

Crisis and emergency plans

"I missed a lot of school because he wasn't well and I didn't like leaving him in case he fell over and he couldn't reach a phone or pull the cords... I went twice a week, that was it."

Who is this chapter for?

- School lead or staff interested in becoming/establishing a school lead within your school
- Education welfare service
- Home school liaison officer
- Parent support adviser
- Attendance officer

This chapter will support schools to:

- draw up a crisis or emergency plan as appropriate for pupils.
- provide additional support to pupils so that they are able to attend school in periods of crisis.

Synopsis

Drawing up an emergency plan for a young carer may help mitigate impacts if a young carers' situation at home becomes more difficult or if there is an emergency. Having an emergency plan in place may help in the event of a family member going into hospital or if their condition deteriorates. With no plan in place, then it is possible that a young carer might suffer with their attendance, attainment and emotional health and wellbeing.

Crisis or emergency plans

For some pupils, situation can become more difficult over time and for others, situations can vary between periods of stability and chaos.

The deterioration in health of a family member or the admission of a parent to hospital can put great stress on a family. As well as transport to school, other school routines such as completing homework on time, attending after school clubs or communications between the family and the school, such as important deadlines or paying school dinner monies, can suffer. In these situations, young carers and their families can need increased support.

It is therefore advisable to draw up a plan in advance of a crisis or emergency, or the increase of a caring role, alongside other agencies involved with the family, including adults' services, the school and the young carer. Crisis plans are most effective if your school adopts a multi-agency



approach and any contingency plans that may have been drawn up with other professionals or agencies should ideally be linked to the school plan. Remember pupils (and their families) are the experts in how their caring role and their family situation changes, and how these affect their schooling so they must be involved in the formulation of any such plans. Knowing that there is a plan in place can significantly reduce the worry for both pupils and parents.

When developing your crisis or emergency plan, consider:

- what other agencies need to be involved, when they need to be involved and how to refer to them.
- an assessment or review of the pupil's and the family's needs.
- how the school will communicate with parents.
- special measures the parents and family can use to communicate with parents.
- what additional support is required from the school and when.
- transport to and from school.
- ensuring continued attendance.
- flexibility with coursework deadlines and how this will be implemented.

In a genuine crisis, the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) advises that "a school can approve absence for a child to care for a relative until other arrangements can be made. The school should set a time limit for the absence and set some school work so the pupil does not fall far behind while at home. It may also be appropriate for a pupil whose close relative is in the final stages of terminal illness to take time off school to be with them".¹

Other chapters within this resource to help you understand this topic

- 5** Attendance
- 8** Transport
- 26** Supporting learning: a personalised approach to education and support
- 28** Support for the whole family: signposting, referrals and partnership work

¹www.teachernet.gov.uk/wholeschool/behaviour