



Éire Óg Greystones Critical Incident Response Plan



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Introduction

A critical incident is any event that is outside the range of usual human experience. It is an event that causes an unusually intense stress reaction and which has the emotional power to overwhelm an individual's usual ability to cope. It may impede peoples' coping mechanisms immediately or in the future following the event. (GPA/GAA guidelines, 2014).

The GAA, its clubs, counties, and all other units, provide great support during and after all manner of incidents that may have traumatic or tragic consequences for members and their communities. This natural response, which may include providing a comforting place for those affected to come together in the club house, arranging stewarding around a wake house or providing a guard of honour, usually require no external expertise or input. Nonetheless, they have been identified as an invaluable support to those involved.

However, some situations can overwhelm even the most experienced and well prepared GAA officers and units. This plan is designed to offer some assurances about what steps to take in such situations, while also highlighting that other support services – both within the GAA and external to it – are available should they be needed.

Examples of critical incidents may include:

- Death or serious injury on or off the playing field
- Major accident
- Exposure to the aftermath of a road traffic accident e.g. the accident scene, the victim(s)
- Personal loss or injury, real or threatened to a child or adult
- Being violently threatened
- Close encounter with death
- Suicide of a club member
- A situation with excessive media interest
- A natural disaster or act of God
- Other incidents not covered above but which are associated with unusually strong emotional reactions

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Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT)

CLUB: Éire Óg Greystones GAA Hurling & Football Club

LEAD LIASION PERSON

Brendan Cuddihy (Cathaoirleach)

Mobile:

Email:

ALTERNATIVE LIAISON PERSON

Larry Howard (Leas Cathaoirleach)

Mobile:

EMAIL:

SUPPORT TEAM

NAME:

MOBILE:

NAME:

MOBILE:

NAME:

MOBILE:

Base of Critical Incident Management Team:

Éire Óg Greystones GAA Club, Mill Road, Greystones, Co. Wicklow, A63 AW93

Key Role of CIRT: Consult with club members/families concerned to establish what support, if any, is required from club officials.

Key Duties of CIRT: Ensure that the club members, families and other members of our club community have information on any available and appropriate support services.

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USEFUL GAA CONTACTS

CONTACT	CONTACT PERSON	CONTACT DETAILS
Club Chairperson	Brendan Cuddihy	
Club Vice Chairperson	Larry Howard	
Club Children's Officer	Lisa Murphy	
Club PRO		
County Health & Wellbeing Chairperson	David Murray	087 3822625
County Children's Officer	Frances Stephenson	087-2499362
County PRO	Bridget Kenny	087 7606765
National Children's Officer	Gearóid Ó Maoilmhichíl	01 8363222
Community & Health Manager	Colin Regan	01 8658674

USEFUL SERVICE CONTACTS IN OUR AREA

CONTACT	CONTACT PERSON	CONTACT DETAILS
Accident & Emergency		999 / 112
Bereavement Support Services	Aware Ireland Pieta House Irish Hospice Foundation Barnardos	1800 804 848 1800 247 247 01 679 3188 01 473 2110
Citizens Information Centre		0761 074000
Red Cross		01 642 4600
Out of Hours GP	Greystones Medical Centre	01 223-4500
Gardaí	Greystones Garda Station	01 666 5800
Mental Health Services	HSE: Yourmentalhealth.ie Samaritans	1800 111 888 116 123
School Principal (St Kevin's)	Corinna Bailey	01 287 6660
School Principal (St Laurence's)	Carol Mooney	01 287 6198
School Principal (Greystones ET)	Helen McClelland	01 287 1817
School Principal (Delgany NS)	Anna Ovington	01 287 6907
School Principal (Gaelscoil na gCloch Liatha)	Rita Ní Thuathail	01 201 0718
School Principal (St Patrick's)	Rachel Harper	01 287 5684
School Principal (Greystones CNS)	Rory Kinane/Francesca Hunt	087 400 7442
School Principal (St Brigid's)	Maura Hennessey	01 287 6113

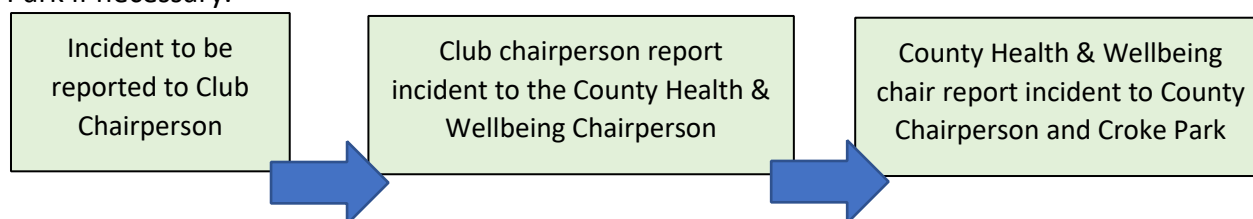
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School Principal (St David's)	Mary O'Doherty	01 287 4800
School Principal (Templecarrig)	Alan Cox	01 287 3610
School Principal (Greystones CC)		
Substance Abuse Advice	HSE Drug and Alcohol Helpline	1800 459 459
HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention	Adam Byrne	087 0637096 adam.byrne@hse.ie

Club Responsibilities

1. Communicating a critical incident

Effective lines of communication will help GAA clubs access any support they need both within the Association and externally. When reporting or seeking support a club should contact their county health & wellbeing committee chairperson in the first instance, who will notify Croke Park if necessary.



2. Club role in responding to critical incidents

Experts have encouraged following these 5 Key Principles during any crisis situation or critical incident.

- a. Promote a sense of safety
- b. Promote a sense of calm
- c. Promote a sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy
- d. Promote connectedness
- e. Promote hope

These simple yet effective steps help support personal and collective responses to any critical incident. The GAA will usually be one entity playing a part in any response to a critical incident. The role of the club is primarily to act as a sign-posting service to the supports that are available. Boundaries should be appreciated and getting the balance between what a voluntary entity can offer as opposed to what professionals can is important.

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Lead Liaison Person

Potential roles and duties when responding to a critical incident:

- Once alerted of the incident assess the situation and level of response required (if any)
- Activate the CIRT within 12-24hrs of incident at agreed time and location
- Recall and initiate Critical Incident Response Plan
- Gather and establish facts and agree actions with CIRT
- Consult with those affected to see what level of support they want (if any)
- With the CIRT, if required, prepare a support letter for members using the template provided (Appendix 1) in the plan as a guide
- Allow a period of 'reflection' before assessing if any intervention is required. If any action is required plan and approve the ongoing response
- Agree all social media/press statements with Media Liaison Person as decided by CIRT
- Decide how and when incident will be communicated to members
- Signpost appropriate supports for those affected (see directory provided)
- Respect privacy and confidentiality at all times
- Record facts and keep a log
- Deal with any other issues as they arise with the support of your CIRT
- Evaluate and review plan following the incident (Appendix 6)

Media Liaison Person

- With the CIRT, if required, prepare a media statement using the template provided (Appendix 3) and following the guidelines provided (Appendix 2) in the plan as a guide
- Designate mobile numbers for contact
- If required, organise a designated area/space to address media
- Be mindful of social media and ensure that all information put on social media is accurate and approved by those affected
- DO NOT discuss details of incident with media/3rd parties until agreed statement has been made
- Ensure all media communications are logged
- DO NOT give any facts unless you are certain it is correct
- DO NOT be afraid to say 'I DON'T KNOW'
- Refer to media guidelines before speaking to any media

Family Liaison Person

- Co-ordinate immediate contact with family
- ALWAYS consult with the family to see what level of support they want
- Liaise with family of bereaved regarding plans for attendance at funerals etc
- Provide ongoing support to families affected by the incident – as appropriate
- Organise letter of condolence to the family with CIRT

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Community Liaison Person

- Main point of contact with relevant support agencies and community groups when required
- Keep key contact details up to date and review annually

3. Who Requires Support?

In addition to the individuals directly affected, other 'at risk' persons are amongst those most likely to suffer distress as a consequence of an incident. Evidence would suggest that these may include those who:

- directly witnessed death/injury/violence as part of the incident
- are uninjured, but were at greatest risk
- are siblings of those immediately affected
- may blame themselves and/or those who may be blamed by others
- are experiencing instability at home
- have learning difficulties
- have pre-existing emotional and behavioural/mental health difficulties
- are vulnerable due to cultural and/or language difficulties
- have previously suffered bereavement or loss

During a critical incident it is important to source help and support as quickly as possible for yourself or for anyone the club might be concerned about. If you feel further help and support is needed as a consequence of being involved in a critical incident, contact the relevant services in the Useful Contacts section.

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Appendix 1 - Sample Support Services letter for Club Members



Support Service for Éire Óg GAA Club members

Dear Member,

We are all in shock from the untimely death of _____.

To lose a loved one like _____, a dear friend and team mate, is one of the most difficult life experiences you will have to face. When the death is sudden and tragic, _____ family and friends must cope with the sadness of their loss plus all their additional heightened feelings like confusion, questioning of self, anger and coming to terms with his death.

Should you wish to speak to someone in confidence about how you feel or if you need help or guidance to come to terms with _____ death, please call:

Samaritans, official helpline of the GAA and available 24-7, on their free-phone number 116 123 in Republic of Ireland.

The above is a confidential service available to you and we encourage you to avail of it and call, if you need to talk to someone. Equally, should you know of any of your friends or colleagues, who are struggling to come to terms with _____ death, please encourage them to call also, or talk to a loved one about their feelings.

We also ask you to keep an eye out for each other, not to be shy or embarrassed about asking for help and to talk to and support each other during what is a very difficult time for us all. If there is anything we can do to help and support you, please let us know.

We will get through this tragic time together.

Chairperson,

on behalf of the Éire Óg GAA Club Executive Committee.

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Appendix 2 - Guidelines for dealing with the Media following a critical incident

Following a critical incident in which people have died, press interest in survivors and bereaved families can be intense. There are rules and standards the press should follow. All members of the press have a duty to maintain the highest professional standards. The Independent Press Standards Organisation (IPSO) is charged with enforcing the 'Editors' Code of Practice'. Individuals are under no obligation to speak to the media. If someone doesn't want to speak to them- tell them.

When speaking with the media the following are some helpful tips;

- Always make a note of the journalist's name and contact phone number at the outset
- Consider appointing somebody as a spokesperson for family - this might be a relative or friend, or your solicitor - some support groups have appointed media liaison people who will field questions on behalf of the support group
- Don't do anything in a hurry, whatever the journalist says about deadlines
- Ask what they want to talk to you about in advance
- Ask them to write down the questions they want to ask you in advance
- Give yourself time to think about what you want to say
- Write down your answers
- Ask the journalist to ring you back at a specified time
- Ask if you can see what they wish to quote from you before it goes to press - they may not do this, but it will alert them to your concerns about what they are going to publish
- Never say anything 'off the record'
- Remember that a journalist is entitled to report anything you say, so don't mistake them for counsellors or friends
- Bring the conversation to a close if you are uncomfortable

Sometimes journalists will ask for photographs of you, your loved one, and your family. You may wish to provide these but remember that you are under no obligation to do so. If you do, ensure that you have a copy and ask for the photographs and any other personal items that you pass on to be returned.

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Appendix 3 - Sample Press Announcement to the media

This can be used as a template by clubs to be emailed, faxed or given to the media. It may help to decrease the number of media calls and callers to the club. In some instances, it is not appropriate to provide names or information that might identify individuals. This announcement will need to be changed based upon confidentiality issues, the wishes of the affected family and the nature of the incident.



Press Release from Éire Óg GAA Hurling & Football Club

My name is (Name) and I am the (Role within the club) of Éire Óg GAA Hurling & Football club. We learned this morning of the death/accident of (Name). This is a terrible tragedy for family, our club and our community. We are deeply saddened by these events. Our sympathy and thoughts are with (Name) family and friends.

(Name of person) was a member of Éire Óg GAA club and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her. We have been in contact with his/her parents and they have requested that we all understand their need for privacy at this difficult time. Offers of support have been pouring in and are greatly appreciated.

Our club have implemented our Critical Incident Response Plan.

The club has been open to members, to support them and to offer them advice and guidance. We would ask you to respect our privacy at this time.

Thank you.

Chairperson,

on behalf of the Éire Óg GAA Club Committee.

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Appendix 4 - Good practice guidelines following the death by suicide of a club member

The death by suicide of a member of a club can have a deep impact on club members, in particular on teammates and coaches. How a club responds to a death by suicide depends on a number of factors including:

- How well known the person who died was to club members;
- How the club has dealt with past tragedies;
- The leadership shown by key club members; and
- Media coverage of the event.

What to do after a suicide:

Do's

1. **Acknowledge the death** - Acknowledge that a club member has died. Respect that some families may choose not to describe the death as a suicide.
2. **Acknowledge a wide range of feelings** - Acknowledge that individuals will experience a wide range of feelings and emotions as a result of the death.
 - Be gentle with each other – we all grieve in different ways
 - The grieving process takes months and years not days and weeks
 - Don't blame yourself or anyone else for the death
3. **Try to get the balance right** - Try to get the balance right between continuing to do normal activities (for example, following the funeral, go ahead with scheduled matches), but also make allowances that motivation and morale may be low among the team. Try not underestimate young people's natural ability to cope with difficult situations.
4. **Keep an eye out for vulnerable people** - Watch out for those who are not doing well or may be at greatest risk, for example:
 - Brother and sisters of the deceased person who are also club members;
 - Close friends;
 - Teammates; and
 - Others who may be experiencing difficult life situations at the time.Anyone who may be particularly vulnerable at this particular time may need extra support. Having access to local support services contact details is important. You can usually call on these organisations for advice. For more information on local support available in ROI you can contact your Regional Suicide Resource Officer.
5. **Anticipate sensitive dates on the calendar**- Anticipate birthdays, holidays, anniversary dates and other celebratory events where the person's absence from the team will be most felt. Accept there will be times, such as these, when members of the club may benefit from extra support.

Don'ts

1. **Don't focus only on the positive** - Do not remember the person who died by only talking about the positive things about them. While it is important to celebrate their sporting achievements and other personal qualities, it is also crucial to talk about the loss. Openly acknowledge and discuss the pain, and heartache, as well as any difficulties the person

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might have been experiencing, for example mental health issues, but with any discussions also encourage individuals to seek help if they feel the need to talk to someone.

2. **Be careful how you pay respects** - Do not do things in memory of the person like:
 - Commemorative matches;
 - Number on shirts; or
 - Naming a trophy.

A Guard of Honour may be organised for other deaths. However, remember that a death by suicide differs from other deaths. Avoid any activities that glamorise or glorify suicide. The challenge is to grieve, remember and honour the deceased without unintentionally glorifying their death.

3. **Do not over-indulge** - Around the time of the funeral and immediately afterwards it is important to ask members and friends to try not to overindulge in alcohol, caffeine or other substances. They may make people more vulnerable at this time.
4. **Helpful short and medium to long-term responses** - After a death by suicide, clubs have found the following short-term and medium to long-term responses helpful.

Short-term

Right after a suicide those affected often look for the following:

Information

Clubs have found it helpful to identify what supports are available locally to provide advice, support and care at this time. As a result, many communities have developed local support cards outlining services available in the area.

Support

The first gathering of the team after the funeral, for example, the first night back at training, may be a difficult time for everyone. Coaches have found it helpful to break the team up into small groups and allow some time to talk about their deceased team member.

Coaches or team leaders may wish to prepare for this by thinking through the types of issues that they think will be raised and how best to create a safe place to discuss these matters. Coaches or team leaders should seek the help of local support services if they feel necessary. Some coaches may not feel comfortable in preparing for such a gathering.

The following topics are usually addressed:

- How to support people who are grieving at this time;
- Looking after yourself during this traumatic time; and
- What to look out for, say and do if you are worried about someone else.

Medium to long-term

The medium to long-term develop policies and procedures on suicide prevention as well as other broader areas such as drug and alcohol use. For example, the GAA has developed an Alcohol and Substance Abuse (ASAP) programme which aims to prevent alcohol and drug problems taking hold in clubs.

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Policies

Clubs should develop policies and procedures on suicide prevention as well as other broader areas such as drug and alcohol use. For example, the GAA has developed an Alcohol and Substance Abuse (ASAP) programme which aims to prevent alcohol and drug problems taking hold in clubs.

Training

Clubs find it helpful to offer training and skills development to coaches and team leaders. It may be useful to initially look at some form of resilience programmes/training that will help coaches/members. There is also the opportunity to look at putting in place suicide awareness training in the longer term.

Discovery of a suicide on club grounds

The following steps should be taken with the discovery of a suicide on sports grounds:

- Give or ask for first aid if there is any possibility the individual may be saved or resuscitated.
 - Contact the emergency services immediately
 - Leave the scene untouched.
- Avoid disturbing any evidence.
- Keep onlookers away.
- Write down the names of all the staff and team members who witnessed the event or discovered the suicide.
- Tell the closest relative – the Gardaí usually do this.

Suicide notes on clubhouse

Once you become aware of the existence of a suicide note, for example, a paper note or a suicide message written on a club house wall, leave it untouched and immediately tell the Gardaí. After the personal and legal needs of family and Gardaí/PSNI are met, the club has to decide when and how best to remove the note. For example, one club hired a graffiti artist to work with supporters and young people to replace the note with a positive image, along with contact numbers for support services for young people.

Death by suicide of famous sports people

Deaths by suicide of high-profile or famous people can impact on members. Responsible media coverage will help to reduce this risk. Clubs should be aware of the impact an international or national sports star's death by suicide can have, especially on young people who viewed them as a role model. Extra care and supports may be needed at this time.

Appendix 5 - A Squad Session following news of a critical incident (handout for officers/coaches)

Normally, the coach/mentor who knows the players best should be the person to inform them of the events and lead the classroom session. Players, especially juvenile ones, generally feel safe and secure with someone they know. If the individual(s) feels uncomfortable with this role another club member may work with them and share the task, or outside support may be brought in. Coaches/mentors/officers should have the opportunity to opt out of this work if they feel unable to handle it and other arrangements should be made for the squad/group of players.

The aim of the session is to break the news to give the students an opportunity to discuss what has happened and to express their thoughts and feelings in a secure environment. The facilitator needs to listen and be empathic. The session needs to be tailored to the age and developmental level of the group.

The outline of the session is as follows:

Step 1: Giving the facts and dispelling rumours

Step 2: Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings

Step 3: Normalising the reactions

Step 4: Worries (for younger players)

Step 5: Empowerment

Step 6: Closure

Step 7: Free Time

Step 8: Recovery

Step 1: Giving the facts and dispelling rumours.

Tell the players in a calm, low key and factual voice:

- What has happened
- Who was involved
- When it happened
- The plan for the day

Sample Script:

I have something very sad I want to share with you. The factual information agreed upon by the critical incident response team e.g. (Name of team mate), who is a club mate of ours and was missing, has been found. He is dead. Yesterday, the Gardaí found his body. They are investigating what has happened and will let us know as soon as they find out more information. I am feeling very sad about what's happened. Let's spend some time together now helping each other to talk about how we feel about what has happened.

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Step 2: Sharing stories

Take some time for discussion. Players may wish to tell their story of the event. As a result, they will feel less alone because of their common shared experiences. Assisting them to verbalise their experiences helps their recovery. For those who find it difficult to verbalise their experiences, or for members with learning difficulties, it may be helpful to allow them to express their feelings and recount their experiences in other ways. Writing stories or using art can be particularly helpful, especially for younger members (this will need some advance planning and perhaps support). Give the players a choice as to how they want to represent their experiences. Have a box of tissues at hand.

Sample script:

To help us today, we are going to make a memory box for (name of deceased). You can draw a picture of a time you remember with (name of the deceased) or write a poem or a letter to him. If you like we can put these in a nice box and give it to (name of deceased) family sometime soon. This will help them to see how important (name of deceased) was.

Step 3: Normalising the reactions

Tell the players that they will all react differently to what has happened and that there is no right or wrong way. List some possible feelings and reactions. Explain that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances. Let the members know that the reactions or symptoms will go away in time. Tell them that if the symptoms haven't gone after a few weeks, they should let you or their parents know. They may need to talk to someone about how they are feeling. Depending on the incident and the age of the member distribute handout's.

Step 4: Worries (for younger players)

Sample script

You may be worried about (name of the deceased) - that they might be sad or lonely or hungry or cold. When someone dies they don't feel cold or hungry or feelings like that anymore. You may be worried that the same thing could happen to you or someone in your family. What happened to (name of deceased) doesn't happen very often. If the teammate has been ill, you could say. He was very sick and the chances of this happening to someone else you know are low.

Step 5: Empowerment

Help the players to identify strategies that they might use to help manage their reactions. For example, talking to family and friends, getting enough sleep, exercise may all help. If appropriate, members can share strategies that worked for them in other stressful situations or brainstorm ideas as to what might help. Overall, it is important to help the players regain a sense of control.

Step 6: Closure

End the session by focussing on the future. Depending on the nature of the incident, help the group decide what they would like to do about various issues, e.g., what to do about the

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person's jersey, about writing cards or letters. Reiterate the message that their reactions are normal responses to abnormal circumstances.

Step 7: Free Time

After the discussion the coach may want to allow the players' some play time on the pitch or free time together, depending on the age.

Step 8: Recovery

It may be useful to continue to do these activities at intervals during the days following and to intersperse them throughout the natural events within the club in the coming days. Normal routines should generally be returned to as soon as possible.

- Members should be encouraged to resume sports and other extra-curricular club activities
- Help members to identify or establish some supports; help them to identify who they go to for different kinds of help
- Use opportunities which arise within training, where coping and support can be reinforced
- Members could be encouraged to discuss how to avoid future crises and lessons learnt from their experiences

Appendix 6 - What a Debriefing Session is and involves

Debriefing allows those involved with the incident to process the event and reflect on its impact.

A debriefing session will have three main objectives.

- 1) Allows CIRT members to take time out to speak freely about the incident,
- 2) It helps restore a form of 'normality' to members/the club which has been involved in a critical incident.
- 3) An opportunity to provide members/the club with information on additional support services if required.

A debriefing session may take the form of a meeting/gathering and can sometimes be useful to have an independent person not directly involved in the incident to facilitate discussions.

A debriefing session may look at the following issues:

- What actions/interventions did the club/members take? e.g. was club rooms opened to allow community to come together?
- Was there information/support services information provided to members/community?
- What worked well?
- What could have worked better?
- Next steps – Record learning
- Forward Planning - Anything that needs to be put in place?
- Does the critical incident plan need amended?
- Are there any gaps?

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