



Respect - Justice - Integrity - Honesty - Saothar

Coláiste na Mí

Draft Critical Incident Management Policy

2025

Kindness - Honour - Teamwork - Responsibility



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CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Coláiste na Mí



The key to managing a critical incident is planning. Schools are strongly advised to develop a policy in relation to critical incident response. NEPS also encourages schools to develop a Critical Incident Management Plan, outlining who will do what in the event of a tragedy.

The templates outlined below are designed as an aid to schools in drawing up a policy and plan. Each school will need to look at its own particular context and circumstances and draw up its own unique policy and plan. Additional guidance is contained in Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resource Materials for Schools (2016) R19-21 P.79-90.

Introduction

Coláiste na Mí aims to protect the well-being of its students and staff by providing a safe and nurturing environment at all times. The Board of Management, through Louise Kearns, has drawn up a Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

Mission Statement

Our Priority at Coláiste Na Mí is to ensure a safe, positive and supportive learning environment for all our students. We consider each student to be unique in personality and in spirit. Therefore, giving praise and rewarding students for good manners, citizenship, improvement, effort and success where appropriate, forms the basis of our approach to positive discipline in the school. From their first day in Coláiste na Mí the students quickly become immersed in the culture, ethos and value system of our school.

Review and Research

The CIMT have consulted resource documents available to schools on www.education.ie and www.nosp.ie including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016) <https://assets.gov.ie/static/documents/responding-to-critical-incidents.pdf>
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- [Suicide Prevention in the Community \(version 2, 2025\) - Connecting, Communicating, Caring: A Practical Guide](#)

- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)

Define what you mean by the term ‘critical incident’

The staff and management of Coláiste na Mí recognise a critical incident to be “an incident or sequence of events that overwhelms the normal coping mechanism of the school”. 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 school community through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death*
- *An intrusion into the school*
- *An accident involving members of the school community*
- *An accident/tragedy in the wider community*
- *Serious damage to the school building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc*
- *The disappearance of a member of the school community*

Aim

The aim of the CIMP is to help school 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 school

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 school community.

Physical safety

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Regular servicing of lifts and other safety equipment.
- LMETB Administration of Medication Policy
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Cycle Safety Awareness to students
- Health and Safety Statement
- Supervision at Sós and Lón
- Emergency plans for students with medical conditions
- Sign In/Sign Out system for students at reception

- LMETB tours and trips policy
- Bí Cinnealta
- Code of Behaviour

Psychological safety

The management and staff of Coláiste na Mí 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 school and to provide opportunities for reflection and discussion.

- Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE) is integrated into the work of the school. 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
- School Care Team looking after the welfare of students in need.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE & RSE.
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures. All staff are compliant with procedures.
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for students at risk of suicide
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies such as Jigsaw, CAMHS, SoSad Navan, FUSE-DCU's anti-bullying centre.
- Inputs to students by external providers are carefully considered in the light of criteria about student safety, the appropriateness of the content, and the expertise of the providers. See DES Circulars 0022/2010 (Primary) or 0023/2010 (Post-Primary)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy (Bí Cinnealta)
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published on 2007 for primary schools and 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools (2014). These documents are available on www.education.ie
- A weekly Student Support Team meeting involving key staff members, which addresses whole school support.
- 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 weekly Care Team meeting involving key staff members is held which identifies new referrals and monitors current students at risk
- Guidance counsellors are trained in suicide awareness and attends regular CPD for counselling as well as the annual IGC conference
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves and are aware of the support services offered by Spectrum Life

- School structures to provide support to students include Year Heads, Caomhnoirí, Attendance officer, AEN team, themed weeks, Lean in/ Lean out, Compass notifications, Rainbows, Friends For Life, and Behavioural Support.
- Curriculum provision to support students includes SPHE/RSE, Guidance, Well Being Hours, Resource and Team teaching.
-

Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT)

A CIMT has been established in line with best practice. The members of the team were selected on a voluntary basis and will retain their roles for at least one school year. The members of the team meet annually to review and update the policy and plan. There is an 'opt-out' option for every member if needed.

Team leader: Louise Kearns

Role

- Ascertain the facts - Guards, family members, Other agencies
- 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
- Deal with the media in conjunction with LMETB
- Liaises with the bereaved family
- In the absence of Louise Kearns, Gemma O'Hart will be the team leader.

Garda Liaison: Michael McCarthy/ Louise Kearns

Role

- Liaises with the Gardaí after facts have been ascertained
- Ensures that information about deaths or other developments is checked out for accuracy before being shared

Staff liaison: Louise Kearns, Gemma O' Hart, Michael McCarthy, Stephen Dunne

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 folder)
- Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
- Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually

- Advises them of the availability of the EAS and gives them the contact number.

Student liaison: Guidance Team, Edel O'Donnell

Role

- At post-primary level, may co-ordinate information from 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 records (R1).
- Looks after setting up and supervision of 'quiet' room where agreed (C003)

Community/agency liaison: Gemma O'Hart & Guidance Team

Role

- Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers of
 - Key parents, such as members of the Parents Council
 - 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 these agencies
- Reminds agency staff to wear name badges
- Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

Parent liaison: Louise Kearns/ Gemma O'Hart / Guidance Team

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 school policy
- Ensures that sample letters are typed up, on the school's 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 Role: Louise Kearns/ LMETB

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

Administrator: Office Staff

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 schools' system in advance and ready for adaptation
 - Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
 - Photocopies materials needed
 - Maintains records
- There will be a dedicated mobile phone number for calls relating directly to the case

Record keeping: Office Staff

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.

Office Staff will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc. There will be a dedicated logbook to log all offers of support and help, which can be reviewed at a later time.

Confidentiality and good name considerations

Management and staff of Coláiste na Mí have a responsibility to protect the privacy and the good name of people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of public statements. Members of school 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.

Critical Incident Rooms

In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes

Room Name:	Designated Purpose:
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff

Guidance offices, AEN office and Tionáil area for larger groups	Meetings with students
Meeting room in main building - Boardroom	Meetings with parents
Meeting room in main building - Boardroom	Meetings with media
Guidance offices, AEN office and year head offices in main building	Individual sessions with students
Meeting room at reception	Meetings with other visitors
Quiet Room	C003

Consultation and communication regarding the plan

All staff were consulted and their views canvassed in the preparation of this policy and plan. Students and parent/guardian representatives were also consulted and asked for their comments.

Our school'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 Management.

The plan will be updated annually in September.

Critical Incident Management Team		
Role	Name	Phone
Team leader:	Louise Kearns	086 1362984
Garda liaison	Louise Kearns	086 1362984
Staff liaison	Louise Kearns, Gemma O'Hart, Michael Mc Carthy, Stephen Dunne	086 1362984, 087-2381826, 086-8540814
Student liaison	Guidance Team, Edel O'Donnell	087 3230533 (L.D) 086 3524296 (E. OD) 087 9007710 (C MCC)
Community liaison	Gemma O'Hart/Guidance Team	087 2381826 (G.OH) AS above
Parent liaison	Louise Kearns Gemma O Hart	086 1362984 087 2381826
Media liaison	Louise Kearns	086 1362984
Administrator	Office Staff	
AP1's	Year Heads and other AP1	Phone numbers held by SLT
Caretakers	School Officers	087 7544737 (R.F) 086 0705287 (P.F)

Short term actions – Day 1

Task	Name
Gather accurate information	Louise Kearns,
Who, what, when, where? Contact CE, Director of Schools, NEPS Psychologist.	Louise Kearns
Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly	Louise Kearns
Contact external agencies: (See List pg 11)	Overall Critical Incident team
Arrange supervision for students	Michael Mc Carthy & Stephen Dunne

Hold staff meeting	All staff to be present
Agree schedule for the day	Overall Critical Incident team
Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately in small groups)	Senior Leadership team
Compile a list of vulnerable students	Guidance Team and Edel O'Donnell
Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media	Louise Kearns, in consultation with CE
Inform parents and affected family	Louise Kearns
Hold end of day staff briefing	Louise Kearns

Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Louise Kearns
Meet external agencies (from page 11)	Critical Incident Team
Meet whole staff	Critical Incident Team
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Critical Incident Team
Visit the injured/family	Louise Kearns, Gemma O Hart
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Louise Kearns
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Louise Kearns
Make decisions about school closure	CE & Department of Education

Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers, year heads, Guidance counsellors, Caomhnoiri
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Guidance Team
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Guidance Team, Gemma O'Hart
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Guidance Team & Louise Kearns
Decide on memorials and anniversaries	BOM/Staff, parents and students
Review response to incident and amend plan	Staff/BOM

EMERGENCY CONTACT LIST

AGENCY	CONTACT NUMBERS
Emergency Dial	999/112
Navan Garda	(046) 903 6100
Navan Hospital	046) 9078500
Navan Fire Brigade	(046) 905 1068
Local GPs/Medical Centre	(046) 902 3171
HSE	<u>046) 9021595</u>
CE – Martin O Brien	(046) 9068200
Director of Schools – Fiona Kindlon	(042) 9334047
Jigsaw Navan	(046) 907 1702
Child and Family Centre	TUSLA Meath: 0469098560 (duty social worker)
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	(046)9079350
School Inspector	01-8896553 (Harold Hislop)
NEPS Psychologist	Leah MacLeod – 01- 8650635/01-8896400
SoSad Navan	0469077682
TUI	01-4922588

ASTI	01-6040160
State Exams Commission	0906442700
Employee Assistance Service _(Spectrum Life)	1800 411 057
Suicide Prevention Officer for Louth/Meath	Sandra.OKOME@HSE.IE 0871321344
Pieta House	1800 247247
CHILDLINE	1800666666
Samaritans	1850609090

List of staff with Suicide Prevention Training

Mental Health First Aid –

Louise Kearns

Clara McCabe

Critical Incident Management Plan	
Date of ratification of Policy by Board of Management	
Date of Scheduled Review of Policy by BOM	
Date of next review	December 2028

APPENDICES

SAMPLE LETTER 1



Date: _____

Dear Parents and Guardians,

It is with great sadness that we convey to you the news of the death of one of our _____ year students, _____. We, as the school community for the past _____ years, mourn their passing and extend our deepest sympathy to the grieving family.

As a mark of respect to _____, an Area of Remembrance has been set up in the school where parents, students and staff may pray and reflect. A Book of Condolences has been placed in this area in the front office.

The funeral arrangements for _____ are as follows:

_____ will be reposing at her home on _____ evening. The removal is from her home on _____ to the Church of _____ in _____ for the Funeral Mass at _____ a.m. followed by burial in _____ Cemetery.

Classes will be suspended on _____ to enable staff and students to attend the funeral.

We feel it is important for the students to pay tribute to the passing of their fellow student and as an expression of solidarity we encourage you the parents where possible to facilitate your child's attending for Guard of Honour in full uniform, representing the school community.

Ar dheis Dé go raibh a h-anam dílis.

Yours sincerely

Ms. L. Kearns

Principal

Appendix Sample Letter 2



Date:

Dear Parents/Guardians

The school has experienced (the sudden death, accidental injury) of one of our students. We are deeply saddened by the death / event.

(Brief details of the incident and in event of death perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost)

We have support structures in place to help your son/daughter cope with this (Elaborate)

It is possible that your son/daughter may have some feelings that she may like to discuss with you. You can help your son/daughter by taking time to listen and encouraging him/her to express his/her feelings. **It is important to give him/her truthful information that is appropriate to her age.**

If you would like advice or assistance you may contact the following people at the school:

(details)

Yours sincerely,

Ms. L. Kearns

Principal

Appendix B -Letter to Parents re: outside support



Date: _____

Dear Parents / Guardians,

Following the recent (death) we have arranged professional support for students in the school who need particular help. _____ is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking to the students, either in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/ daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your daughter to receive this support please sign the attached slip and return it to the school by _____.

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slip.

Yours sincerely,

Ms. L. Kearns

Principal

I/We consent to having our son/daughter met by a psychologist.

I/We understand that our son/daughter may meet the psychologist(s) in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements, which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: _____

Class & Year: _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my daughter, _____ to avail of the support being offered by the psychologist.

Name of Parents/Guardians: _____

Signature of Parents/Guardians: _____

DRAFT

APPENDIX C



STAFF CONTACT NUMBERS

As per office and text service (updated yearly)

DRAFT

APPENDIX D



POINTERS TO REMEMBER IF ASKED TO GIVE A LIVE INTERVIEW

- Assign the task to someone skilled or familiar with and experienced in dealing with the media
- Take time to prepare a statement
- Remember that everything you say is on record and therefore, keep it simple, factual and brief.
- Decline if you are not ready or think it inappropriate to speak with media

APPENDIX E



SAMPLE LETTER RE SCHOOL CLOSURE

Date: _____

Post-Primary Administration
Department of Education and Science
Cornamaddy

Athlone

Co. Westmeath

For Attention: _____

SCHOOL ROLL NO. 76173K

Dear _____

Further to a telephone conversation with your department yesterday and on advice given, I wish to inform you that due to the death of a ____ year student, I will be closing the school on _____ to enable staff and students to attend the funeral.

Thanking you,

Yours sincerely,

Ms. L. Kearns

Principal