

Responding to a Critical Incident



Tynagh-Abbey/Duniry

GAA Club





Tynagh-Abbey/Duniry GAA Critical Response Plan Team

Lead Liaison Person:

- Name **Ollie Robinson**
- Contact No. 087 2437009

Alternative Liaison:

- Name TBC
- Contact No.

Support Team:

- Name **Gerry Larkin**
- Contact No. 086 8163581

- Name **Enda Broderick**
- Contact No.

- Name **Michael Glynn**
- Contact No. 087 4113425

- Name **Tom Burke**
- Contact No. 085 1741907

Media Liaison Person:

- Name **Orla Fahy**
- Contact No. 086 8373895

Family Liaison Person:

- Name tbc
- Contact No.

Key Duties: in the event of a Critical Incident in our club Ollie Robinson, Lead Liaison, is to be contacted, he/she will then contact the members of the support team. This plan is intended to support our members through a difficult period of time as a result of a traumatic or tragic event. This type of support can be arranging stewarding around a wake at home or providing a guard of honour or having a comforting place for those affected to come together (GAA Club). At all times the wishes and privacy of those affected must and will be respected.

Key Principles during any crisis or critical incident are: to promote a sense of safety and calmness, have the capacity to deal with the situation, promote connectedness and hope.

Roles And Responsibilities

Immediate Response

Phone Emergency Services 112/999

Provide First Aid

Make scene safe & evacuate members if necessary

Make contact with relevant support agencies if required

Lead/Alternate Liaison Person

- Once alerted to incident assess situation and level of response required (if any)
- Activate Critical Incident Response Team
- Gather and establish facts with team
- Make sure to consult with those directly involved to see what level of support is required (if any)
- Allow a period of “watchful waiting” before assessing if any intervention is needed.

Media Liaison Person

- Manage media relation/enquiries
- Only one person to engage with media-should be PRO
- Ensure all information is factual- this will cut out rumours & miscommunications.

Family Liaison Person

- Co-ordinate with family of those directly affected
- ALWAYS consult the family to see what level of support they want
- Liaise with family of bereaved regarding plans for attendance at funerals etc
- Organise a letter of condolence from club to family
- Keep family informed when returning to club activities

Remember Individuals and families are central and must be heard first.

The club 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 need to be appreciated and getting the balance right between what a voluntary entity can offer as opposed to a professional is important. We are a voluntary organisation-Don't take on too much-encourage our members to seek help if needed- the services are in place.

Useful Club and GAA Contacts

CONTACT	NAME	CONTACT NUMBER
---------	------	----------------

Club Chairperson	Ollie Robinson	087 2437009
Club Healthy Club Officer	Orla Fahy	086 8373895
Club Children's Officer	Caroline Pierce	087 6843363
Club PRO	Orla Fahy	086 8373895
County Healthy Club Chairperson	Iggy Clarke	087 2609607
County Children's Officer	Pat Monaghan	087 9592068 childrensofficer.galway@gaa.ie
County PRO	Seamus Finnerty	
National Children's Officer (Croke Park)	Gearoid O Maoilmhichil	01 8363222 nationalchlidrensofficer@gaa.ie
Community & Health Manager (Croke Park)		

Useful Local Service Contacts

CONTACT	NAME	CONTACT NUMBER
Ambulance Service	HSE/NAS	999/112
Gardai		999/112
Emergency Department	University Hospital Galway Portiuncla Hospital	091 544338/091 524222
Local GP/WestDoc (out of hours)		1850 365000
Samaritans		FREEPHONE 116 123
24/7 Suicide helpline	Pieta House	1800 247 247 Text "HELP" to 51444
Bereavement support services	HSE	1850 241850

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 usual ability to cope. It may impede peoples coping mechanisms immediately or in the future following the event. (GPA/GAA guidelines, 2014)

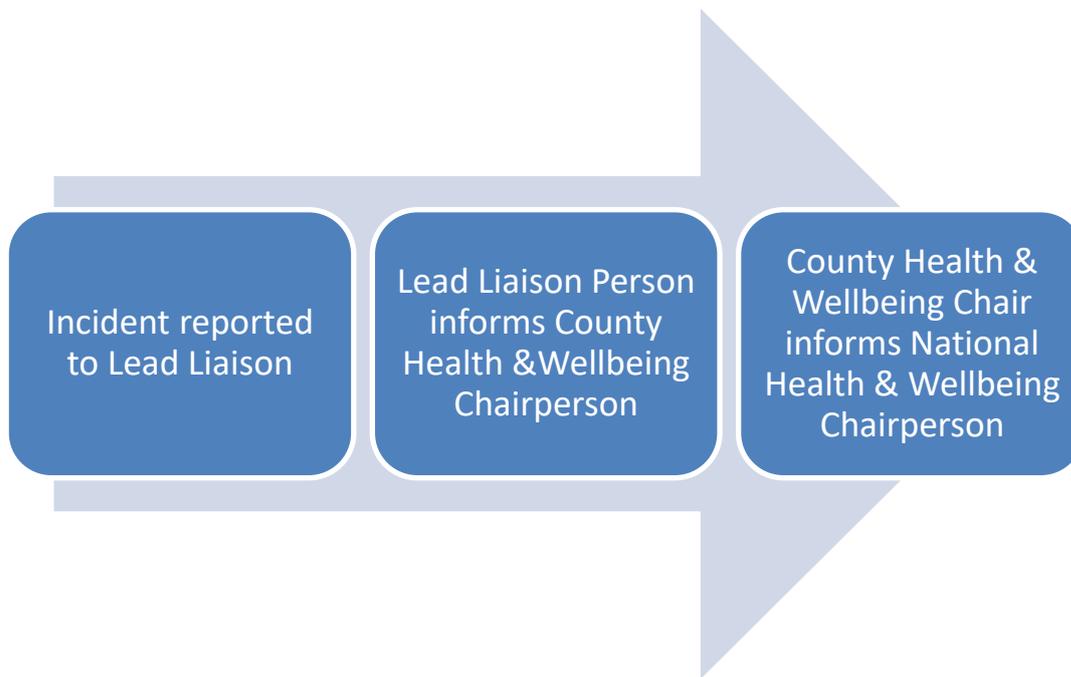
Sometimes a critical incident- one that overwhelms ones natural capacity to respond- will arise leaving individuals or communities struggling to cope.

This document has been developed by Tynagh-Abbey/Duniry GAA Club in order for our GAA Club and community to be best placed to respond to a critical incident should it arise within the structures of the club.

Examples of Critical Incidents include

- Death or serious injury on or off playing field
- 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 (this tragic situation can cause extreme distress and confusion for everyone involved. *Guidelines developed by professional services highlighting the most appropriate responses following a death by suicide by sporting organisations are available. Some of this information has been included in a special section on suicide in the Appendix section of this document.*
- 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.

Recommended avenues for communicating a critical incident



Our role in responding to critical incidents

It is important to remember that the GAA will usually be just one entity playing a part in any response to a critical incident.

While the affected family/families remain at the centre of any plan and all actions taken, there are many potential participants involved in a community based response to a critical incident.

Potential Participants:

Emergency services

GAA Club

HSE

Spiritual/Religious

School

Community Groups

Other at risk persons will be to the forefront of considerations too.

It is important to try follow **5 Key Principles** during any crisis situation.

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

1. Promote a sense of safety
2. Promote a sense of calm
3. Promote a sense of self-efficacy (i.e. the capacity to deal with the situation)
4. Promote connectedness
5. Promote hope.

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

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

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

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 or the GP out of hours service.

If you feel you need further help and support as a consequence of being involved in a critical incident, you are advised to contact:

- www.yourmentalhealth.ie

Other Resources Available:

- **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. Telephone: **116 123**

- www.supportme.ie –Galway Mental Health Support Service
- www.hse.ie/eng/services/galway/children -Directory of services available
- www.jigsaw.ie –Free & confidential service supporting the mental health and wellbeing of young people aged 15-25 in Galway city and county.

We as a Club have a primary role to act as a sign posting service to the supports that are available for all our members. 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

APPENDIX

Good practice guidelines following the death by suicide of a member

The death by suicide of a member can have a deep impact on other members, in particular on colleagues and close associates. How best to respond to a death by suicide depends on a number of factors including:

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

What to do after a suicide:

Do's

Acknowledge the death

Acknowledge that a GAA 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 members.

Try not to 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 GAA members;
- Close friends;
- Teammates / colleagues; 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 contact the local Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSP) www.hse.ie/4/mental-health-services/nosp/resourceofficers.ie

Anticipate sensitive dates on calendar

Anticipate birthdays, holidays, anniversary dates and other celebratory events where the person's absence from the organisation will be most felt. Accept there will be times, such as these, when members of the organisation 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 or other substances. They make people more vulnerable at this time.

Helpful short and medium to long-term responses

After a death by suicide, GAA units 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**
 - GAA units 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 the services available in the area.
 - Visit <http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/supports-services/types-of-services/accessdirectly>
 - **Support**
 - The first gathering of the team/group after the funeral, for example, the first night back at training, may be a difficult time for everyone. It may be helpful to break the team/group into smaller groups and allow some time to talk about their deceased member.
- 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. Leaders should

seek the help of local support services if they feel necessary. Not all leaders may 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

- In the medium to long-term the following actions are encouraged:

Policies

- GAA units 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

- GAA units find it helpful to offer training and skills development to personnel. It is maybe useful to initially look at some form of resilience programmes/training that will help members. There is also the opportunity to look at putting in place suicide awareness training in the longer term.