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| NAOMH ÉANNA AN ÓMAIGH  CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN |



2022

Critical Incident Management Team (CMIT)

**CLUB**: Omagh St Enda's Gaelic Athletic Club

**LEAD LIAISON PERSON**

Conor Sally (Cathaoirleach)

Mobile: 07775700598

E-mail: Chairperson.omaghstendas.tyrone@gaa.ie

**ALTERNATIVE LIAISON PERSON**

Ciarán McDaid (Rúnaí)

Mobile: 07291378421

E-mail: Secretary.omaghstendas.tyrone@gaa.ie

**SUPPORT TEAM**

NAME: Dr Eamon McMullan Mobile: 07979240440

NAME: Rachael Mallon Mobile: 07527906033

NAME: Leanne Kearney Mobile: 07717756569

**Critical Incident Management Team Base**

Healy Park GAA Stadium, 53 Gortin Road, Omagh, BT79 7HN

**Key Role:**

Consult with the club member/family concerned to establish if any support is required from club officials following a critical incident

**Key Duties:**

Ensure that the club member/family has information on any local support services available

**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 which has the emotional power to overwhelm an individual's normal ability to cope. It may impede people's coping mechanisms immediately after the event or in the time 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 a traumatic or tragic impact on members and their communities in general. This natural response, which may include providing a comforting place for those affected to come together, arranging stewards around a wake house or providing a guard of honour at a funeral requires no external expertise or input. Nonetheless, it has been identified as an invaluable support and comfort to those involved. However, there are some situations that can overwhelm even the most experienced and well prepared GAA officers and units. This plan is designed to offer some assurance about what steps to take in such situations, whilst highlighting additional support services internal and external to the GAA that are available if required. Reassurance in times of stress is invaluable and all it takes is a phone call.

**Examples of critical incidents (not exhaustive)**

* Death or serious injury on or off the playing field
* Personal loss or injury, actual or threatened to a child or an adult
* Close encounter with death
* Exposure to aftermath of a serious road traffic accident
* Suicide of a club member (this tragic situation can cause extreme distress and confusion for involved especially when involving a youth member. Guidelines developed by professional services highlighting the most appropriate responses following death by suicide by sporting organisations are available. Some of this infomration has been included in a special section in the Appendix of the plan)
* A situation with excessive media interest
* A natural disaster or Act of God
* Being violently threatened

**Useful GAA Contacts**

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| **CONTACT** | **CONTACT PERSON** | **CONTACT DETAILS** |
| Club Chairperson | Conor Sally | **07775700598** |
| Club Vice Chairperson | Dr Eamon McMullan | 07979240440 |
| Club Children's Officer | Leanne Kearney | 07717756569 |
| Club PRO | Gerard Fox | 07872693598 |
| Club Health & Wellbeing Officer | Rachael Mallon | 07527906033 |
| County Health & Wellbeing Officer | Malachy McCann |  |
| County Children's Officer | Adrian Nugent | Childrensofficer.tyrone@gaa.ie |
| County PRO | Eugene McConnell | 07889452188 |
| National Children's Officer | Gearóid Ó Maoilmhicíl | (00353) 872301420  (00353) 18363222 |
| Community & Health Manager | Colin Regan | (00353) 18658600 |

**Useful Service Contacts in Omagh Area**

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| **CONTACT** | **CONTACT PERSON** | **CONTACT DETAILS** |
| Emergency Dept Omagh Hospital |  | 999/112 |
| Bereavement Support Services | Cruse Bereavement Care  WHSCT Bereavement Service | 08088081677  08000852463 |
| Omagh Independent Advice Service |  | 02882243252 |
| Drumragh Family Practice | Carmel McGrath | 02882259119 |
| Three Spires |  | 02882240100 |
| Police Service NI | Omagh PSNI station | 02890650222/101/999 |
| Mental Health Services |  | www.mindingyourhead.info |
| Principal St Connors PS | Katrina McGettigan | 02882244683 |
| Principal Holy Family PS | Maura Dolan | 02882243551 |
| Principal Christ the King PS | Roisin Darcy | 02882247051 |
| Principal Omagh Integrated PS | Gavin Gallagher | 02882242008 |
| Principal Recarson PS | Orla Meenagh | 02882245628 |
| Principal St Mary's Killyclogher PS | Carole McAuley | 02882242313 |
| Principal Sacred Heart College | Sinead McAllister | 02882242717 |
| Principal Omagh CBS | Foncie McConnell | 02882243567 |
| Principal Drumragh Integrated College | Nigel Frith | 02882252440 |
| Samaritans |  | 116123 |
| Lifeline |  | 08088088000 |
| Zest |  | 02871269999 |
| Rev Eugene Hasson PP |  | 02882242092 |
| Rev Chris McDermott CC |  | 02882242092 |
| Rev Ignacy Saniuta CC |  | 02882242092 |

**What Our Club Will Do**

**1. Recommended avenues for communicating a critical incident.**

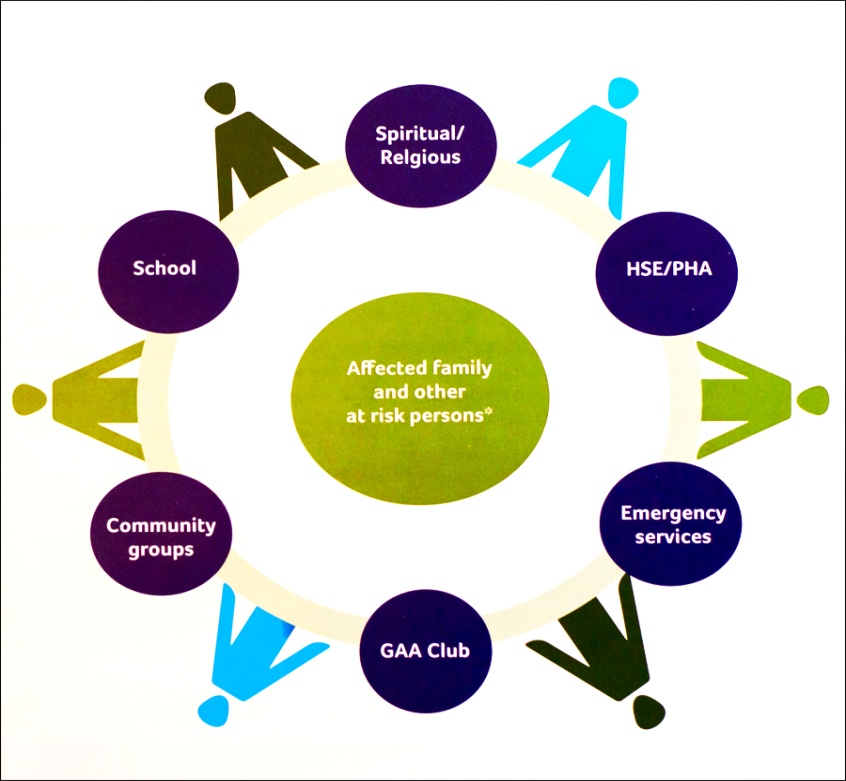
Effective lines of communication will help GAA clubs access any support they need from within the association and external organisations. When reporting or seeking support, the club should contact the County Chairperson in the first instance who will notify Croke Park if necessary through the Health & Wellbeing Chairperson.

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| **Incident reported to County Chairperson** |  | **County chairperson informs Health & Wellbeing chairperson** |  | **Health & Wellbeing chairperson informs Ulster Council Health & Wellbeing manager and Croke Park** |

**2. Our role in responding to critical incidents**

It’s important to remember that the GAA will usually be just one entity playing a part in any response to a critical incident. Figure 1 outlines some of the other entities that may be involved in a community response. It also highlights the importance of having the affected family or families at the centre of any plan while being consulted on all actions. Other at risk persons will be to the forefront of considerations as well.

**Figure 1**

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Experts have encouraged following **5 Key Principles** during any critical incident.

**\*Key Point – Always consult with those affected to see what level of support they want / need.**

Promote a sense of safety

Promote a sense of calm

Promote a sense of self-efficacy and collective efficacy (i.e. the capacity to deal with the situation)

Promote connectedness

Promote hope

These simple yet effective steps help support personal and collective responses to any critical incident.

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

It is important that these individuals should be considered in relation to specific needs.

By playing a part in the Response to a Critical Incident (figure 1) continuum of care cycle a local GAA club can help:

* Minimise the impact of the incident by supporting an appropriate, timely and flexible response
* Provide accurate information about the current situation to those affected and other stakeholders involved in the response
* Respond to the phased need of those affected including reassurance about normal responses to abnormal events, grief, or trauma
* Strengthen the sense of unity and the efficacy of the community response
* Offer signposting to more appropriate services as defined by need
* Support the immediate needs of the family or next of kin

**4. Where to find support?**

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 are seriously concerned about someone, please contact 999/112 or the GP out of hours 02871865195

**Samaritans** (Official mental health partner & support helpline of the GAA)  
**Free helpline:** Samaritans is a free helpline available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week for anyone struggling to cope.

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| **KEY POINT - Remember that the role of Omagh St Enda's GAC is primarily to act as a signposting service to the support services that area available. Boundaries should be appreciated and finding the balance between what a voluntary entity can offer as opposed to what professionals can is vitally important. Do not take on too much!!** |

**5. Key objectives in responding to a critical incident**

a) All roles and duties are clearly defined

b) Contact with support services is made quickly

c) Any affected families/individuals are contacted

d) Appropriate support is offered to all involved

e) Accurate information only is provided

f) Normal club activities are maintained as much as possible

**Duties in Response to a Critical Incident:**

**Chairperson:**

* Lead Person
* Garda / PSNI Contact / Report Incident to County Chairperson / Keep PRO up to date.
* Liaise with those directly affected – consider appointing a family liaison club member
* Organise and chair a debriefing for club members or specific groups

**Healthy Club Officer:**

* Liaise with local community and outside agencies and services, if required
* Identify relevant resources and services available at the club
* Review the Plan, after an incident / annual AGM

**Public Relations Officer:**

* Handle all media contact and liaise with the club chairperson throughout the incident

**Secretary:**

* Monitor the club’s response throughout the process
* Liaise with Chairperson , Healthy Club Officer and PRO and record the details of the club’s response

**Appendix 1**

**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**

**Acknowledge the death**

Acknowledge that a club member has died. Respect that some families may choose not to describe the death as a suicide.

**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

**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.

**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 you can contact the local Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention contacts.

**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**

**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 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.

**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.

**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.

**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. In Northern Ireland ‘Z Cards’ are available for each Health and Social Care Trust area, providing information on local support services.

**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.
* **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 talking hold in clubs.
* **Training**
* Clubs find it helpful to offer training and skills development to coaches and team leaders. It maybe 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.

**Appendix 2**

**Sample support letter for members**

We are all in shock from the untimely death of

To lose a loved one like ***NAME***, 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 Name***, 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 ***NAME***death, please call:

***Samaritans, official helpline of the GAA and available 24-7, on their free-phone number  
116 123 in Republic of Ireland or 08457 90 9090 in Northern Ireland. Or Lifeline is a Northern Ireland crisis response helpline service operating 24 hours a day, seven days a week. If you or someone you know is in distress or despair, call Lifeline on 0808 808 8000.***

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 ***NAME***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***Name Club*** Committee.

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

**Appendix 3**

**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 4**

**Sample announcement to the media**

Template:

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.  
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.

\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_Chairperson.

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Note:

This can be used as a template 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.

**Appendix 5**

**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.**

* Allows members to take time out to speak freely about the incident,
* It helps restore a form of ‘normality’ to members/the club which has been involved in a critical incident.
* 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?