**Critical Incident**

**Management Plan**

***The Willow Tree Children’s Centre.***

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| **Version** | **Description** | **Authors** |
| July 2020 | First version of policy | Laura MacKenna and Lisa Clifton on behalf of the board of management |
| August 2021 | Amended policy | Lisa Clifton and Danielle Berry on behalf of the board of management |
| August 2022 | Amended policy | Laura MacKenna and Lisa Clifton on behalf of the board of management |
| August 2023 | Amended policy | Lisa Clifton and Danielle Berry on behalf of the board of management |
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**Service Contact Details**

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**Deputy Manager**: Lisa Clifton

**Board of Management Chairperson:** Jessica Hastings

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# Critical Incident Management Plan

***Background:***

**“**The key to managing a critical incident is planning. NEPS psychologists report that schools that have developed school policy and a **Critical Incident Management Plan** (CIMP) are able to cope more effectively in the aftermath of an incident. Having a plan enables staff to react quickly and effectively and to maintain a sense of control. It may also ensure that normality returns as soon as possible and that the effects on students and staff are limited”. *Responding to Critical Incidents, Guidelines for Schools, NEPS, 2007*

## This policy was completed with reference to

* Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools, NEPS, 2007
* Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2007
* Critical Incident Plan Toolkit for Childcare Providers- Galway City and County Childcare Committee, 2012
* Responding to Critical Incidents during School Closures and Public Health Restrictions arising from COVID-19.

***Issues the service needs to address:***

* Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the service
* Defining a critical incident
* Creation of a critical incident management team
* Development and communication of the plan
* Administrative tasks.

## Creation of a coping, supportive and caring ethos in the school:

At the Willow Tree Children’s Centre, we provide a loving home-from-home environment where each child is treated with respect and valued as individuals who will develop confidence in their knowledge, opinions and abilities. Our play-based curriculum is a broad-based, flexible, well-documented programme which emphasises hands-on activities, mental well-being and connection to nature.

Our team members are a hardworking, committed, highly qualified, professional team. Above all, the welfare, mental and emotional well-being of each child is of utmost importance to them.

***Defining a critical incident:***

The Willow Tree Children’s Service understands a critical incident to be defined as follows:

“In general, it is any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the school” *Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools, NEPS, 2007, p.15*

Types of critical incidents that may arise include:

* The death of a member of the service through accident, violence, suicide or suspected suicide or other unexpected death
* An epidemic/ Pandemic (Covid-19)
* An intrusion into the service
* An accident involving members of the service
* An accident/tragedy in the wider community
* Serious damage to the building through fire, flood, vandalism, etc
* The disappearance of a member of the service.

Staff are familiar with the Guidelines and Resource Materials from NEPS. These are available on the hard drive in the locked cabinet or in the Corona Virus Compliance folder which are both available in the office.

***Development and communication of the plan:***

Emergency Preparedness Emergency preparedness is the preparation and planning necessary to effectively handle a critical incident. It involves staff members of the Willow Tree Children’s Centre assessing the likelihood of specific critical incidents occurring and developing an emergency plan that identifies the services they require, and the resources we need to have on hand in case such an incident occurs. The goal of these preparedness activities is to make sure that a facility is ready and able to respond quickly and effectively in the event of a critical incident. As a minimum, the following emergency situations should be addressed:

Medical Emergencies, Missing Child, Natural Disasters: flood, storms, icy weather, Utility Disruption, water, electricity, heating, Fire/smoke Emergencies ,Hazardous Material; chemical spills, Potentially Violent Situations (unauthorized/ suspicious person/intruder), Disgruntled or Impaired Parent/Guardian, Bomb Threat, Pandemic Flu or other Pandemic Episodes e.g. COVID-19.

### Communication and availability of plan

* The plan is readily accessible to all members of staff. It on the hard drive and in the Corona Virus compliance folder.
* All members of the critical incident management team have a copy of the plan
* The manager (Laura MacKenna) will communicate this plan to new and temporary staff
* The plan will be communicated to parents/guardians via the Willow Tree Children’s Centre website. It will be available for viewing upon request.

**Responsibilities and Roles in Emergency Planning and Response**

*A. The Childcare Provider/Manager/Person in Charge*

1) Ensures that the facility remains in compliance with Child Care (Pre-School Services) (No 2) Regulations 2006 in regard to:

• First Aid • Medical Assistance • Management and staffing • Registering of children • Records • Information for Parents • Fire safety measures • Premises and Facilities

2) Develops with help from a planning team the facility Emergency Preparedness Plan(s).

3) Trains staff and children in the provisions of Emergency Preparedness Plan(s).

4) Assigns emergency responsibilities to staff members as required, with regard to individual capabilities and normal responsibilities.

5) Secures necessary training for staff members (as applicable).

6) Conducts drills and initiates required plan revisions based on drill evaluations.

7) Keeps parents and staff members informed of Emergency Preparedness Plan revisions.

8) Supervises periodic safety checks of the physical facility, equipment and vehicles.

## Administrative Tasks:

## Contact numbers

* Maintaining an up to date list of contact numbers. Numbers should be available for:

Parents/Guardians, Staff,Emergency support services

* The manager/ deputy manager, will compile and update these lists regularly. These lists will be kept in the office
* The list of emergency support services will be displayed in the office and the staff room

### Resources

* Resources can be prepared in advance of an incident e.g. templates for letters to parents, templates for press releases, list of emergency contact details, checklist for first 24 hours, map of premises, procedures/protocols for what to do in the event of an outbreak
* A plan of the premises, with exits highlighted, will be displayed
* Rooms have been assigned to use should a critical incident arise e.g. isolation area within the office for isolating children in case they present with symptoms of Covid- 19. Children will wait here until their parent/guardian collects them.

### Information for school trips

* The Staff will compile a list of all children/staff involved.
* A risk assessment is devised for the outing which is read and signed by all members of staff and the person in charge. This is available to view upon request.
* The school will ensure that it has up to date medical information on pupils by referring to the Child Profiles completed in September of each year.
* The service seeks parental consent for trips/ outings.

### Record keeping

* In the event of an incident each member of the Critical Incident Management Team (CIMT) will keep records of phone calls made and received, letters sent and received, meetings held, persons met, interventions used, material used etc.
* The administrator will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials etc.
* These records will be kept indefinitely
* The manager is responsible for these records. The deputy manager, the CIMT and the Board of Management will have access to these records

***The Critical Incident Management Team*:**

* “The ‘manager’ Laura MacKenna, will play a key role, being responsible for many of the tasks.” *Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools, NEPS, p.16*(see Covid 19 folder).
* A planning team of key personnel should be formed *p.16*
* The following points will be considered when selecting members of the Critical Incident Management Team:
  + Members should be suited to the role. They should have an interest in this type of work and some particular skills (e.g. good interpersonal skills, organisational skills, a calm approach). It is suggested that someone who is recently bereaved may not be a suitable candidate for the team.
  + Each member should be willing to contribute a number of hours to the work.
  + Responsibilities attached to the various roles should be clearly outlined.
  + The size of a team should be appropriate to the size of the service.
  + The team should meet annually to update and review the plan .
  + The members should usually remain on the team for at least one full school year
* The team members include Laura MacKenna (Manager), Lisa Clifton (Deputy Manager), Jessica Hastings (Director of service), team leaders of the individual rooms. The team should meet annually to update and review the plan. The team will meet every August prior to the start of the new school year.

**The key roles which need to be covered are as follows:**

* + Team Leader
  + Garda liaison
  + Staff liaison
  + Student liaison
  + Parent liaison
  + Community/agency liaison
  + Media liaison
  + Administrator

**The role of management:** *Laura MacKenna / Lisa Clifton*

* Alerts the team members to the crisis and convenes a meeting
* Coordinates the tasks of the team
* Liaises with the Board of Management; DCYA, NEPS, HSE
* Contact parent(s)/ guardian in the case a child presents with symptoms of COVID-19
* Inform and guide parents through the process of ringing the childs GP if this occurs.
* Alerting the Early Years Registration Department (TUSLA).

### The role of the garda liaison

### *Laura MacKenna*

### Liaises with the Gardaí

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

**The role of the staff liaison** *Jessica Hastings, Laura MacKenna/ Lisa Clifton*

Leads briefing meetings for staff on the facts as known, gives staff members an opportunity to express their feelings and ask questions and outlines the routine for the day

* Advises staff on the procedures for identification of vulnerable students
* Keeps staff updated as the day progresses
* Is alert to vulnerable staff members and makes contact with them individually.

**The role of the community / agency liaison** *Lisa Clifton / Jessica Hastings*

Maintains up to date lists of contact numbers

* + Parents/guardian(s), GP
  + 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
  + Updates team members on the involvement of external agencies

### The role of the parent liaison

### *Lisa Clifton/ Laura MacKenna*

### Arranges meetings

* + - Maintains a record of parents seen
    - May meet individual parents or communicate with a parent over the phone where practical

**The role of the media liaison** *Laura MacKenna*

* 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.)
* Will draw up a press statement, give media briefings and interviews (as agreed by management)

**The role of the administrator** *Laura MacKenna/ Lisa Clifton*

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
  + Prepares and sends out letters, emails and faxes
  + Photocopies materials needed
  + Maintains records

## Confidentiality and good name considerations

The management, staff, parents and the community of the Willow Tree Children’s Centrehave a responsibility to protect the privacy and good name of the people involved in any incident and will be sensitive to the consequences of any public statements. The staff of the service will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that all other parties involved do so also.

## Critical incident rooms

In the event of a critical incident,

* The office will be the main room used to meet the staff
* The office will be used for meetings with parents where practical
* The office will be the room used for media
* Group meetings of any sort in the kitchen

## Implementation Date

This plan was implemented following ratification in July 2020 following school closure due to a pandemic outbreak of COVID- 19.

Amendments to this policy will be made after reviewing the policy in August of every year or before this if deemed necessary at the time.

## Timetable for Review

This plan will be reviewed in August annually at the meeting of the Critical Incident Management Team.

## Ratification & Communication

This plan was ratified at a Board of Management meeting in July 2020.

This plan was reviewed and adopted by The Willow Tree Children’s Centre on 9th August 2023.

*Date of ratification:*

*Signed: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

# Reference Section

* Responding to Critical Incidents – Guidelines for Schools and Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2007
* Responding to Critical Incidents – Resource Materials for Schools, NEPS, 2007
* When Tragedy strikes - Guidelines for Effective Critical Incident Management in Schools, INTO

# Websites

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| **DES – NEPS** | **www.education.ie** |
| **Health and Safety Authority** | **www.hsa.ie/osh** |
| **Allianz *(Church and General )*** | **www.cg-online.ie** |
| **INTO** | **www.into.ie** |