accompany the Police to show the exact location of the device and to also assess that safety measures implemented have remained in place.
7. The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person and individual teaching staff should be prepared to assist the Police, if required, to make a full search of buildings or classrooms for other suspected devices as long as staff: child ratios are followed.

6. LOCK DOWN PROCEDURE

Where there has been an identified threat outside of the service the service will implement a Lock Down Procedure. This is to occur where the service is not required to evacuate the building, but is required to protect the staff and children inside the building from an external threat.

When the threat is identified inform the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person and sound alarm.

- Gather children to a safe area within the service. Usually this should be away from windows and doors.

- One staff member will be directed to lock all windows and doors of their play room.
- Staff to contact emergency services and await further instruction.

7. CHEMICALS, GAS AND EXPLOSIONS

Within the Centre

Whenever there is a major escape of gas, chemicals or threat of explosion within the Centre, **immediate evacuation** from the affected buildings must be implemented.

Actions:

- notify the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person immediately;
- remain calm and keep the children as calm as possible;
- attempt to leave the building as long as you are completely certain the route is safe.
- Special care must be taken with stairs or steps; and
- if you are unsure of the safety of the exit, then stay where are until assistance arrives.

Adjoining Facilities or Buildings

Where adjoining buildings, homes or facilities are affected, the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should act in accordance with the instructions of Emergency Services present, or order immediate evacuation where deemed necessary.

In some cases, it may be necessary to keep staff and children within the building rather than evacuate them.

8. TRANSPORT OR INDUSTRIAL ACCIDENTS

In the event of a transport or industrial accident, always ensure that children and staff are safe. Assess the situation and take action accordingly.

Actions:

- if danger to children exists in playrooms, evacuate immediately. If, however, children are safer within the playrooms, keep them there;
- if roads are closed, keep children at the Centre until parents are able to pick them up or inform the staff of their wishes.

9. NATURAL DISASTERS

9.1 Wind Storms

Warning of an impending windstorm may be received in time to allow children to go home before the emergency. However, if warning time is insufficient to allow this or if high winds develop during opening hours without warning the following should be implemented:

- direct children and staff to assemble inside buildings:
 - stand against interior walls away from windows;
 - avoid rooms that will bear the full force of the wind; and
 - close all windows and blinds on the windward side.
- secure all loose objects in the open that may become missiles, e.g. garbage bins.
- close down any Centre utilities that may cause additional hazards, e.g. power, gas.
- ensure all staff and children have taken shelter, conducting a roll call at the first appropriate time.
- the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should notify the Children and Youth Services Team Leader of action taken.

- notify utility companies of any break or suspected break in lines.
- keep children and staff at the Centre until it is safe to return to normal activities or to go home.

9.2 Earthquake

The effects of any earthquake vary depending on geographic location, ground type, intensity of the event and the construction of the buildings.

In the event of an earthquake the following procedures should be implemented:

Indoors

- if you are indoors, stay there. You could be hit by falling debris outside;
- take cover under a door frame, table, bench or desk; and
- keep away from windows.

Outdoors

- if you are outdoors, move away from buildings, high walls, electric power lines and dangling electric wires;
- sit down; and
- if you are near a large building, seek refuge under archways or doorways which could offer protection from falling debris.

When the Earthquake Stops

- immediately evacuate buildings, if safe to do so;
- assemble staff and children well clear of buildings, but not under trees;
- take the roll for all rooms and account for all; and
- liaise with Emergency Services if possible.

If time permits and it is safe to do so, turn off heaters and other appliances prior to the evacuation.

If damage has occurred, turn off gas and electricity, if it is safe to do so.

Do not use telephones other than for emergencies. Telephone exchanges needed for rescue and medical services become overloaded.

10. SERIOUS INJURY / DEATH

Staff or children who witness a serious injury or death must receive immediate assistance and support (trauma counselling or crisis debriefing). By preference, this should occur on the same day as the incident or immediately the next day and must be provided by an experienced professional.

Actions:

- the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must be informed immediately;
- the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must then put into place adequate support mechanisms for all those who require it (by contacting the Community Life Manager, and relevant trauma / grief counsellor); and
- The Nominated Supervisor is required to refer to **Children's Services Policy 2.2- Incident, Injury, Trauma and Illness** for further reporting requirements.

11. AGGRESSIVE BEHAVIOUR

Aggressive, threatening, bullying behaviour toward staff by a child, young person or adult (incl. other staff):

- Assess the situation and decide on appropriate action to be taken.
 1. Attempt to diffuse the situation with quiet & understanding discussion.
 2. Use 'Constant Companion' to call for help if you feel the situation could escalate (where available). (This will alert the police).
 3. Call '000' if you feel the situation could escalate and it is possible to do so and explain the situation.
- To ensure the safety of staff and children, follow all instructions.
- The safety of staff and children is paramount and nothing should be done to threaten that safety.
- The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must be notified of the behaviour of the child, young person or adult and whether or not the child, young person or adult is known to staff as soon as it is safe to do so. **Never** endanger a staff member or children in doing this.
- Try to observe and remember as much detail as possible for later police investigation.
- NO attempt should be made to apprehend a child, young person or adult or to follow them away from the premises.

Physical assault of staff by a child, young person or adult (incl. other staff):

- Try to remain calm and cooperative and where possible calmly but quickly remove yourself and find a safe place for self and others.
- Use 'Constant Companion' to call for help (where available). (This will alert the police).
- Call '000' if it is possible to do so and explain the situation.
- To ensure the safety of staff and children, follow all instructions.
- The safety of staff and children is paramount and nothing should be done to threaten that safety.
- The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must be notified of the assault by the child, young person or adult and whether or not the child, young person or adult is known to staff as soon as it is safe to do so. **Never** endanger a staff member or children in doing this.
- Try to observe and remember as much detail as possible for later police investigation.
- Take no physical retaliatory action unless you believe your life is threatened.
- Notify Council management ASAP.
- NO attempt should be made to apprehend persons or to follow them away from the premises

12. ARMED HOLD UP/HOSTAGE SITUATIONS

Actions:

- Assess the situation and decide on appropriate action to be taken.
 1. Use 'Constant Companion' to call for help (where available) (This will alert the police).
 2. Call '000' if it is possible to do so and explain the situation.
- To ensure the safety of staff and children, follow all instructions.
- The safety of staff and children is paramount and nothing should be done to threaten that safety.
- staff and children not involved should be evacuated to a safe area, if possible;

- The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must be notified of the situation as soon as it is safe to do so. **Never** endanger a staff member or children in doing this;
- Follow all Police instructions.
- Provide trauma counselling where required.

SIEGE / HOSTAGE QUESTIONNAIRE

1. Date/...../..... Time Reported By
2. Exact Location of Hostage Incident
.....
.....
3. Number of Hostages
4. Name(s) of Hostage(s)
.....
.....
5. If Name(s) Unknown, Hostage(s) Details: Height
Sex
Age
Colouring
6. Number of Assailants
7. Notable Characteristics of Assailant(s)
.....
8. Number of Weapons
9. Description of Weapons
10. Mood of Assailant(s) e.g. calm, irrational, nervous
.....
11. Any Other Information
.....
.....
.....

13. CRIMINAL ACTIVITY (Vandalism / Break-in)

Actions:

- immediately inform the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person;
- the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must inform the Police;
- do not touch anything or let children into the area, until Police have inspected the area and have advised that it is safe to enter the area and to handle things. (This may mean that the Centre opens late to families); and
- the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person must inform the Children and Youth Services Team Leader, Community Life Manager, Risk Management Specialist and Workers Compensation Co-ordinator and Property & Construction Services Manager.

14. CHILD/YOUNG PERSON LOST OR INJURED ON EXCURSION

Please refer to the 'Excursion Policy' for conduct of excursions

Actions:

12.1 INJURY	12.2 LOST
* Give appropriate first aid treatment if injury is minor.	Conduct immediate search of area Contact Police or other emergency personnel.
* If injuries are major, immediately contact Ambulance / Police (if required). * Contact the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person. * The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person is to ensure any emergency information is provided to the staff member on the scene. * The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should contact the child's parents and notify them of the details.	* Contact the Nominated Supervisor
* If more than one staff member is present, one to stay with the group and the other to remain with the patient	* The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should notify the child's parents when necessary.
* If possible, a staff member should go with the child to the hospital (depending on the staff: child ratios) and ascertain the hospital the patient is taken to and inform the Centre.	* A staff member is to remain on site until relieved or directed to leave.

* A staff member is to remain on site until relieved or directed to leave.	* Always ensure the safety of the group.
* Always ensure the safety of the group.	

15. TEMPERATURE EXTREMES

Heat

Transient periods of high temperatures will often occur during the summer months. The Centre should continue to operate without disruption to normal routines and children should not be sent home. The Centre is fully air-conditioned to decrease the chances of staff or children becoming affected by the heat.

Please refer to the 'Sun Protection Policy'.

Heat Stress

Heat stress is a serious condition that can lead to death if not treated. Symptoms include:

- tiredness
- weakness
- visual disturbances
- headaches
- nausea
- muscle cramps
- breathlessness
- dizziness
- palpitations

Prevention of Heat Stress

The following precautions should be taken to prevent heat stress in staff and children:

- encourage staff and children to drink at **least 2 litres** of water per day (at least a glass of water every hour if inactive, or a glass of water **every 1/2 hour** if active) to avoid dehydration;
- encourage the wearing of hats, the use of a **30+** sunscreen and protective clothing.
- Lightweight cotton, (closely woven) clothing provides protection from the sun and is cooler;
- introduce the Summer Programme so that outdoor activities are limited to the cooler parts of the day;
- encourage children to remain in shaded areas during outdoor play periods;
- enforce the "No Hat - No Play" procedure; and
- as part of the regular maintenance program, ensure that blinds, fans, cooling and heating devices are working efficiently.

Cold

Periods of extremely cold weather will also occur during the year. If the body temperature falls below a certain point, shivering will occur. Action should be taken to immediately warm the body. This can include exercise, wearing more clothing or moving the person to a warmer place.

16. MEDIA ATTENTION

Staff Authorised to Speak

No staff at the Centre are authorised to speak to the media, if they are approached for comment. All enquiries should be referred to Council's Communications Team.

Inform the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person if you are approached by the media. The Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person will inform the Community Life Manager and the Communications Team.

Unfavourable Attention

Actions:

- inform the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person;
- the Nominated Supervisor or Responsible Person should contact the Children and Youth Services Team Leader/Community Life Manager and Council's Communications Team for advice; and
- the Nominated Supervisor should control "damage" through the Centre community via newsletters and parent meetings.

17. PEOPLE AFFECTED BY CRITICAL INCIDENTS

The effects of a critical incident on people can vary. They may be directly involved in the incident; they may be managing it or those who witness it. All will encounter different experiences. The following should be used as a guide in identifying those who may require assistance or support.

People Directly Exposed to the Incident

- Those who suffer intense trauma and experience either physical or psychological injuries.

Relatives and Friends

- Those who are grieving for the injured and affected, e.g. families, students and staff.

People with Previous Trauma or Grief

- Those who are not directly affected by the incident but who may be affected because of a previous incident or experience.

Helpers or Recovery Personnel

- Recovery personnel who are required to maintain functional efficiency during the incident and to cope with the psychological effects, e.g. staff, school counsellors, administrators and emergency service personnel.

The Community and People Indirectly Involved

- Those in the community affected but not directly involved, e.g. other parents, staff and students from neighbouring schools, those that could have been direct victims but were not due to chance, those for whom stress is triggered as a result of the incident.

18. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

It is essential for services to prepare for the roles and responsibilities of people before a critical incident occurs.

Therefore, services are to use the example below to develop a chart indicating who is responsible for managing different aspects of a critical incident.

Role / Title	Responsibilities	Person/s
Warden	To make decisions and control Centre emergencies and evacuations	Nominated Supervisor Responsible Person Designated Staff
Evacuation Assistants	To ensure the centre is completely evacuated in an emergency	All Staff
First Aid Officers	To administer first aid during the incident	Nominated Supervisor Other staff with First Aid Certificates

19. TIMEFRAME FOR ACTION

The successful management of critical incidents is dependant on the service taking appropriate action and providing support during and after the incident. Timeframes following a critical incident will vary depending on the circumstances.

The following is a guide to probable critical incident management at Council Child Care services

Immediately - ensure the safety and welfare of students and staff, arranging first aid if necessary; set up a recovery room or centre if necessary,

Within 24 hours - gather the facts;

- where possible notify the time and place of debriefing to all relevant persons;
- manage the media via councils Media Policy;
- keep staff, children and parents informed as appropriate;
- arrange counselling and debriefing as necessary; and
- develop plans to restore normal functioning of the service.

Within 48 - 72 hours

- provide opportunities for staff and children to talk about the incident;
- provide support for staff and helpers;
- continue to debrief all relevant persons;
- restore normal functioning and service delivery as soon as possible;
- keep parents informed; and
- identify behavioural changes and the possibility of post-traumatic stress disorder; refer to Child and Family Health Centre Counsellors for children, and Council's Employee Assistance Program (EAP) for staff.

Within First Month

- arrange a memorial service if appropriate;
- encourage parents to participate in meeting to discuss children's welfare;
- monitor progress of hospitalised staff or children; and
- monitor psychological and physical health of all helpers.

In the Short Term

- continue to monitor staff and children for signs of post-traumatic stress order disorder
- refer for specialised treatment; and
- continue to provide support.

In the Longer Term

- plan for and be sensitive to the disturbing influence of anniversaries, inquests and legal
- proceedings; and
- access specialist support whenever necessary.

20. TELEPHONE THREATS RESPONSE CHECKLIST

RESPONSE BY RECEIVER OF CALL

- Record the exact wording and nature of the threat.
- Below are some examples of questions that you may have the opportunity to ask.

These will help the police to investigate the incident.

GENERAL THREAT

What are you threatening to do?.....

Why are making this threat?.....

When do you intend to carry it out?.....

Do you intend to phone again?.....

What is your name?.....

Where are you?.....

What is your address?.....

BOMB THREAT

When is the bomb going to explode?.....

Where did you place the bomb?.....

When did you put it there?.....

What does the bomb look like?.....

What kind of bomb is it?.....

What will make the bomb explode?.....

Why did you place the bomb?.....

What is your name?.....

Where are you?.....

What is your address?.....

Please turn over and complete the details

IDENTIFYING / LOCATING THE CALLER

(Tick the appropriate boxes)

Caller's Voice

- | | | | |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Male | <input type="checkbox"/> Slow | <input type="checkbox"/> Slurred | <input type="checkbox"/> Deep breathing |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Female | <input type="checkbox"/> Rapid | <input type="checkbox"/> Nasal | <input type="checkbox"/> Cracking voice |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Old | <input type="checkbox"/> Soft | <input type="checkbox"/> Stuttering | <input type="checkbox"/> Disguised |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Young | <input type="checkbox"/> Loud | <input type="checkbox"/> Lisp | <input type="checkbox"/> Accented |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Laughing | <input type="checkbox"/> Raspy | <input type="checkbox"/> Familiar |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Emotional | <input type="checkbox"/> Abusive | <input type="checkbox"/> Inconsistent |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Well-spoken | <input type="checkbox"/> Incoherent | <input type="checkbox"/> Irrational |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Foul | <input type="checkbox"/> Recorded | <input type="checkbox"/> Message read by caller |

Background Noises

- | | | |
|--|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Street noises | <input type="checkbox"/> House noises | <input type="checkbox"/> Office machinery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Crockery | <input type="checkbox"/> Motor | <input type="checkbox"/> Factory machinery |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Voices | <input type="checkbox"/> Aircraft | <input type="checkbox"/> Static |
| <input type="checkbox"/> PA system | <input type="checkbox"/> Clear | <input type="checkbox"/> Fading |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Music | <input type="checkbox"/> Muffled | <input type="checkbox"/> Local |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> Animal noises | <input type="checkbox"/> Long distance |

☐ Any other details.....