

## CIC SERVICES

# Talking to Children after an Act of Terrorism

## Employee Care in Times of Trauma



After a terrorist act parents and caretakers are left with the difficult task of comforting their children and helping them to make sense of what has happened. In an age of social media it is often impossible to prevent children hearing about tragic news events.

What is important is helping children to express their feelings and feel safe. Then you can talk about the situation and answer any questions they have.

### Where to Start

Begin by asking them what they have heard and what questions they might have. They may hear things at school, on the news, on newspaper stands, on TV or online. Older children and teenagers might ask more questions and request and benefit from additional information.

No matter what the age try to keep the dialogue simple, accurate and direct.

### Give children reassurances and extra emotional support

Terrorist acts remind us that we are never completely safe and we may need to reassure children about the ways we keep them safe in their homes, schools and community. Tell them how the government, police, emergency services and hospitals are doing all they can. Allow them to express their feelings and comfort them. Talking about the events allows them to show you how they feel. Remember it is the event that is upsetting them rather than the discussions you have. Let them know it is ok to show they are upset.

### Avoid Graphic Details and Exposure to Media

It is generally best to share basic, accurate information with children and to avoid graphic or unnecessary details about tragic circumstances. They need to understand enough to know what has happened but graphic information and images can cause further distress. Take cues from your children in determining how much information to provide.

## Want to know more?

Get in touch with CiC using the details below.

+44 (0)20 7937 6224 | [enquiries@cic-eap.co.uk](mailto:enquiries@cic-eap.co.uk) | [www.cic-eap.co.uk](http://www.cic-eap.co.uk)

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Keep children away from repetitive frightening images and sounds. This can mean keeping TV, radio and social media switched off while they are around. If older children ask to watch the news you can consider prerecording it and watching it so that you can evaluate its contents.

It will also allow you to be better prepared for any later discussions you may have. At the very least try to watch it together.

### Signs they may not be coping

While it is normal for a child to be upset, tearful and frightened after a terrorist incident watch out for other signs that could suggest they need additional support.

These may be:

- Changes in sleep patterns, nightmares.

- an increase in physical complaints such as head aches, stomach pains or generally feeling unwell.
- Changes in behaviour – being clingy, seeming more immature, greater difficulty managing their emotions.

If you notice these changes it may be worth seeking extra support. You can begin by talking to your GP.

### Support Yourself

Be aware of your own feelings around the event as adults will experience heightened emotions and anxieties too.

Draw on your own sources of support as you come to terms with the event. ams.



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