

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

Structured support for people affected by traumatic or distressing events

Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a specialised support service designed to help individuals and teams recover after exposure to traumatic events in the workplace or community. CISM provides timely, evidence-based support that helps reduce the emotional and operational impact of critical incidents, supports psychological recovery and fosters resilience across workforces.

What it is

CISM is a structured response framework that brings together peer support, professional facilitation and crisis intervention techniques. It is delivered by trained practitioners who are experienced in guiding individuals and groups through the emotional responses that can follow events such as workplace accidents, violence, serious injuries, sudden losses, or other high-stress situations.

The service can be deployed reactively following an incident, or proactively through preparedness and resilience-building activities. The aim is to help people process their experience safely, reduce the risk of long-term stress responses, and support a return to healthy functioning.



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Core features

- **Critical incident response facilitation** — structured support shortly after traumatic events.
- **Group debriefs and defusings** — safe, guided sessions for teams to share experiences and emotional reactions.
- **One-to-one support** — individual space to discuss reactions and access coping strategies.
- **Peer support integration** — trained peer facilitators working alongside professionals.
- **Leadership support briefings** — guidance for managers on supporting their teams.
- **Preparedness planning and training** — risk awareness and readiness activities ahead of incidents.

Who it supports

CISM is suitable for any organisation where people may be exposed to critical or traumatic events — including public services, healthcare, housing associations, education providers, commercial businesses and others. It can support individuals directly affected by an incident as well as teams and leadership groups managing its aftermath.

How it works

When an organisation experiences a critical incident, a trained CISM practitioner connects with key contacts to understand the context and needs. The service is then tailored to the situation, which may include team defusings, individual support conversations and follow-up check-ins. Interventions are delivered sensitively and confidentially, with emphasis on safety, respect and facilitating healthy coping mechanisms.

The service can also be arranged in anticipation of organisational needs, with training and planning sessions designed to strengthen internal readiness and confidence in managing potential incidents.

Why it matters

An EAP isn't only about responding to challenges — it's about early support before issues escalate. Confidential and accessible assistance can help people manage stress, improve resilience and maintain focus at work. For employers, it's a constructive part of duty-of-care, contributing to reduced absenteeism, better engagement and healthier workplace cultures.

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