**Critical Incident Policy**

*Ballina Youthreach* aims to protect the well-being of its students/learners and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The centre has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the centre’s policies and plans.

**Review and Research**

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to centres on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie)

* Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Centres (NEPS 201 6)
* Suicide Prevention in Centres: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group 2002)
* Suicide Prevention in the Community – A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
* Well-Being in Post-Primary Centres Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention ( DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
* Well-Being in Primary Centres – Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 201 5)

**Define what you mean by the term “Critical Incident”**

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

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

**Aim**

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

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

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

**Physical Safety**

* Evacuation plan formulated
* Regular fire drills occur
* Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
* Pre-opening supervision in the centre yard
* Rules of the outside areas

**Psychological safety**

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

* Social, personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the centre. It is addressed in the curriculum by addressing issues such as grief and loss; communication skills; stress and anger management; resilience; conflict management; problem solving; help-seeking; bullying; decision making and prevention of alcohol and drug misuse. Promotion of mental health is an integral part of this provision.
* Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
* Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guideline and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
* Books and resources on difficulties affecting the centre student/learners are available
* Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
* Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
* The centre has developed links with a range of external agencies – list these agencies
* Inputs to students/ learner by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student/learner safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circular 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
* The centre has a clear policy on bullying in accordance with this policy
* Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member (e.g. guidance counsellor or support teacher), concerns are explored and the appropriate level of assistance and support is provided. Parents are informed, and where appropriate, a referral is made to an appropriate agency. (a summary of this support is set out in R23)
* Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves

**Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)**

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

**Team Leader : Paul Large**

**Role**

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

*(Note – it is important to consider who will take the lead in the absence of the team leader.)*

**Garda Liaison: Martin Kelly**

**Role**

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

**Staff Liaison: Claire O’Boyle**

**Role**

* Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions, outlines the routine for the day
* Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
* Provides materials for staff (from their critical incident folder0
* Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
* Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually
* Advises tem of the availability of the EAS and gives then the contact number

**Student Liaison: Dennis McCalmount**

**Role**

* At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information form tutors and year heads about students they are concerned about
* Alerts other staff to vulnerable students (appropriately)
* Provides materials for students (from their critical incident folder)
* Maintains student contact record (R1)
* Looks after setting up and supervision of “quiet” room where agreed

**Community /Agency Liaison: Natasha Walsh**

**Role**

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

**Parent Liaison: Claire O’Boyle**

**Role**

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

**Media Liaison: Paul Large**

**Role**

* In advance of an incident, will consider5 issues that may arise and how they might be responded to (e.g. students/learners being interviewed, photographers on the premises, etc.)
* In the event of an incident, will liaise where necessary with SEC; relevant teacher unions etc.
* Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews ( as agreed by centre management)

**Administrator: Natasha Walshe**

**Role**

* Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
* Parents or guardians
* Teachers
* Emergency services
* Takes telephone calls and notes those that need to be responded to
* Ensures that templates are on the centres system in advance and ready for adaptation
* Photocopies materials needed
* Maintains records

**Record keeping: Paul Large**

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

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

**Confidentiality and good name considerations**

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

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| Critical Incident Rooms  In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes | |
| Room Name: | Designated Purpose: |
| *Canteen* | Main room for meeting staff |
| *Canteen* | Meetings with students |
| *Co-Ordinators Office* | Meetings with parents |
| *Classroom 1* | Meetings with Media |
| *Front Room* | Individual sessions with students |
| *Front Office* | Meetings with other visitors |

**Consultation and Communication regarding the Plan**

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students were consulted and asked for their comments. Our centre’s final policy and plan in relation to responding to critical incidents has been presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team has a personal copy of the plan. All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan by (Name of team member). The plan will be updated annually (September).

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| Critical Incident Management Team | | |
| Role | Name | Phone |
| Team Leader | *Paul Large* | 086 065 4004 |
| Garda Liaison | *Martin Kelly* | 087 678 9131 |
| Staff Liaison | *Claire O’Boyle* | 087 745 1924 |
| Student Liaison | *Dennis McCalmount* | 086 121 3032 |
| Community Liaison | *Natasha Walshe* | 087 698 9281 |
| Parent Liaison | *Claire O’Boyle* | 087 745 1924 |
| Media Liaison | *Paul Large* | 086 065 4004 |
| Administrator | *Natasha Walshe* | 087 698 9281 |

**Short Term Actions - Day 1**

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| Task | Name |
| Gather accurate information | Paul Large |
| Who, what, when, where? | Paul Large |
| Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly | Paul Large |
| Contact external agencies | Natasha Walshe |
| Arrange supervision for students | Claire O’Boyle |
| Hold Staff meeting | All staff |
| Agree schedule for the day | All staff |
| Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately) | Dennis McCalmount |
| Compile a list of vulnerable students | Dennis McCalmount |
| Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media | Paul Large |
| Inform Parents | Claire O’Boyle |
| Hold end of day staff briefing | Paul Large |

Medium Term Actions – (Day 2 and following Days)

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| Task | Name |
| Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1 | Paul Large |
| Meet external agencies | Natasha Walshe |
| Meet whole Staff | Claire O’Boyle |
| Arrange support for students, staff, parents | Natasha Walshe |
| Visit the injured | Paul Large |
| Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements | Claire O’Boyle |
| Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service | All staff |
| Make decisions about centre closure | BOM/Advisory group |

Follow –up – Beyond 72 hours

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| Task | Name |
| Monitor students for signs of continuing distress | Class teachers |
| Liaise with agencies regarding referrals | Natasha Walshe |
| Plan for return of bereaved student(s) | Paul Large/ Dennis McCalmount |
| Plan for giving of “memory Box” to bereaved family | All Staff |
| Decide on memorials and anniversaries | BOM/Staff, parents and students |
| Review response to incident and amend plan | Staff/ BOM |

This policy was reviewed and revised September 2021

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

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| **AGENCY** | **CONTACT NUMBERS** |
| Garda | Ballina Station: 096 21422  Emergency Number: 999 |
| Hospital | Castlebar: 094 9021733 |
| Fire Brigade | 999 |
| Local GP’s | Dr Brunker: 096 70877 |
| HSE | Call Save: 1850 24 1850  Phone: 041 685 0300 |
| Community Care Team | Social Care: 096 21511 |
| Child and Family Centre | Ballina Health Centre: 096 24564 |
| Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS) | Mayo CAMHS: 094 9024423 |
| DES | Athlone: 090 648 3600 |
| INTO/ASTI/TUI | TUI: 01 492 2588 |
| Clergy | Ballina Parish Office: 096 70555 |
| State Exams Commission | Athlone: 090 644 2700 |
| Employee Assistance Service | 1800 411 057 |