Standard operating procedure (SOP) · WRK-SOP-004 · Version 1.0 · Approved by the ASF Expert Committee

Supports: 2E.3

At a glance

- After a distressing event, offer support to every staff member involved within 24 hours.
- Offer a confidential route to occupational health or a counsellor.
- Check on the staff member again after one week.
- Record the offer and the response.
- Stop and get help straight away if: a staff member involved in a serious event has not been offered any support.

1. Purpose

To make sure staff affected by serious or distressing events get timely, confidential support [EC].

2. Scope

Applies to	All staff involved in or affected by a serious event, including patient deaths, serious harm and violence
Locations	All services
When	Within 24 hours of the event, with follow-up at one week
Does not apply to	Routine stress without a specific event

3. Definitions

Term	Meaning
Distressing event	An event that may cause significant psychological distress to people who were involved
Debrief	A structured conversation after an event to share what happened and what support is needed

4. Background

Staff who are not supported after distressing events are at higher risk of burnout and of leaving the service. Early support is quick and low cost.

5. Responsibilities

Role	Responsibility	Competence
Service manager	Starts the support process within 24 hours	Management
Occupational health	Provides confidential support and follow-up	Occupational health
Staff member	Accepts or declines support and tells the manager what helps	Own role

6. Materials and equipment

Item	Requirement	Condition
List of confidential support contacts	Current	Printed in every staff room

7. Safety

- Support is offered, never forced. Staff can decline and ask later.

8. Before you start

- Confirm the confidential support contacts are current.

9. Procedure

Step 1. Identify those affected.

- List everyone involved or affected by the event.

Key point: Do not assume only the person at the centre is affected.

Step 2. Offer support within 24 hours.

- Speak to each person privately.
- Give the support contacts in writing.

Key point: The offer is made, and recorded, within 24 hours.

Step 3. Hold a debrief where needed.

- Hold a short, facilitated debrief for the team within 72 hours, if the team wants one.

Key point: The debrief is not a review of individual blame.

Step 4. Follow up at one week.

- Check with each person how they are coping.
- Record the response and any further support.

Key point: The one-week check is the one most often missed.

10. Decision points

- If a person is not fit to work after the event, occupational health decides on temporary duties.

11. Special situations

Situation	Action
Patient death	Support is offered in the same way, and the family liaison process runs in parallel.

12. Escalation

- Any staff member who reports thoughts of self-harm is referred to occupational health the same day, and to emergency services if at immediate risk.

13. Monitoring

Measure	Target	Frequency	Owner	If not met
Affected staff offered support within 24 hours	100%	Each event	Service manager	Escalate to chief executive

Follow-up at one week recorded	100%	Each event	Occupational health lead	Escalate to occupational health lead

14. Records

Record	Kept in	Retention
Support offer and follow-up record	Occupational health file	Employment plus 40 years

15. Training

- Managers are trained in the first conversation after an event at induction.

16. Related documents

ID	Title	Use
WRK-POL-003	Occupational health, safety and wellbeing policy	Policy this procedure supports
WRK-SOP-006	Violence and aggression prevention and response	Events that involve violence

17. Evidence

Reference	Note
E-006	ASF Policy Framework v1.2. Adapted.
E-009	ASF Expert Committee consensus.

18. Change history

Version	Date	What changed	Approval
1.0	the date of approval	First version	set Expert Committee approval

E-learning for this document

No e-learning course is linked to this document yet.

Planned course: New course planned.

References

- Accréditation Sans Frontières (2026). ASF Policy Framework v1.2. (E-006)
- Accréditation Sans Frontières (2026). ASF Expert Committee consensus on Standard 1. (E-009)

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