# CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach

*The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Schools are strongly advised to develop a policy in relation to critical incident response. NEPS also encourages schools to develop a Critical Incident Management Plan, outlining who will do what in the event of a tragedy.*

*The templates outlined below are designed as an aid to schools in drawing up a policy and plan. Each school will need to look at its own context and circumstances and draw up its own unique policy and plan. Additional guidance is contained in Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016) R19-21 P.79-90.*

*Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach* aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by always providing a safe and nurturing environment. The Board of Management, through *Orlagh Ní Fhaoláin,* has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

**Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 201 6)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)

**Define what you mean by the term 'critical incident'**

The staff and management of *Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach* recognise a critical incident to be "an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school". Critical incidents may involve one or more students or staff members, or members of our local community. Types of incidents might include:

- *The death of a member of the school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*

- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

**Aim**

The aim of the CIMP is to help school management and staff to react quickly and effectively in the event of an incident, to enable us to maintain a sense of control and to ensure that appropriate support is offered to students and staff. Having a good plan should also help ensure that the effects on the students and staff will be limited. It should enable us to affect a return to normality as soon as possible.

**Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school**

We have put systems in place to help to build resilience in both staff and students, thus preparing them to cope with a range of life events. These include measures to address both the physical and psychological safety of the school community.

**Physical safety**

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- School doors locked during class time

**Psychological safety**

The management and staff of *Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach* aim to use available programmes and resources to address the personal and social development of students, to enhance a sense of safety and security in the school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness, and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – Barnardo, Carlow Youth Services, CAHMS, TUSLA, NEPS
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g., guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored, and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency.

- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves, and details of spectrum support services are displayed throughout the school building and are given to staff directly when needed.

**Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder. This contains a copy of the policy and plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

**Team leader**: Principal- *Orlagh Ní Fhaoláin*

**Role**

- Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
- Coordinates the tasks of the team
- Liaises with the Board of Management; DES; NEPS; SEC
- Liaises with the bereaved family

*(Note – In the absences of the principal as team leader the deputy principal Caoimhe Ní Fhearaíl will act as lead leader.)*

**Garda liaison** *Principal- Orlagh Ní Fhaoláin*

**Role**

- Liaises with the Gardaí
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

**Staff liaison Role**: *Principal-*
*Orlagh Ní Fhaoláin*

- Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
- Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
- Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses.
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and contacts them individually.
- Advises them of the availability of Spectrum and gives them the contact number.

**Student liaison** *Deputy Principal – Caoimhe Uí Fhearaíl and relevant Year Head of year's affected*

**Role**

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about

- Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
- Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
- Maintains student contact records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed.

**Community/agency liaison** – *Deputy Principal- Caoimhe Uí Fhearaíl*
**Role**

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
  - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
  - Emergency support services and other external contacts and resources
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral
- Is alert to the need to check credentials of individuals offering support
- Coordinates the involvement of these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

**Parent liaison** *Principal- Orlagh Ní Fhaoláin*
**Role**

- Visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if held
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's system and ready for adaptation
- Sets up room for meetings with parents
- Maintains a record of parents seen
- Meets with individual parents
- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

**Media liaison** *Principal – Orlagh Ní Fhaoláin*

- In advance of an incident, will consider issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g students being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc)
- In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with the SEC, relevant teacher unions etc.
- Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by school management)

**Administrator** *Runaí- Catherine Neylan*
**Role**

- Maintenance of up-to-date telephone numbers of
  - Parents or guardians
  - Teachers
  - Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
- Ensures that templates are on the school's system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts

- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

**Record keeping** *Príomhoide & Runaí*

In the event of an incident each member of the team will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.

*Catherine Neylan* will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of *Gaelcholáiste Cheatharlach* have a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and seek to ensure that students do so also, e.g., the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is solid information that death was due to suicide, *and* that the family involved consents to its use. The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead. Similarly, the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established that a murder was committed. The term 'violent death' may be used instead.

| **Critical Incident Rooms**<br>In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes | |
|---|---|
| **Room Name:** | **Designated Purpose:** |
| *Seomra Taispeántais* | Main room for meeting staff |
| *Seomra Taispeántais* | Meetings with students |
| *Oifig an PO* | Meetings with parents |
| *Seomra Taispeántais* | Meetings with media |
| *Seomra 9* | Individual sessions with students |
| *Oifig an PO* | Meetings with other visitors |

**Consultation and communication regarding the plan**

All staff were consulted, and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school's final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by (Name of team member) The plan will be updated annually (*edit* name month)

| Critical Incident Management Team | | |
|---|---|---|
| **Role** | **Name** | **Phone** |
| **Team leader:** | *Príomhoide* | 0599132130 |
| **Garda liaison** | *Príomhoide* | |
| **Staff liaison** | *Príomhoide* | |
| **Student liaison** | *Oide Bliana – Foireann Shinsearach Bainistíochta* | |
| **Community liaison** | *Príomhoide* | |
| **Parent liaison** | *Príomhoide* | |
| **Media liaison** | *Príomhoide* | |
| **Administrator** | *Catherine Neylan* | 0599132130 |

## Short term actions – Day 1

| Task | Name |
|---|---|
| **Gather accurate information** | Foireann Shinsearach Bainistíochta |
| **Who, what, when, where?** | Foireann Shinsearach Bainistíochta |
| **Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly** | Príomhoide |
| **Contact external agencies** | Príomhoide |
| **Arrange supervision for students** | Príomhoide Tánaisteach |
| **Hold staff meeting** | **All staff** |
| **Agree schedule for the day** | Príomhoide Tánaisteach |
| **Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)** | Foireann Chúraim |
| **Compile a list of vulnerable students** | Comhairleoir Gairme |
| **Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media** | Príomhoide |

| | |
|---|---|
| **Inform parents** | Príomhoide |
| **Hold end of day staff briefing** | Foireann Shinsearach Bainistíochta |

## Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

| Task | Name |
|---|---|
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 | Team leader – Príomhoide |
| Meet external agencies | Príomhoide |
| Meet whole staff | Foireann Shinsearach Bainistíochta |
| Arrange support for students, staff, parents | Foireann Chúraim |
| Visit the injured | Foireann Shinsearach Bainistíochta |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements | Príomhoide |
| Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service | Príómhoide – Oide Bliana |
| Make decisions about school closure | BOM |

## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

| Task | Name |
|---|---|
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | Class Teachers |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals | Príomhoide & Comhairleoir Gairme |
| Plan for return of bereaved student(s) | Care Team |
| Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family | Ceannairí Folláine |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries | BOM/Staff, parents and students |
| Review response to incident and amend plan | Staff/BOM |

# EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

| AGENCY | CONTACT NUMBERS |
|---|---|
| Garda | 059 9136620 |
| Hospital – St Luke's Hospital | 057 7785000 |
| Fire Brigade | 059 9131144 |
| Local GPs – Dr. Conway & Bruce Ashburner<br>Clayton Medical Group<br>Gallagher Medical Centre<br>Carlow Medical – Shamrock Plaza<br>Caredoc<br>Dolmen Family Practice<br>Dr. Regina Kelly<br>Dr. Gerard Moran<br>The Barrowview medical practice -Athy<br>The Park Clinic – Athy<br>Athy Lodge Medical | 059 9143247<br>059 9133330<br>059 9133313<br>059 9133292<br>0818 300365<br>059 9132450<br>059 9176840<br>059 9173108<br>059 8631352<br>059 8631839<br>059 8631476 |
| HSE | 1800 700 700<br>01 635 2000 |
| Community Care Team – Carlow Youth Services | 059 9130476 |
| TUSLA | 052 6177302 |
| Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) | 059 9136301 |
| School Inspector | 01 889 6553 |
| NEPS Psychologist – | Níl Ceann againn |
| DES | 01 899 6400 |

| | |
|---|---|
| TUI | 01 492 2588 |
| Clergy – An t-Athair Conn | 087 2236435 |
| State Exams Commission | 1800 283 071 |
| Employee Assistance Service | 1800 411 057 |