

# CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT POLICY

Saplings Special School for  
Children with Autism and  
Complex Needs, Kill

## What does a 'critical incident' mean:

The staff and management of Saplings Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs, Kill, 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
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school yard
- Emergency exit doors locked with coded locks during class time
- Rules of the playground

## **Psychological safety**

The management and staff of Saplings Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs, Kill, 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.
- Staff have access to training for their role in SPHE
- Staff are familiar with the Child Protection Guidelines and Procedures and details of how to proceed with suspicions or disclosures
- Books and resources on difficulties affecting student wellbeing are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety at an age appropriate level
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – e.g NEPS, TUSLA etc.
- 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)
- The school has a clear policy on bullying and deals with bullying in accordance with this policy
- 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.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the designated staff member, 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.
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves.

## **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 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:** Louise Caraher

### **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

**Garda liaison** Louise Caraher

### **Role**

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

**Staff liaison** Wendi O'Donoghue

**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** Geraldine Sexton

**Role**

- 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

**Community/agency liaison** John Whelan

**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** John Whelan

**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** Marc deSalvo

**Role**

- 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** Grainne Grace

##### **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

#### **Record keeping** Grainne Grace

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. Will also have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

#### **Confidentiality and good name considerations**

Management and staff of Saplings Special School for Children with Autism and Complex Needs, Kill, 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 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.

<b>Critical Incident Rooms</b>	
In the event of a critical incident, the following rooms are designated for the indicated purposes	
<b>Room Name:</b>	<b>Designated Purpose:</b>
Staff Room	Main room for meeting staff
Classroom 1	Meetings with students
PA Room	Meetings with parents
Principal's Office	Meetings with media

Principal/ Behaviour Analyst Office or classroom (as appropriate)	Individual sessions with students
Principal's 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 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 Louise Caraher

The plan will be updated annually in October of each year.

<b>Critical Incident Management Team</b>		
<b>Role</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Phone</b>
<b>Team leader:</b>	Louise Caraher	086 0768431
<b>Garda liaison</b>	Louise Caraher	086 0768431
<b>Staff liaison</b>	Wendi O'Donoghue	086 1599116
<b>Student liaison</b>	Geraldine Sexton	087 2996676
<b>Community liaison</b>	John Whelan	086 8775001
<b>Parent liaison</b>	John Whelan	086 8775001
<b>Media liaison</b>	Marc deSalvo	086 2273170
<b>Administrator</b>	Grainne Grace	087 2950519

### **Short term actions – Day 1**

<b>Task</b>	<b>Name</b>
<b>Gather accurate information</b>	CIMT
<b>Who, what, when, where?</b>	
<b>Convene a CIMT meeting – specify time and place clearly</b>	Team Leader
<b>Contact external agencies</b>	Team Leader
<b>Arrange supervision for students</b>	Student liaison
<b>Hold staff meeting</b>	Team Leader & Staff Liaison
<b>Agree schedule for the day</b>	Team Leader
<b>Inform students – (close friends and students with learning difficulties may need to be told separately)</b>	CMIT as appropriate
<b>Compile a list of vulnerable students</b>	Student Liaison
<b>Prepare and agree media statement and deal with media</b>	Media Liaison
<b>Inform parents</b>	Parent Liaison
<b>Hold end of day staff briefing</b>	Team Leader

## Medium term actions - (Day 2 and following days)

Task	Name
Convene a CIMT meeting to review the events of day 1	Team leader
Meet external agencies	Team leader
Meet whole staff	Staff liaison
Arrange support for students, staff, parents	Staff liaison, student liaison, parent liaison
Visit the injured	CMIT team as appropriate
Liaise with bereaved family regarding funeral arrangements	Team leader
Agree on attendance and participation at funeral service	Team leader and Staff liaison
Make decisions about school closure	BOM

## Follow-up – beyond 72 hours

Task	Name
Monitor students for signs of continuing distress	Class teachers
Liaise with agencies regarding referrals	Team leader
Plan for return of bereaved student(s)	Team leader, staff liaison and student liaison
Plan for giving of 'memory box' to bereaved family	Staff/ BOM
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
Garda	045 884300 (Naas) or 999 as appropriate
Hospital	045 849 500 (Naas) 01 4142000 (Tallaght) 01 4096100 (Crumlin)
Fire Brigade	045 879964 (Naas) or 999 as appropriate
Local GPs	045 877314 (Kill)
HSE	Contact teams for particular students as appropriate
Community Care Team	Contact teams for particular students as appropriate
Child and Family Centre	Contact teams for particular students as appropriate
Child and Family Mental Health Service (CAMHS)	01 8796800
School Inspector	Eamon Clavin (eamon_clavin@education.gov.ie)
NEPS Psychologist	elizabeth_deforge@education.gov.ie (Liz deForge)
DES	Relevant sections as per education.ie
Clergy	N/A
State Exams Commission	N/A
Employee Assistance Service	1800 411 057