



Responding to a Critical Incident

2021 - 2022

WICKLOW



GAA





Wicklow GAA Critical Incident Response Plan



WICKLOW GAA CRITICAL RESPONSE TEAM DETAILS :

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Author:	Wicklow GAA Executive Board and County Health & Wellbeing Committee
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Copies of this plan are available from:	A copy of this plan is available from the County Secretary, the county Health & Wellbeing committee and also on https://officialwicklowgaa.ie/
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Wicklow GAA Critical Incident Response Plan Team

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INTRODUCTION

Sometimes a critical incident – one that overwhelms one's natural capacity to respond – will arise leaving individuals or communities struggling to cope. GAA clubs and counties have proven themselves invaluable in supporting their members' and communities in responding to an array of tragic and seemingly insurmountable situations.

However, sometimes our units need support in responding to critical situations too.

By preparing this critical incident response plan in advance Wicklow GAA will be better prepared for the challenges such situations may present. This resource is intended to:

- Reassure our clubs of the importance of the natural support system they provide as a community organisation (in fact in most situations nothing more is required).
- Highlight some of the recommended best practises for responding to crisis situations by community organisations such as the GAA.
- Offer a toolkit from which units can develop their own critical incident plan highlighting key roles and responsibilities.
- Help identify appropriate local and national agencies/entities that units can turn to during crisis situations.
- Highlight the supports that are available through the GAA's own structures.

What is a Critical Incident?

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 which has the emotional power to overwhelm an individual's usual ability to cope. It may impede people's coping mechanisms immediately or in the future following the event. (GPA/GAA guidelines, 2014)

Examples of Critical incidents may include:

- Death or serious injury on or off the playing field
- Exposure to the aftermath of a road traffic collision 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 (This tragic situation can cause extreme distress and confusion for everyone involved. Guidelines developed by professional services highlighting the most appropriate responses are available (see appendix 4).
- 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.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE PLAN:



ROLES & DUTIES OF THE SUPPORT TEAM

Lead Liaison Person:

- Alerts the Critical Incident Management Team of an incident and convenes a meeting of the team.
- Coordinates the tasks of the Support Team.
- Organises someone to liaise with the bereaved family.
- Liaises with the Gardai.
- Liaises with the County Board and GAA HQ.
- Keep record of all phone calls, letters, meetings etc.
- Responsible for privacy and confidentiality when needed.
- Liaises with agencies in the community for support and onward referral

Media Liaison Person:

- Will draw up press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by County Executive Committee)
- Will coordinate the monitoring of communications relating to the incident.
- Ensures that information about deaths is checked before being shared.

Family Liaison Person:

- Co-ordinate contact with family.
- 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 from the County Executive.

The Critical Incident Response Team:

- Will always consult with those affected to see what level of support they want from the County Board, if any.
- Convene a meeting of the Critical Incident Response Team
- A General Practitioner (GP) should be recommended as the first point of contact if an individual needs help.
- To ensure consistency of message, only one person should deal with any media inquiries.
- Be mindful of social media and ensure that all information put on social media is accurate and approved by those affected.
- If there is a match scheduled always check in with those involved to see how they would like the County Board to manage fulfilling the fixture.



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MEDIA RELATIONS:

Media Relations is the responsibility of **Coiste Chontae Chill Mhantáin** and all communications will be routed through the county P.R.O. or a person appointed by Wicklow GAA Executive Board

RECORD KEEPING:

Accurate written records are kept so that no piece of information about either the planning or the response to the incident is lost.

All relevant facts are kept in chronological order and stick to the facts.

The records will be retained after the incident for future reference. (Subject to GDPR).

Each member of the team involved in dealing with the incident will log telephone calls made and received and tasks carried out.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

Wicklow GAA is conscious of its responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statement.

REVIEW:

This plan will be reviewed annually or following a critical incident.

A copy of this plan has been distributed to all Wicklow GAA Club Secretaries and to each Healthy Club Officer. A copy is also available to view at <https://officialwicklowgaa.ie/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Wicklow-GAA-County-Critical-Incident-Plan.pdf>

Each member of the Critical Incident Team has a personal copy of this plan.

The next review date for this plan is November 2023

Signed

David Murray

Date

27/10/2022

David Murray

Chairperson Wicklow GAA

Health & Wellbeing Committee

Signed

Martin Fitzgerald

Date

27/10/2022

Martin Fitzgerald

Cathoirleach, Coiste Chontae Chill Mhantain

Cumann Luthchleas Gael

SUPPORT & SIGN-POSTING:

Wicklow GAA 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. Do not take on too much.

Wicklow GAA recognises that critical incidents do not necessarily follow any set pattern. Each event may pose different unique challenges. We are often faced with the challenge of what way we can support our members and our communities. Sign posting support services is a most important function of our work.

Support & Sign-Posting is broken down into 3 categories:

- Who Needs Support
- Where to find Immediate Support
- Recovery





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. 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

(GAA/GPA Critical Incident Response Information and Guidelines, 2014)

WHERE TO FIND IMMEDIATE SUPPORT:

Please refer to APPENDIX 5 for further local/national support groups.

A General Practitioner (GP) should be recommended as the first point of contact if an individual needs help.

USEFUL SERVICE CONTACTS IN YOUR AREA:

Contact	Contact Organisation/Person	Contact Details
Accident & Emergency	Emergency Contact	999 or 112
Accident & Emergency	Wexford Hospital	053-9153320
Accident & Emergency	Naas Hospital	045-849899
Accident & Emergency	St Vincent's Hospital	01-2214358
Gardai	Arklow	0402-32304
	Baltinglass	059-6482610
	Blessington	045-865 202
	Bray	01-666 5300
	Wicklow Town	0404-67107
Care Doctor	Wicklow Out of hours Doctor Service	0818 300 365 www.caredoc.ie
Suicide Prevention Talk Lines	Samaritans	116 123
	Talk to Tom	0818 30 30 61 info@talktotom.ie
	Pieta House 24/7 Suicide Helpline	Freephone: 1800 247 247 Text: 'HELP' to 51444 Call: 0818 111 126
HSE Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service Co-Ordinator Pieta House	East Wicklow	085 870 6712
	West Wicklow	085 870 6606
Talk to Tom Bereavement Support	Talk to Tom	0818 30 30 61 info@talktotom.ie
Pieta House	Pieta House	Enquiries 0818 111 126 In crisis? Freephone 1800 247 247 Text HELP to 51444
HSE Suicide Resource Officer/Suicide Prevention	Niamh Crudden CHO Area 7 West Wicklow	niamh.crudden@hse.ie
HSE Suicide Resource Officer/Suicide Prevention	Adam Byrne CHO Area 6 East Wicklow	087 0637096 adam.byrne@hse.ie
Drug & Alcohol Support	HSE Helpline	1800 459 459 helpline@hse.ie
	Annemarie Bolger HSE YoDA Youth Drug and Alcohol Service for U 18's	01-9214978 annemarie.bolger@hse.ie
	Shane VonMetzradt Merchants Quay East Coast CRIS Project.	0404 34009 or 086 466 84 28 shane.vonmetzradt@mqi.ie



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RECOVERY:

When the incident has passed the can begin the recovery process. The Lead Liaison Person and the Support Team should continue to work with the relevant support groups and agencies.

There may be formal inquiries or even Gardaí investigations into the incident, which may continue for some time, and require the cooperation and support of club committee members

POST-INCIDENT Checklist:

As soon as possible after the incident:

- Liaise with family of bereaved regarding plans for attendance at funerals etc.
- Liaise with members regarding plans for attendance/representation at funeral services
- Arrange debriefing meetings for the Club Committee and CIRT
- Arrange debriefing meetings for coaches/mentors
- Consider the need for individual or group support
- Help affected members to come back to club
- Initiate a review of the Critical Incident Response, evaluating the club's response and feeding in any lessons learnt
- **Where will the plan be kept and are people aware of this?**

In the longer term:

- Consult and decide on whether and how to mark anniversaries
- The impact of some incidents can continue for years, so thought may need to be given to ongoing identification and support measures for both support team, members and players



R-1 DEBRIEFING FOLLING A CRITICAL INCIDENT

R1 - What a debriefing session is and involves

Debriefing

Debriefing allows those involved with the incident to process the event and reflect on its impact. (Davis, 1992; Mitchell, 1986).

A debriefing session will have three main objectives.

- 1) Allows 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?



R2-HANDOUT FOR COACHES & MENTORS

R2 - Handout for Coaches/Mentors - Squad session following news of a critical incident

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 players 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**
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
- Step 2: Sharing stories and allowing and encouraging the sharing of thoughts and the expression of feelings**
- 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. Let the players know there are supports in place if need and sign-post them to these agencies if required.
- Step 4: Worries (for younger players)**
Please use age appropriate language to
- 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.
- 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 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**
- Members should be encouraged to resume 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 1

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' unless both you and the journalist have a shared understanding of what this means
- 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.



Appendix 2

Sample support letter for members

Support Service for _____ Club/County members

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.**

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 _____ Club Committee.

Phone: (insert your number here if you feel it is appropriate for any additional enquiries)

Appendix 3

Sample announcement to the media

PLEASE NOTE: 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.

Template 1:

My name is (Name) and I am the (Role within the club) of (Name) club. We learned this morning of the death 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 (Name) club and will be greatly missed by all who knew him/her. We have been in contact with his/her parents/family 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

Template 2 (Social Media Statement):

(Club Name) wishes to express its profound sadness and shock at the tragic passing of (Name). This has brought great sorrow and grief across the community. We extend our deepest sympathy and condolences to _____ family, extended family and many friends.

As a mark of respect our club activities will be postponed and our playing fields silent until further notice. Details of funeral arrangements will be published when they become available.

The club will be making no further comment at this time.

Ar dheis De go raibh a anam dilis.

Appendix 4

Good Practice guidelines following the death by suicide of a club member

The term "suicide" should not be used until it has been established categorically that the member's death was a result of suicide. The phrases "death" or "sudden death" may be used instead.

The following is a guide how the club can support the bereaved family, club members and players.

Family:

- The Lead Liaison Person should contact the family to establish the exact facts and the family's wishes about how the death should be described.
- Organise a home visit by a member of the Club Committee
- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the club e.g. at the funeral service.

Club Officials & Members

- Convene a Critical Incident Response Team meeting to brief team on the above details.
- Help Coaches/Mentors to prepare for breaking the news to players. Please refer to Rx for further information re this.
- Decide on the strategy to deal with queries from members/players. Prepare a letter/statement setting out the facts and how the club is dealing with the events.

DO's:

- Acknowledge the death and Respect that some families may choose not to describe the death as suicide
- Acknowledge a wide range of feelings.
- Try to get the balance right regarding continuing with normal club activities
- Keep an eye out for vulnerable people and sign-post where necessary to local/regional support services
- Anticipate sensitive dates on calendar

DON'Ts:

- Don't focus only on the positive
- Be careful how you pay respects – DO NOT do commemorative matches, naming of trophy, number on shirts etc. Avoid activities that glamorise or glorify suicide.
- Ask members to not over-indulge in alcohol, caffeine or other substances around the time of the funeral and immediately afterwards
- Keep an eye out for vulnerable people and sign-post where necessary to local/regional support services
- Anticipate sensitive dates on calendar



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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:** Identify key supports that are available locally and regionally to provide advice, support and care at this time.
- **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 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

- **Policies & Procedures:** Clubs are encouraged to develop and implement policies and procedures on suicide prevention as well as other broader areas such as drug and alcohol use i.e. GAA's 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 (SAFETalk, ASSIST) in the longer term.

Other situations to note

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 are met, the club's CIRT will decide when and how best to remove the note.



Appendix 5

Local & National Support Groups

GAA CONTACTS:

Contact	Contact Person	Contact Details
County Health & Wellbeing Chairperson	David Murray	087-2174747 chair.hwc.wicklow@gaa.ie
County Children's Officer	Frances Stephenson	0872499362 childrensofficer.wicklow@gaa.ie
County PRO	Bridget Kenny	087 7606765 pro.wicklow@gaa.ie
National Children's Officer (Croke Park)	Gearoid O Maoilmhichil	01 8363222 or nationalchildrensofficer@gaa.ie
Community & Health Manager (Croke Park)	Colin Regan	087 2945705 or Colin.regan@gaa.ie
Chairperson, Leinster Health & Wellbeing Committee	Brian Carberry	developmentofficer.meath@gaa.ie
Secretary, Leinster Health & Wellbeing Committee	John Mc Carthy	jmccarthygaa@gmail.com

Appendix 6 OTHER USEFUL SERVICE CONTACTS:

Citizens Information Centre	Arklow	0761 07 6750 arklow@citinfo.ie
	Bray	0761 07 6780 bray@citinfo.ie
	Wicklow Town	0761 07 6840 wicklow@citinfo.ie
MABS - Money Advice & Budgeting Service	Arklow	0761 072250
	Wicklow	0761 072390
Gambling Issues	Gamblers Anonymous	01- 872 1133 087- 748 5878 (10am-10pm) info@gamblersanonymous.ie
Cancer Support	Irish Cancer Society	1800 200 700 supportline@irishcancer.ie
Helplines	Childline	Free Phone 1800 66 66 66 Free Text 50101
	Teenline	01-6767 960
	C.A.R.I. - Children at risk in Ireland	1890 924 567
Eating Disorders	BodyWHYS	01- 2107906
Mental Health Support	Jigsaw	01-524 0796 wicklow@jigsaw.ie
	Aware	(01) 661 7211 info@aware.ie
	Spun Out	086-8385584 michaeln@mentalhealthireland.ie
Traveller Support	Wicklow Traveller's Group	083-4428130 info@wicklowtravellersgroup.ie
LGBTQ+ Support	BelongTo Bray Group	01 2050502 braylgbtyouth@gmail.com
	BelongTo Arklow Group	0402-39646
Homeless Services	East Coast Crisis	086-4668428 or 0404-34009
	Focus Ireland	01-8815900 help@focusireland.ie

Appendix 6

OTHER USEFUL SERVICE CONTACTS:

Elderly Support	Age Action	01-4756989 info@ageaction.ie
	Friends of the Elderly	01 873 1855 info@friendsoftheelderly.ie
Bereavement Support	Rainbows Ireland Bereavement Support for Children	01-4734175 ask@rainbowsireland.ie
	AnamCara Support after the death of a child of any age	01-4045378 085-2888 888 info@anamcara.ie
	Irish Hospice Foundation Bereavement Support Line	1800 80 70 77
Alzheimer's support	The Alzheimer Society of Ireland. Wicklow Support Group	0862722551 040429929 laurence.collins@alzheimer.ie

Please refer to <http://read.digitaleditions.ie/i/532758-responding-to-a-critical-incident> to get a FULL copy of the GAA's Guidelines for Responding to a Critical Incident



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