



AGHADERG GAC & BALLYVARLEY HC



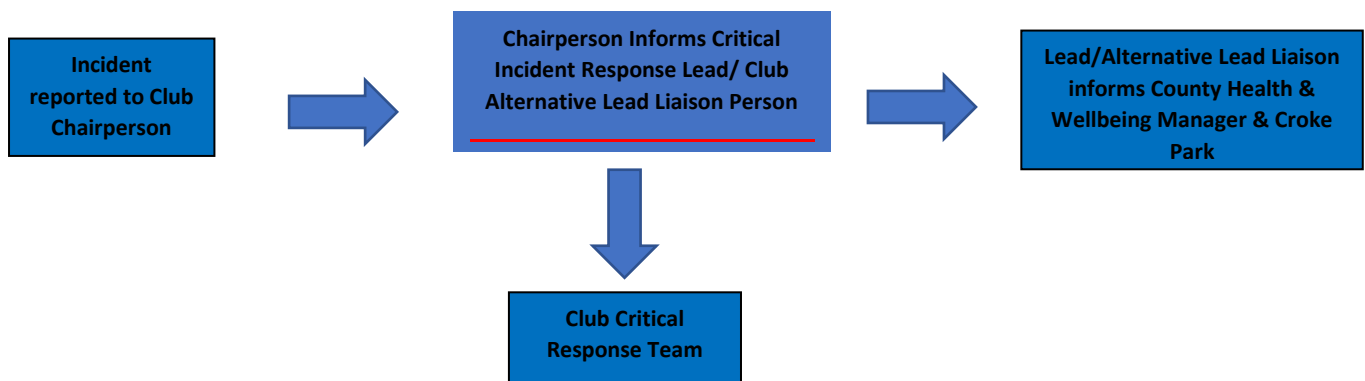
CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PLANNING

The GAA, its clubs and counties provide great support during and after all manner of incidents that may have traumatic or tragic consequences for members and their communities. This natural response by clubs usually requires no external expertise or input. Nonetheless, Critical Incident Response Planning has been identified as an invaluable support to those involved when encountering situations which have the potential to overwhelm even the most experienced and well-prepared GAA officers and units. This Critical Incident Response Plan, (CIRP), is designed to offer some assurance about what steps to take in such situations, while also highlighting that other support services – both within the GAA and external to it – are available should they be needed. This reassurance can be invaluable in times of crisis and stress.

Aghaderg GAC & Ballyvarley HC have implemented the recommended ‘**Five Step Plan**’ and developed key roles and duties for identified individuals.

CRITICAL INCIDENT RESPONSE PLAN: Aghaderg GAC & Ballyvarley HC



Recommended Critical Incident Communication Cascade.



Critical Incident Response Team Personnel

Joint Liaison Persons:

Andrew Haggart

Gary Reilly chairperson.aghaderg.down@gaa.ie

(Club Chairperson)

Social Media/Media Liaison:

Niamh Keenan

(Club PRO)

Family Liaison Person:

Martin Malone

(Club Assistant Secretary)

Support Team:

Name/Role;

Bernice Rea

(Healthy Club Officer)

Chris Lennon secretary.aghaderg.down@gaa.ie

(Club Secretary)

Sarah Lennon childrensofficer.aghaderg.down@gaa.ie

(Children's Officer)

Deirdre McGrath

(Vice Chairperson)

USEFUL GAA CONTACTS;

CONTACT	CONTACT NAME	CONTACT DETAILS
County Health & Wellbeing Chair	Gary Doherty	Chair.hwc.down@gaa.ie
County Chairperson	Maureen O'Higgins	07748518994 Email: chairperson.down@gaa.ie
County PRO	Paula Magee	07753987224 Email: pro.down@gaa.ie
County Children's Officer	Seamus Ennis	07368139002 Email: childrensofficer.down@gaa.ie
Community & Health Department Croke Park		01- 865 8600 Email: community.health@gaa.ie

WHERE TO FIND SUPPORT:

Accident & Emergency;

Craigavon Area Hospital/Daisy Hill Hospital

Phone First: 0300 123 3 111

For Life Threatening Emergencies call 999

PSNI; Loughbrickland LNPT

Constable Young 07557966028

Out of Hours Doctor;

028 38399201

Samaritans;

08457 90 90 90

Lifeline;

0808 808 8000

<https://www.mindingyourhead.info/>

See Appendix 2 for Local and National Support Organisations for deaths by suicide.

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 advise someone seeking support to contact their GP.

IMPORTANT ACTION POINTS

- Review the plan and its content at least once year or after an incident
- Keep the plan 'up-to-date' regarding personnel
- Keep the contact list on your phone in case it becomes necessary to activate the plan
- Send a copy of the plan to stakeholders after each major amendment

<u>Critical Incident Response Plan: Aghaderg GAC & Ballyvarley HC</u>	
Name	Key Roles
Andrew Haggart and Gary Reilly, Chairperson Joint Lead Liaison Persons	<p>Joint Lead liaisons to liaise with Club Incident Response Team.</p> <p>To provide advice and guidance on responding to a critical incident.</p> <p>Logistics of response to incident.</p> <p>Delegate key responsibilities as related to incident.</p> <p>To coordinate response to media.</p> <p>To ensure that the club response is accurate and consistent.</p> <p>To respond to media presence at club.</p> <p>Review situation as it develops.</p> <p>Coordinate special Senior Committee Meeting.</p> <p>To liaise with managers, mentors and coaches.</p> <p>Liaise with GAA County Provincial and National Organisations if appropriate.</p> <p>To arrange debriefing meeting for club members.</p> <p>Annual review of CIRP.</p> <p>To both retain written and electronic copies of CIRP.</p>
Martin Malone (Assistant Secretary), and/or Someone Known to Family, Family Liaison Person	<p>To be key contact with family.</p> <p>Liaise with Parish Priest/Community Leaders/Schools if appropriate.</p>
Christopher Lennon Club Secretary	<p>To store securely a written copy of CIRP in Committee Room.</p> <p>To communicate update to managers, mentors and coaches.</p> <p>To be proactive in the organisation of response events i.e. clubrooms available for club members to meet.</p> <p>To record actions of Incident response team.</p>
Sarah Lennon Children's Officer	<p>To liaise with parents.</p> <p>To organise clubrooms for refreshments if required and to create appropriate environment in clubrooms.</p> <p>To contact relevant agencies to provide support and guidance.</p> <p>To support underage coaching teams if required.</p>
Bernice Rea Healthy Club Officer	<p>To liaise with GAA County, Provincial and National Health and Wellbeing Officers.</p> <p>To contact relevant agencies to provide support and guidance.</p> <p>To signpost persons involved to relevant agencies.</p> <p>Community/support agency contact.</p> <p>To assist with debriefing meeting for club members.</p>
Niamh Keenan PRO	<p>To oversee communication to club members.</p> <p>To prepare press release.</p> <p>To monitor social media.</p>
Deirdre McGrath Vice Chairperson Helen Morgan Healthy Club Project Administrator & Healthy Club Team	<p>To prepare practical arrangements i.e. clubrooms set out with seating if required.</p> <p>To organise clubrooms for refreshments if required and to create appropriate environment in clubrooms.</p> <p>To retain copy of CIRP pinned in Healthy Club WhatsApp Group.</p> <p>Provide redacted version of CIRP for Club website with personal phone numbers/email addresses removed.</p>



Date of Issue;	5/5/26	Date of Review	1/2/27
Person Responsible for Review	Andrew Haggart	Named Person/People	

What is a Critical Incident?

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 ability to cope. It may impede people's coping mechanisms immediately or in the future following the event. It is normal to experience all kinds of unpleasant feelings, emotions and body sensations following abnormal events.

Examples of Critical incidents may include:

- Death or serious injury on or off the playing field
- Exposure to the aftermath of a road traffic collision eg; 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).
- 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.

Our role in responding to critical incidents

Experts have encouraged following these **5 Key Principles** during any crisis situation or critical incident. These simple yet effective steps help support personal and collective responses to any critical incident. Abnormal events trigger normal responses that may seem to be alien to those experiencing them. It is important to normalise these responses.

5 Key Principles of Crisis Management

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

It's important to remember that the GAA will usually be just one entity playing a part in any response to a critical incident. The Figure below outlines some of the other organisations that may be involved in a community 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.



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

Good Practice Tips

The following is a summary of some good practice tips to follow:

- **Always consult with those affected to see what level of support they want from the Club, if any**
- A General Practitioner (GP) should be recommended as the first point of contact if an individual needs help
- Ensure the response is consistent throughout the process

- Keep a log of events with times and details of actions and decisions taken. This could be important for any subsequent inquiry which could range from an internal club or county/local authority review to a formal inquiry/legal inquiry
- Be familiar with all the appropriate local services and agencies that are available and ensure that the contact numbers are checked and updated every year. This is really an invaluable exercise. Go to www.mindingyourhead.info for a one stop directory of recognised national & local services
- Ask the questions regarding support services – what can they deliver? And when can they deliver? Do they respond at weekends?
- Only keep open clear lines of communications which will avoid any rumours or miscommunications
- Be mindful of any relevant procedures in both jurisdictions (ROI/NI)
- To ensure consistency of message, designated persons should deal with any media inquiries
- Be mindful of social media and ensure that all information put on social media is accurate and approved by those affected
- If there is a club match scheduled always check in with those involved to see how they would like the club to manage fulfilling the fixture
- Be careful about using the term counselling in the aftermath. People understand it to mean different things so it can be misleading
- Cases of suicide bring with them a particular set of challenges and very specific recommendations as to how to respond appropriately. Fortunately, there are also skilled services available – both statutory and voluntary – to guide units through such tragic situations. **(see appendix 1 & 2)**

Key Point - Remember that the role of the Club is primarily 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 important.

Guidelines for dealing with the media following a Critical Incident

A high-profile critical incident, especially one involving the loss of life, can bring intense media interest on any family and club involved. Club officers and members are under no obligation to speak to the media. Never feel pressured to do so.

If you feel it is appropriate, here are some helpful tips:

- Get approval from the club executive if speaking on behalf of the club and not in a personal capacity
- Don't do anything in a hurry regardless of any deadline the journalist is working to – set a time and date that works for you/the club, not them
- Always make a note of the journalist's name and contact phone number at the outset
- If conducting a live interview, ask journalists to write down what questions they want to ask you in advance so you can prepare. Make sure they stick to those questions
- A prepared response is helpful as this avoids someone saying something they wished they hadn't
- 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
- Journalists may ask for photographs of the bereaved. You may wish to provide these but remember that you are under no obligation to do so. If you do, ensure that you have the family's permission to do so

Dealing with the media can bring additional, unwanted stress during an already difficult time. Feel free to reach out to either your county PRO or Croke Park's Communications department for support and assistance (all media queries can be directed to these if you wish).

Appendix 1; Good Practice Guidelines Following the Death by Suicide of a Club Member

The death by suicide of a member of a club can have a deep impact on club members, in particular teammates and coaches.

How a club responds to a death by suicide depends on a number of factors including:

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

What to do after a suicide:

Do's

Acknowledge the death

Acknowledge that a club 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 the team.

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:

- Brothers and sisters of the deceased person who are also club members;
- Close friends;
- Teammates; 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 Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention contacts (see appendix 2).

Anticipate sensitive dates on the calendar

Anticipate birthdays, holidays, anniversary dates and other celebratory events where the person's absence from the team will be most felt. Accept there will be times, such as these, when members of the club 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, clubs 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

Clubs 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. 'Z Cards' are available for each Health and Social Care Trust area, providing information on local support services.

Support

The first gathering of the team after the funeral, for example, the first night back at training, may be a difficult time for everyone. Coaches have found it helpful to break the team up into small groups and allow some time to talk about their deceased team member.

Coaches or team 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. Coaches or team leaders should seek the help of local support services if they feel necessary and/or the county health and wellbeing chair. Some coaches may not 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, also what to say and do if you are worried about someone else.

Medium to long-term

In the medium to long-term 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.

Policies

Clubs should develop policies and procedures on suicide prevention as well as other broader areas such as drug and alcohol use.

Training

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



Appendix 2 Local & National Support Groups

GP out of hours services – Tel: **028 38399201**

Samaritans – Tel: **08457 90 90 90** official helpline of the GAA and available 24-7 in Northern Ireland.

Lifeline – Tel: **0808 808 8000** 24-7 mental health support

PIPS Hope and Support 50 Mill St. Newry BT34 1AG Tel: **02830266195** Lurgan: **02838310151**

Minding Your Head - [Minding your head](#)

Childline Tel: **0800 1111** www.childline.org.uk

NSPCC Helpline (24 Hour) Tel: **0800 800 5000**

Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH) Tel: **028 6632 2995** Local support, including housing schemes. www.niamhwellbeing.org

Women's Aid Newry Tel: **02830250765**

Portadown/Armagh Tel: **02838397979**

Domestic & Sexual Abuse Helpline 24/7. Tel: **08088021414**

WAVE Trauma Centre Tel: **028 37511599** Offers care and support to anyone bereaved or traumatised through violence, irrespective of religious, cultural or political beliefs.

www.wavetraumacentre.org.uk

Cruse Bereavement Care Tel: **028 30252322**

- National Cruse day-by-day helpline 0844 477 9400
- Cruse young person's helpline 0808 808 1677

National charity that exists to promote the wellbeing of bereaved people – for adults, children and young people. www.cruse.org.uk

Young people: www.rd4u.org.uk

Youthlife Tel: **028 7137 7227** Helping children and young people who have experienced bereavement and loss. www.youthlife.org

Southern Health Trust Key Contact Details;

Gerry Bleakney Head of Health & Social Wellbeing Improvement

Telephone: **028 3741 4606**

Deirdre McNamee Head of Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement Senior Officer

Telephone: **028 3741 4557**

Helen Gibson Regional Training Co-ordinator for Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention Telephone: **07772418059**

Nuala Quinn Protect Life Coordinator

Telephone: **028 3741 2882**

Email: nuala.quinn@southerntrust.hscni.net