

Guidance for those working with young people following a traumatic community event

Traumatic community events such as the one experienced in Southport will deeply impact young people, communities and those who work closely with them. Youth workers play a crucial role in providing immediate and long-term support in helping young people process their experiences and feelings, which will in turn help support the whole community.

Recognising and valuing the feelings of young people are important. By prioritising mental health, creating supportive environments, and facilitating access to resources and professional services where appropriate, we can help to navigate the challenges of recovery and build resilience for the future.

Those working with young people need to make time to recognise reflect and process their own responses to these events, as well as managing secondary trauma from young people and the wider community.

Making space for opportunities to talk, reflect and process together with colleagues is useful as well as signposting to professional support and expertise available.

Guidance for supporting Youth Workers

Counselling Services

Identify access to professional counselling and mental health services through your local NHS. This support helps youth workers process their own trauma and stress, enabling them to better assist young people.

Supervision and Debriefing

Ensure there are more regular supervision and debriefing sessions. These meetings provide a space for youth workers to share their experiences, receive guidance and discuss challenges. If possible, seek access to a therapeutic practitioner who can help facilitate this during the next few weeks. You can find some [information](#) and [resources](#) on supervision here.

Training and Resources

Provide access to training on therapeutic and trauma-informed youth work for your team. [You can access free training from the NYA](#). Ensure workers have access to [the resources they need](#) to respond effectively.

Self-Care Promotion

Create spaces and times within the working day where youth workers can step away and be mindful. Having time to ground yourself in the present and process your feelings is important to allow workers to be able to be their best for young people. [Some helpful thoughts on that can be found here](#).

Flexible Work Arrangements

Consider flexible work arrangements to allow youth workers the time they need to recover and recharge.

Communication is critical

Provide as much information as possible to employees following a crisis situation. Knowledge can help prevent feelings of uncertainty and chaos. Employ active listening techniques to validate their emotions and experiences. Show empathy and understanding in all interactions.

Guidance for supporting Young People

Safe Spaces

Create safe, welcoming environments where young people can express their feelings and share their experiences without fear of judgment, these can both either online or offline.

Professional Counselling

Facilitate access to professional counselling and mental health services. Where possible, provide links or access to mental health professionals to provide individual and group therapy sessions. [Click here for an example.](#)

Crisis Intervention

Ensure immediate crisis intervention services are available for young people in acute distress. [This can be accessed locally here.](#)

Structured Activities

When the time is right for your young people, provide usual organised and structured activities to create a sense of routine. This provides both a distraction and a healthy and positive outlet for emotional expression. Think about [sessions that you can deliver that provide opportunities to explore wellbeing, coping skills and strategies.](#)

Engage with wider contexts and families

Engage with parents and guardians where appropriate to both connect to support and to ensure that you have all of the information required to best support young people. Understanding young people's needs holistically is key to creating ways to support them.

Key points for supporting your local community

[Validate everyone's reactions.](#) Our personalities and past experiences play a role in how we react to specific events. Something that may significantly impact one person, may not affect another—and that's ok. People will react differently, expect this from workers and young people.

[Have professional contacts on hand.](#) Create a document containing information and contacts for national support services and local community agencies. You are then prepared to signpost people to the relevant support they need.

[Continue to watch for signs of struggle.](#) Not everyone will show signs of trauma immediately. It could be weeks, months, or years after the event. If you notice uncharacteristic behaviour, take time to speak with the person about what's going on. Provide information about appropriate support.

[Ensure you know how to access peer and specialist support.](#) Sometimes people may not seek out help. However, if it's readily available and right in front of them, it provides choices. Provide the time and space required for people to talk about what happened.

Further resources

There are a variety of avenues of support for your staff and young people to help them process the traumatic community event and support healing within the community. Below is a list of some of the key providers of resources.

- NYA - [Critical Incident Response](#)
- Youth and Policy - [Trauma Informed Response](#)
- Oxford Health - [Support after a traumatic event](#)
- Anna Freud - [Traumatic bereavement resources](#)
- [Supporting young people with PTSD](#)
- Orygen - [Trauma and mental health in young people](#)
- Champion Health - [PTSD in the workplace](#)
- MNVVR - [Trauma informed mindfulness and meditation](#)
- Positive Psychology - [21 Mindfulness exercises](#)
- Grief Encounter - [Grief and young people](#)
- Mind - [Bereavement and self-care](#)
- The Good Grief Trust - [Bereavement specialists](#)