

HUMAN RESOURCES

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH: POST INCIDENT SUPPORT

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South Yorkshire
Fire & Rescue
WORKING FOR A SAFER
SOUTH YORKSHIRE

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH POST INCIDENT SUPPORT PROCEDURE

INTRODUCTION

1. South Yorkshire Fire and Rescue (SYFR) understand that employees may at times experience problems of a psychological nature following traumatic incidents that they may attend. It is recognised that education is a vital component in dealing with psychological responses to such incidences. The education process commences with trainees during their initial training course.
2. This procedure will be activated following incidents involving; multiple fatalities, child fatalities, organisational serious injury or fatality or any other incidents of special interest which involve experiences that may be considered traumatic.
3. As a member of the Dignity at Work Partnership¹, SYFR is committed to promoting a positive working environment where the dignity and respect, to which all employees are entitled, is not undermined. No employee should be treated less favourably on the grounds of race, gender or gender reassignment, disability, sexual orientation, religion or spiritual belief, colour, nationality, national or ethnic origin, marital/parental status, family ties, trade union or political belief, hours worked, or any other reason, either directly or indirectly.
4. This procedure should be read in conjunction with the following documents:
 - Confidentiality Policy
 - Counselling Procedure
 - Counselling Information Sheet
 - Stress Policy

PROCEDURE

5. The Occupational Health Nurse Counsellor will be informed of any such incidents by Control, Supervisory Officers or Watch Roles as soon as is reasonably practicable.
6. The Occupational Health Nurse Counsellor will contact the appropriate station to make arrangements to attend at a suitable time.
7. Attendance at the initial 'defuse' will be optional and will be informal. One to one contact will be available if preferred or required by any individual at a location suitable to both the individual and the Occupational Health Nurse Counsellor.
8. Should a formal psychological debriefing be deemed necessary this will be arranged via the Occupational Health Unit and the watch concerned. This will take place within 48 to 72 hours of the incident whenever possible and will be facilitated by the Occupational Health Nurse Counsellor, using Mitchell's 3 Stage Model designed for use by the Emergency Services. It involves:
 - Exploration of **Facts**, (what actually happened)

¹ The Dignity at Work Partnership is a partnership between the Government, Unite (the UK's largest union) and major public and private organisations. For further information on the Partnership, see www.dignityatwork.org

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- **Feelings** (how individuals reacted to the situation)
 - **Future** (education on dealing with the post exposure phase of the traumatic incident).
9. Following any defuse/debrief all personnel involved will be offered support and/ or review as necessary.

PURPOSE

10. The purpose of carrying out defuse is to allow those taking part in traumatic incidents to begin to process their experience. It is recognised that some watches will naturally achieve this by themselves. The attendance of the Occupational Health Nurse Counsellor ensures uniformity of this process across the organisation. It also enables easier access for those individuals who may wish to make contact.

CODE OF PRACTICE

11. Each session will be carried out in a professional manner ensuring privacy in order to protect and promote the dignity of the individuals taking part.
12. Each session will be carried out with due regard for the confidential nature of the information divulged.
13. All individuals involved in a traumatic incident will be given the opportunity to participate to their own chosen levels.
14. Equity of occupational health care will be ensured by adopting a standardised defusing/debriefing procedure undertaken by personnel who have undertaken Critical Incident Stress Debriefing Training.
15. Defusers/debriefers will ensure their own safety by defusing/debriefing each other and/ or attending for supervision as necessary.

CONFIDENTIALITY

16. Records of the content of the defuse/debrief will not be kept. Confidential records of those invited/attending will be retained by the Occupational Health Nurse Counsellor, in accordance with Access to Medical Reports Act 1998 and Data Protection Act 1998.
17. Records kept will only be used anonymously for audit purposes when evaluating and reviewing the system.
18. Details of invitation or attendance at defuse/debrief will have to be released in the event of a legal request from either the individual, or the Organisations', solicitor or legal representative.

If you require any further guidance on this document, please contact the Occupational Health Unit.

