



Major Incidents

How we psychologically prepare and respond to major incidents with fatalities

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Agenda

PRoMIS

Types of major incidents

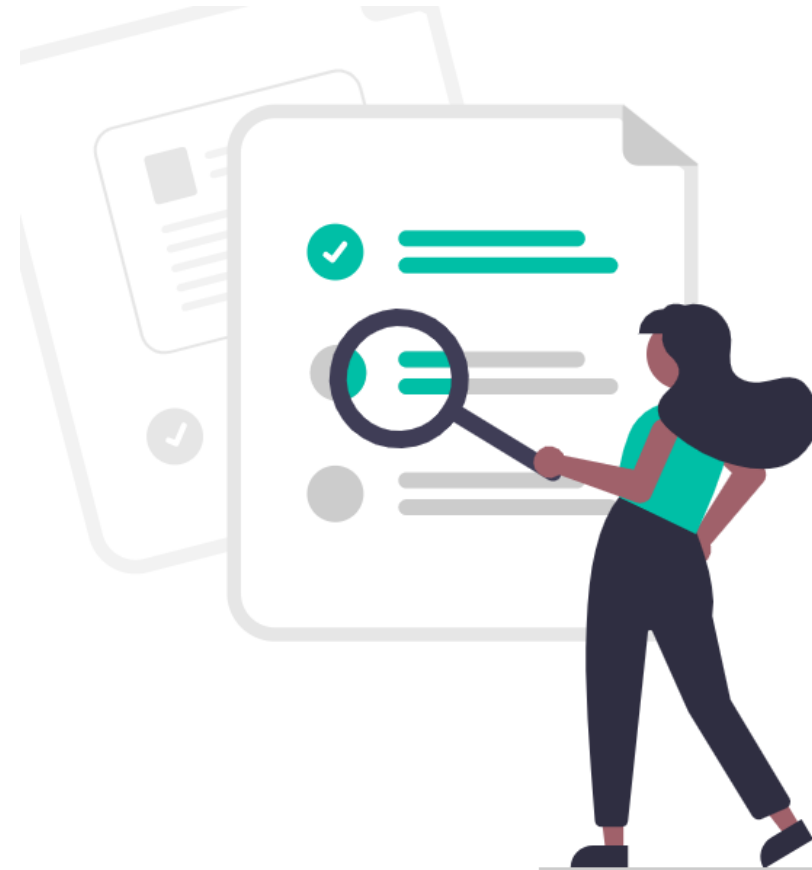
Phases of major incidents

Considerations around fatalities

Normal responses and Psychological First Aid

Mental health difficulties

Considerations around the workforce





PRoMIS

Psychosocial response to major incidents in Scotland

PRoMIS was established in November 2019 with the aim of promoting the psychosocial recovery of people affected by major incidents. It is directed at adults, young people and children normally resident in Scotland who are affected by major incidents within Scotland, other parts of the UK or abroad.

PRoMIS is led by Scotland's two specialist trauma services: the Glasgow Psychological Trauma Service and the Rivers Centre in Edinburgh. The approach taken is based on the principles of Psychological First Aid (PFA), which is recognised internationally as best practice in promoting resilience following trauma exposure.

What is a major incident?

Major incident (MI)

Major incident with mass casualties (MI-MC)

Major incident with mass fatalities

Accident

CBRN

Explosives

Pandemics

Terrorist

Natural disaster



Populations in major incidents

Workforce

Adults

Children and young adults

Other considerations

- Out of area
- Inequalities



Stages

Preparedness

Response

- *Immediate aftermath*

Recovery

- *Weeks*
- *Months*
- *Years*



Recovery

Recovery is a co-ordinated process of rebuilding, restoring, rehabilitating and, perhaps, regenerating communities following an emergency. Its purpose is to minimise their harmful effects on individuals and communities.

At the heart of a good recovery is a focus on ensuring that individuals and communities are supported, heard, and treated with dignity and respect. This can begin early in the incident by ensuring that their basic needs are met, and in the longer term through ongoing support.

Most people and communities will recover naturally without the need for specialist intervention

Communities have their own psychosocial support structures

Major incident considerations around fatalities



People missing

- May try to find a way home
- Head injuries/ disorientation
- Risk of exploitation
- Families/ close contacts checking hospitals

Takes time to identify victims and co-ordinate response

Recovering the deceased is also an evidence recovery process

Possibility of deceased having to be stored in temporary mortuaries or body storage facilities

Major incident considerations around fatalities



Importance of being able to engage in cultural, religious, spiritual and communal burial rituals

- HSCP liaising with community and cultural leaders where appropriate

Families and wider community may not be able to engage in burial rituals immediately

Bodies of the deceased may not be recoverable

Not knowing the details of how, why, etc.

In news – talked about by other people generally

Remembrance rituals

Memorial services, acts of remembrance and cultural rituals marking the anniversaries of the emergency should be planned in conjunction with the people who have been affected. They may want to do this independently or as a group. Some people may require additional support at this time.

Laying down culturally meaningful objects at the place of the incident or somewhere that represents the event

Memorial services

Marking anniversaries

Coming together as a family/ community

Normal responses

Common to experience distress in initial days and weeks following a MI

Generally temporary and will not require further action beyond utilising existing resources and social supports

Only small number of people will require further support to aid recovery

- Some people may need bereavement support
- Staff trained within health boards to provide support
- Voluntary organisations can also offer support – and should be signposted to



Traumatic loss

What makes a death of a loved one traumatic?

- Nature of relationship
- Nature of event
- Role in event : responsibility
- Response by others



Post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

Experiencing a highly distressing/traumatic situation

Under threat response memories are laid down in the brain differently

Main symptoms

Reliving of the event – nightmares, intrusive memories (images, smells, voices)

Current sense of threat (hyperarousal/ on edge)

Avoidance / emotional numbing

Complicated Grief& PTSD

- External event
- Loss related disrupting thoughts occurring several times a day
- Avoidance of reminders
- Impairment in functioning
- Duration>6 months

Survivor guilt: Survivors blame themselves for what happened, or not doing something to protect others

Complicated Grief vs Normal Grief

A lack of ability to move on from loss

An inability to make or continue interpersonal relationships

Unresolved

Risk of CG increases if death is traumatic



HSCP working with those impacted



Major incident considerations around fatalities



Workforce:

- May be redeployed to unfamiliar areas of work
- Asked to modify their normal processes at work
- Period of high demand on staff
- Exposure to high levels of distress and death



Moral injury

“occurs when we perpetrate, bear witness to, or fail to prevent an act that transgresses our deeply held moral beliefs”

“the challenge of simultaneously knowing what care patients need but being unable to provide it due to constraints that are beyond our control”

- *Dean et al. (2019)*



Impact on HSCP workforce

Moral injury

First responders impacted

Loss of life of first responders

Loss of life of HSCP colleagues

Mental health impact





Fostering resilience /wellbeing

Resilience

The ability to navigate through and recover from stressful or adverse situations

What can be done in work

Daily briefs

Huddles/20 minute care space

Peer support

Leaving work at work

Awareness of available support (support lines, online resources)

National Wellbeing Hub

www.nationalwellbeinghub.scot

Call the National Wellbeing Helpline: 0800 111 4191



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[Managers ▾](#)

[Help for you ⓘ](#)



Welcome

If you work in health or social services in Scotland then this site is for you.

Thank you for all you are doing to support your fellow citizens.

You look after us, so we'll look after you.



Questions?

