

**Bereavement Policy**

**Date of publication:** February 2020

**Date for Review:** February 2022

**Policy Owner:** Vice Principal Learner Services, Safeguarding

and General Education

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**Introduction**

The purpose of this policy is to help everyone within the college community to deal with a death of a student or member of staff. At a time when there may be shock, upset and confusion, it is essential to ensure that there is as little disruption as possible and that appropriate and effective communication is used to allow the wider college community to be supported.

**When a Death Occurs**

**Staff Notification of a Students’ Death**

The Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) or Learner Services Manager (LSM) ~~will~~ should be the primary point of contact with the student’s family following a death. However, if it is deemed more appropriate a Programme Manager (PM) may be instructed to take on this responsibility.

The DSL/LSM/PM will gather factual information and where necessary gain consent from the family with regarding their wishes in sharing information with the college community.

The Principal and Senior Management Team should be informed as soon as possible so that they can inform Programme Managers and relevant staff.

The Learner Services Manager should inform all other staff including:

* Counsellors and Student Health Advisor - to arrange for support if required, in the immediate aftermath and in the future for both students and staff
* Reception - to direct calls to the appropriate department.
* Student Finance - to make the necessary funding arrangements.
* MIS - to prevent any standard communications going to the family, i.e. absence notification/reports and to update the college database and administration staff.

The aim of information sharing is to reduce unnecessary additional stress to the family.

**Academic and Vocational Examination Information**

In the event of a student death the examinations department will be notified by the Programme Manager. Any forthcoming examinations linked to the student will be dealt with immediately to prevent any future correspondence with the family. Other students that may be affected by a death of a student should discuss this with their Programme Manager who will contact the Awarding body to discuss arrangements.

**The Death of a Member of Staff**

The primary point of contact for a member of staff’s family following a death is Human Resources. Appropriate support should be provided for the whole College community. Special support, including appropriate cover may be needed for staff who worked particularly closely with the deceased. The Principal will determine the appropriate period of time for these pastoral supports to continue. In general, it is best to have a minimum of disruption to the college timetable. The structure of the college day is important to maintain, but some flexibility may be required. Great sensitivity and care will need to be taken in determining how lessons will be covered immediately following the death.

**Student Notification of a Death**

Students within the programme area should be informed as soon as possible by their tutor, if possible, within small tutorial groups. Information shared should be kept to a bare minimum and information regarding support should be given out.

If a death of a student occurs, parents of the other students within the tutorial group should be informed to enable them to offer support. If students are absent from college or on work placement, then parents should be asked to pass on the information in person, to avoid any confusion via social media.

**Information Sharing - Press**

If the Press are involved in reporting of the death, the Principal or SMT will consult with the Marketing Manager regarding an official statement to be released by the College. Any enquires via phone calls, emails or letters should be sent directly to the Marketing team. Reception or other members of staff should also direct any correspondence to the Marketing team. A communications log may be used to make note of any correspondence.

**Funeral Provision**

When a funeral has been planned it is essential that the College is sensitive to the family’s wishes. Members of the College community may be welcome to attend if the family wishes so. If it is to be a private funeral it may be appropriate to hold a short service of remembrance at College for those that wish to attend.

**Possessions**

The arrangements and collection of possessions of the deceased, including their work, will be managed by the Programme Manager or in the case of a member of staff, their direct line manager. The situation will need to be handled sensitively and with respect.

**Memorials**

Memorials may wish to be considered by the college. Examples could include planting a miniature tree (and labels with string) to be left in a suitable place, offering the chance for individuals to leave a thought/note/prayer or a book for messages to be written inside. Longer term memorials could include: planting of a tree, plant, plaque or bench.

Sending a card to the parents/guardians/family one year after the incident can also be a supportive gesture and one that may be well appreciated.

**Discovery of a Death on College Premises**

1. Police must be notified immediately
2. Nothing should be moved or touched until the police have arrived and their guidance has been sought
3. If there is a ‘violent, unnatural or sudden death of which the cause is unknown…’ then the Coroner’s Act 1988 imposes on the Coroner a duty (usually delegated to the police at the scene) to establish; who the deceased was; where, when and how the deceased met their death; details required for the registration of the death
4. The Police will normally arrange for the removal of the body
5. A crisis (postvention) team should convene immediately which should include the Principal, SMT, Learner Services Manager, DSL/DDSL, and Marketing Manager. The team will disseminate any further information to the appropriate staff within one day (see annex 2).
6. The Police or hospital will normally arrange that the next of kin are informed. SMT must check that this has been done and which person(s) have been informed. The college may need to assist the police by making available information from its student records.
7. In the unlikely event that the police do not undertake this duty, responsibility may fall to SMT. It is essential that the veracity of the information about the death is clear before making any contact with the next of kin.
8. If there are witnesses whom the police will wish to interview, they should be taken to a private area removed from the immediate scene as soon as possible and provided with appropriate support.
9. No information must be shared via phone calls, emails or social media to avoid the immediate distress of family members and friends.
10. In most cases, the sudden death of a student will become common knowledge to at least a portion of the community within a short space of time. Basic information should be disseminated without delay on a need to know basis. Failure to communicate can lead to rumours and unnecessary anxiety in the college community.
11. An apparent or alleged suicide is not a suicide until a Coroner says so. It is important that people acting in an official capacity within the college know this and do not pre-empt the Coroners verdict in communication. If the family do not wish for this to be disclosed, explain that having staff that are able to talk to students about suicide and sudden deaths can help keep other people safe.
12. If a suicide is confirmed, the crisis (postvention) team will be asked to meet with other agencies/organisations who may be part of a Rapid Response Team. This helps with any learning from this event in the time immediately after the event.

**Useful Contacts**

**Help is at Hand** – provides people affected by suicide with emotional and practical support

<http://supportaftersuicide.org.uk/support-guides/help-is-at-hand/>

**Hampshire & Isle of Wight Educational Psychology Service (HIEP)**

<http://www3.hants.gov.uk/childrens-services/childrenandyoungpeople/educational-psychology/contact-hep.htm>

**Samaritans**

[www.samaritans.org.uk](http://www.samaritans.org.uk)

Tel: 116 123 (UK) 24 hours.

**Cruse Bereavement Care** – one to one support, pre-bereavement support, telephone support and home visits, bereaved suicide group and family support.

[www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk](http://www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk)

0844 477 9400 (national) Mon-Fri 9-5pm

0844 3303701 North Hampshire Area

**Simon Says** – supports children and young people up to the age of 18 years who has a significant person in their life who has died or is dying.

<http://www.simonsays.org.uk>

Tel: 01794 323934 – Mon-Wed 9-4pm.

**Annex 1:**

**Procedure for Reporting a Death outside of College Premises**

Next of Kin informs college.

Initial contact to pass on information to:

Designated Safeguarding Lead or Learner Services Manager

(Staff deaths to be reported to HR)

Principal/SMT/VP to liaise with next of kin to discuss information

SMT to inform Programme Manager

Learner Services Manager to inform:

MIS & Library staff

Learner services Manager to inform:

Counsellors

Student Health Advisor

Reception

Finance

Programme Manger to inform staff and exams office

Marketing Manager to make an official statement after liaising with SMT

Teaching staff to inform students in individual tutor groups.

**N.B**

*If another member of staff is contacted directly by the next of kin to notify them of a students’ death, the Designated Safeguarding Lead or Learner Services Manager should be contacted immediately in order to establish the correct pathway for reporting.*

**Annex 2:**

**Procedure for Reporting a Death within College Premises**

Teaching staff to inform students in individual tutor groups.

Programme Manger to inform staff and exams office

Marketing Manager to make an official statement after liaising with SMT

Learner Services Manager to inform:

MIS & Library staff

SMT to inform Programme Manager

Learner services Manager to inform:

Counsellors

Student Health Advisor

Reception

Finance

SMT to liaise with next of kin to discuss information

Witnesses to be taken to a private area to discuss with police.

(No information to be shared)

Police to notify next of kin

Crisis (postvention) team (Principal, SMT, Learner Services Manager, DSL, DDSL & Marketing Manager to convene immediately

Police/coroner to arrive on site and remove body

Security, SMT & Police to be notified immediately