Dealing with Trauma – Children & Young People

Below are some tips on supporting children and young people involved in major trauma which reflects evidence-based practice.

Advice for parents, clubs and coaches

In the *first few days* after a trauma:

* Experiencing some distress is entirely *normal.* This might include difficulties sleeping, thoughts and memories of what has happened popping into mind, bad dreams, irritability, feeling low, behavioural problems and avoiding activities they used to enjoy.

There is no one way of feeling after a trauma

* Children and young people will usually benefit from being with the family and friends
* Returning to normal club activities as soon as possible post-trauma is encouraged as continuing normal routine is generally helpful
  + Some clubs may feel it appropriate to open their club facilities for people to come together for a chat and a cup of tea. For other clubs, simply continuing with club activities as normal, and encouraging people to talk is the most appropriate approach.
* It is important for children and young people to know that they can talk at home or in their club environment about what happened, *if they wish*
* Parents, coaches and so on should not avoid talking about what happened; it may help to pro-actively give children and young people the message that it’s fine to discuss their experiences
* It can be helpful to acknowledge that what happened is very serious, while also recognising that it is a very rare event
* Although many people will feel they ought to be doing *something* at this stage, there is very little that counselling can achieve at this time.

In the *following weeks and months:*

* Many children and young people will find their initial difficulties settle down and they continue as they did before the trauma
* However, some children and young people may have difficulties that persist.
* Their difficulties may not be visible to others; don’t assume they are doing fine just because you have not seen any changes. They may lack the language and skills to communicate their distress
* It is important to consider a “check-in” 1-3 months post-trauma, to identify any children and young people who are still suffering psychologically

If you have concerns about yourself or someone you know you should contact:

* Your GP
* Lifeline 0808 808 8000
* Samaritans 116 123
* Childline 0800 11 11

Please do not comment on social media, or share any videos or photographs online. If you have any information please contact the PSNI.