

# Responding to a Critical Incident



## **KILMEENA GAA CLUB**



# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

<b>Critical Incident Response Plan Team – KILMEENA GAA</b>			
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# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## Key roles & duties for short-term response (first 24-48 hours)

### **Lead Liaison Person and alternative lead person (Noreen Johnston and Mary Slattery)**

- Once alerted of the incident assess the situation and level of response required (if any)
- Activate the Critical Incident Response Team (CIRT) within the first 12hrs of incident at agreed time and location
- Gather and establish facts and agree actions with CIRT
- Initiate CIRP to respond effectively
- Make sure to consult with those directly affected to see what level of support is required (if any)
- If required, prepare a statement and/or support letter for members using the generic template provided (see resource R-3 in CIRP guide)
- Allow a period of 'watchful waiting' before assessing if any intervention is required

### **Media Liaison Person (Sean Barrett, PRO)**

- With the CIRT, prepare a statement using the template provided in CIRP resource as a guide (R-6)
- Designate mobile number(s) for key point of contact
- DO NOT discuss details of incident with media/3<sup>rd</sup> parties until agreed statement has been made
- 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
- Ensure all media communications are logged
- Refer to media guidelines before speaking to any media

### **Family Liaison Person (Majella O'Malley, Children's Officer)**

- Co-ordinate immediate contact with family and those directly affected
- **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
- Organise letter of condolence with Critical Incident Response Team to the family
- Keep family informed when returning to club activities

### **Community Liaison Person (Support Team)**

- Provide relevant support agencies and community groups details when required
- Provide the GAA's information leaflets on personal crisis & managing stress (if required)
- If required be main point of contact with any other community groups

## Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

### USEFUL SERVICE CONTACTS IN YOUR AREA:

Contact	Contact Person	Contact Details
Accident & Emergency	Castlebar Hospital	999 or 112 094 90 21733
Gardai	Westport Station	098 25555/098 50230 999 or 112 Garda Confidential 1800666111
Community Gardai	Colm Boyle (Westport) Michelle Murray (Newport)	098 25555/098 50230 098 25555/098 50230
GP/Club Doctor	Dr. John Keane Dr. Brian Lennon	098 27666 087 2439005
Local GP or WestDoc - Out of Hours GP Service	WestDoc	1850 365000
Parish Contact	Fr. Jim Walsh Fr. Charlie McDonnell	098 41270 098 28871
Fire Brigade		999 or 112
Clew Bay Medical Centre	Tubber Hill, Westport	098 37014
Undertakers	Adrian McGing Tom Navin	087 4444925 087 2645085
Bereavement Support Services	HSE	1850 241850
Michael Carney Peter Carney Richie Goggins	Principal, Myna N.S. Principal, Carrowholly N.S. Fahy N.S.	086 8125320 086 8530365 087 7608911
TUSLA	For Concerns about a child or young person	094 90 49137
24/7 Suicide Helpline	Pieta House	Helpline: 1800 247 247 Text: 'HELP' to 51444
Pieta House West Bishop Street, Tuam, Co. Galway	Marie White	093 25586

# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## 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 people's coping mechanisms immediately or in the future following the event. (GPA/GAA guidelines, 2014)***

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

This document has been developed by Kilmeena Club GAA in order for our GAA Club and Community to be best placed to respond to a critical incident should it arise within Kilmeena GAA Club structures. Mayo Health and Well Being Committee will continue to be a support should such incidents occur within its constituent clubs; and in such circumstances will take the lead from the relevant unit's own Critical Incident Response Plan. Kilmeena G.A.A. Club have implemented the recommended 'five step plan' and has developed key roles and duties for identified individuals; named in page 2.

**Clubs are encouraged to develop their own Critical Incident Response Plans. Templates and further information on developing a critical incident plan are available from the GAA website;**

[Critical Incident Response Plan \(gaa.ie\)](http://gaa.ie)

### ***Examples of critical incidents may include:***

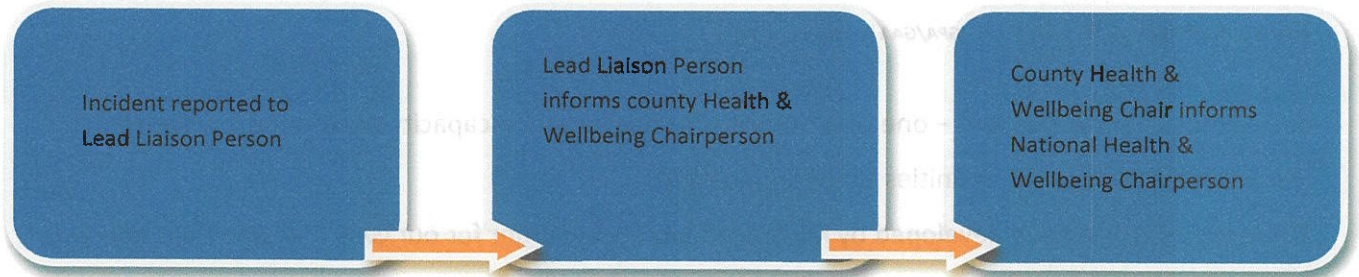
- Death or serious injury on or off the playing field
- Exposure to the aftermath of a road traffic accident e.g. the accident scene, the victim(s)
- Personal loss or injury, real or threatened to a child or adult
- Being violently threatened, or a close encounter with death.
- Suicide of a member (this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



# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## What GAA Clubs can do

**Figure 1: Recommended avenues for communicating a critical incident within Kilmeena GAA**



## **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 2 outlines some of the other entities that may be involved in a 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 too. It is important to try to follow these **5 Key Principles** during any crisis situation or critical incident.

**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 (capacity to deal with situation)**
- 4. Promote connectedness**
- 5. Promote hope**

# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

**Figure 2: Some potential participants involved in a community based response to a critical incident.**



## 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 there might be concerns about. In an emergency situation, please contact 999/112 or GP services.

Other resources of help include:

- [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)
- [www.hse.ie/eng/services/list](http://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list)
- [www.Samaritans.org](http://www.Samaritans.org)

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**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**

Local Contacts within your local community are also available on

- [www.westbewell.ie](http://www.westbewell.ie)

We as a Club have a primary role 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 very important.

**important. Do not take on too much.**

## Appendix 1.

### **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 Mayo GAA has dealt with past tragedies;
- The leadership shown by key Mayo 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 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.



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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).

## Anticipate sensitive dates on the 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, 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, 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 services available in the area. Visit <http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie/supports-services/types-of-services/access-directly/>
  - **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.

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## 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 may be 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.

## Service Directory

<http://www.mayobewell.ie/services-directory/>

### Services that can be accessed within this Directory

- 24 Hour Services : MGH, A&E, Samaritans , Confidential Gardai line
- Alcohol : Alan on , AA , Hope House,
- Debt : MABS,
- Doctors (GPs)
- Drugs: Help lines,
- Families : Resource Centres ,
- Gambling : Help lines,
- HSE Services
- Mental Health: Young People : Mind space, Mental Health Association.
- Mental Health: General

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*Taking care of your body is a powerful first step towards mental and emotional health. The mind and the body are linked.*

When you improve your physical health, you'll automatically experience greater mental and emotional well-being.

For example, exercise not only strengthens our heart and lungs, but also releases endorphins, powerful chemicals that energize us and lift our mood.

The activities you engage in and the daily choices you make affect the way you feel physically and emotionally.

## PHYSICAL WELLBEING

The benefits of being active for physical and mental health are huge. Being active helps release chemicals in your brain (endorphins), which have a positive effect on your mood, not to mention the benefits to your heart, lungs, muscles and bones. Getting out and being active is also a great way to manage stress.

Regular physical activity can help you reduce the risk of developing diabetes, high blood pressure, heart disease and cancer. For children and young people being active helps reduce their risk of developing these diseases in later life too. Increased levels of physical activity will help reduce body fat and maintain a healthy weight.

Being active is fun for all the family. Research shows that children whose parents are active are more than 5 times as likely to be active than those whose parents are not. Getting active does not have to be expensive and most of the ideas on this site are low cost or completely free. You can find out more about physical activity here [23f51643fd1d4ad7abf529e58c8d8041.pdf \(assets.gov.ie\)](#)

## MENTAL WELLBEING

Mental health is something we all have. It can be good and at times it can be poor. We should try to look after it in the same way we look after our physical health.

For further information on our mental health and minding your mental health please check out [www.yourmentalhealth.ie](http://www.yourmentalhealth.ie)

# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## SPIRITUAL WELLBEING

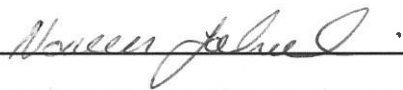
Spiritual health means having direction and meaning in life. It involves the development of positive morals, values and ethics. When people become healthy spiritually, they demonstrate love and a sense of caring for self and others.

Just as the physical, mental, and social dimensions of our lives interrelate, we can also assume that there will be interactions between our spiritual health, and the other dimensions of health. Some aspects of spirituality can offer real benefits for mental health.

Spiritual practices can help us to develop the better parts of ourselves. They can help us to become more creative, patient, persistent, honest, kind, compassionate, wise, calm, hopeful and joyful.

### SPIRITUAL SKILLS INCLUDE:

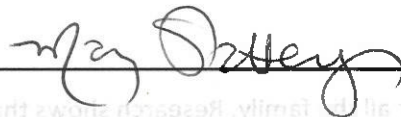
- being honest – and able to see yourself as others see you
- being able to stay focused in the present, to be alert, unhurried and attentive
- being able to rest, relax and create a still, peaceful state of mind
- developing a deeper sense of empathy for others
- being able to be with someone who is suffering, while still being hopeful
- learning better judgement, for example about when to speak or act, and when to remain silent or do nothing
- learning how to give without feeling drained
- being able to grieve and let go.



(Noreen Johnston)

Health and Well Being Officer


Dated: 25/4/2021



(Mary Slattery)

Secretary of Kilmeena GAA Club

Dated: 25/4/21



(John McDonald)

Chairperson of Kilmeena GAA Club

Dated: 25/4/21

Review Date: April 2021,

By: Kilmeena GAA Executive Committee



# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## 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 signpost 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 focusing 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

# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## 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.

# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## Sample support letter for members

We are all in shock from the untimely death of \_\_\_\_\_.

To lose a loved one like, a dear friend and teammate, 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 or 08457 90 90 90 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 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)

# Kilmeena GAA Critical Incident Response Plan

## Sample 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.

### 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 the \_\_\_\_\_ 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.

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Thank you.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chairperson