

Critical incident – incapacitated parent



**Definition:** 'Incapacitated' refers to any condition which renders a parent unable to take responsibility for their child; this could be at the time of collecting their child from the setting – but may also be observed when the child and parent arrive at the setting. Behaviour that gives rise to concerns may include:

- Appearing drunk – smell of alcohol on breath, incoherent or slurred speech, co-ordination or walking that is affected
- Appearing under the influence of drugs – eyes seem glazed, speech is incoherent or slurred, sleepy, vacant OR eyes seem wide and fiery, speech fast, jumpy.
- Angry and threatening behaviour – whether against the child,, members of staff, or others
- Appearing mentally unbalanced – saying bizarre or irrational things, disconnected from reality, agitated or concerned that others are doing things to the child, or to themselves, threatening suicide

If there are concerns that a parent may be incapacitated

- If members of staff are concerned that a parent displays any of the above characteristics that incapacitates them from being able to take responsibility for their child, they will discourage the parent from leaving the building with the child
- The manager and another member of staff (always 2 staff) ask the parent/s into the office and another member of staff takes the child back to the room – children should never witness altercations of any kind
- If the parent refuses to come to the office, the area around them is cleared of children and the atmosphere is kept low key but firm
- The parent is asked how they are feeling
- The Manager/Deputy will say that they are concerned by what they are observing and what this leads them to suspect – accusations are not made and the parent's side of the story is listened to.
- The manager will acknowledge the reply, but state clearly that in her view the parent is not in a suitable state to take charge of the child

- The manager will ask if there is anyone else who can come for the child – using the emergency contacts listed for the child, provided there are no concerns that the named contacts are likewise incapacitated
- Social care is informed by telephone immediately – concerns are explained and where there is a named carer; social care are given these details
- The child may leave with a responsible named contact if members of staff are satisfied they can ensure the child’s safety and if social care agrees.
- Social care are given the details of the carer who will take the child
- If there is no-one suitable to take the child, social care will come to the setting and take charge of the situation
- Social care will visit the child and family at home
- If violence is threatened towards anybody, the police are called, then social care

#### Record keeping

- After the situation has been managed, a record of events is made and kept.
- Each member of staff who witnessed the situation will write down the events of the incident
- The manager completes a CRIFF (common request for referral form) which would then be e-mailed to Children’s Social Services
- Further updates/notes/conversations/ telephone calls are recorded