



Ranelagh Gaels Critical Incident Response Plan

June 2026

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 or group's usual ability to cope. Examples of critical incidents are a death by suicide or a serious incident of injury or death during a club event, among many others.

This Ranelagh Gaels Critical Incident Response Plan should be seen as a guide to how Ranelagh Gaels GAA club (the club) will respond to a critical incident that occurs within our community. It is recognised that each incident is unique and may throw up unprecedented considerations. The response team and the club will respond to each incident on a case by case basis while following the broad outline of this plan. This plan is based on the model recommended by the GAA (see page 2 here https://www.gaa.ie/api/images/image/upload/t_q-best/ngebrt0hshk48ksrr516.pdf)

First Steps

A meeting of the response team will be called as soon as possible (within 24-48 hours) after the club becomes aware of an event of concern in the club or wider community. This meeting can be called by any member of the executive committee. It is at this meeting that the response team will deliberate on whether or not this event constitutes a critical incident and warrants the implementation of the critical incident response plan. If it is agreed that the event is indeed a critical incident the team will follow the steps of the plan as laid out. (page 2, https://www.gaa.ie/api/images/image/upload/t_q-best/ngebrt0hshk48ksrr516.pdf).

If the lead liaison is not available to lead the response the alternative lead liaison will do so. At this meeting the merits of an alternative person to liaise directly with the affected family will be discussed, as below ('Communication'). A volunteer should not feel obliged to be part of the response, especially if closely impacted by the incident.

Contact will be made with the county Health & Wellbeing Committee, or the county Chairperson/ Secretary for support as needed. (If necessary, the county structure will notify Croke Park/national level of the need for additional guidance/support).

A basic log of events will be kept including timelines, details of the incident, and actions taken. This could be important should any subsequent inquiry take place which could range from an internal club review to a formal/coroner's inquiry, depending on the nature of the incident. A sample log is attached.

Key considerations for Ranelagh Gaels GAA Club when dealing with the aftermath of a critical incident.

The club will keep the family and those directly impacted informed and at the centre of all decisions.

It is important to remember that Ranelagh Gaels is likely to be just one entity within the community affected by a critical incident. Also, the club is not expected to take on the burden of responding alone and should seek assistance through appropriate channels e.g. GAA, HSE etc.

The club will endeavour to ensure that those leading out the response have all the support they need. It can be a stressful role and those coordinating the care of others may neglect their own care.

It is normal for people impacted by a critical incident to experience a broad range of emotional reactions. Should anyone struggle to come to terms with the trauma they have experienced, their GP should be their first port of call. That said, it may not be obvious to the person involved that they are struggling. If there is a serious concern about someone action can be taken such as contacting 999 or advising someone seeking support to contact their GP.

If a squad or squads have been impacted by a sudden death or death by suspected suicide, it may be beneficial to bring the group together in the 24-48 hours after the incident. In other clubs the clubhouse may be chosen as the natural venue for such a gathering. The decision to do this and the venue for it will be dealt with by Ranelagh Gaels on a case by case basis.

COMMUNICATION:

The club will assign one person to liaise with the family of a bereaved or injured person. Preferably this will be someone well known to the family, e.g. a mentor who has been involved with the family members. In the absence of such a person or in the event of multiple deaths/injuries the club Chairperson will be the nominated person to communicate with the family(ies). Consistency of approach is key.

Effective communication to the community is one of the key principles when responding to a critical incident. All communication must respect the family wishes at all times.

In cases of loss of life, the club will refrain from posting details on social media, club newsletter, emails etc until an official death notice has been released (e.g. on RIP.ie).

Once a death notice is released, the club can share this along with their condolences across the club's official social media channels, club announcement group, newsletter, as appropriate.

If the club decides to publish a photograph of the deceased along with the message of condolences it will be done with the family's approval.

Care needs to be taken when reporting on suspected suicide as research shows that certain types of media depictions, such as explicitly describing a method, sensational and excessive reporting, can lead to imitational suicidal behaviour among vulnerable people.

The advice from the GAA is that if the death is a suspected suicide, the club may share details of the general supports that are available to club and community members (e.g. Samaritan's helpline 116-123) without commenting/speculating on the cause of the death. This is a point that requires strong consideration by the response team on a case by case basis as it may cause upset for a family where the cause of death is not confirmed or is contested.

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT:

To ensure consistency of message only the club PRO will deal with media enquiries.

While the club is under no obligation to speak to the media, the advice from the GAA is that co-operation can make the difference between accurate and inaccurate reporting.

Media will not be permitted on club property without the prior approval of the executive. This applies to television, radio, print media and photographers. As Ranelagh Gaels does not at the time of writing have a traditional grounds/clubhouse set-up this will need to be managed on a case by case basis.

The GAA advice is that the club issue a statement on its website/social media and then direct all media inquiries to it, thus saving the need to engage repeatedly with media enquiries.

If the club, in particular the PRO would rather not deal with any media enquiries (as has been the case in some very high-profile incidents) this responsibility can be passed on to county level, or national level.

NORMAL CLUB ROUTINES:

The club will maintain as many scheduled activities as practical in the aftermath of any critical incident, including a sudden death/suspected suicide.

Should postponements be unavoidable normal routine will be restored as soon as possible, including training and match schedules. Regular and open communication about returning to training/matches will be maintained with those most closely impacted – including bereaved families.

While motivation and morale may be understandably low among those most closely impacted, training and matches provide a reassuring structure and routine as well as access to trusted support networks during uncertain times.

Before returning to formal training or competitive matches an informal kick or puck-about may provide an opportunity to release some of the physical and emotional tension and stress brought on by a critical incident, while easing players back onto the field of play.

Naturally, individuals will be allowed to return at their own pace.

GUARDS OF HONOUR:

If a guard of honour is requested by the family of a deceased person the club will facilitate this. If juveniles are to participate, they will be supported by adults, with a parent/guardian standing with them or members of an adult team alternately placed between them.

Participating in any guard of honour will always be optional and at the discretion of an individual or parent/guardian.

PUBLIC VIGIL:

A public vigil can offer the wider community an opportunity to show support and solidarity with a club/family that has been bereaved through a critical incident.

However, they can also bring some challenges such as:

The burden of managing a vigil can prove stressful for club officers and volunteers during an already emotional and exhausting time.

They can attract significant media attention, some of which may be intrusive/unwanted.

Vigils can be highly emotional experiences for some people. This includes those directly impacted by the bereavement but also young people for whom this is their first such experience.

There is also the consideration that it will set a precedent in the club – will vigils be held following all subsequent tragic deaths?

The hosting of a vigil should only be done at the family's request, and other options to bring bereaved teammates together in a more intimate setting than a vigil should be explored first.

Particular care and attention must be given to all younger club members in the event of a vigil.

If the club does decide to host a vigil help can be sought from the local Community Policing unit.

If a vigil is organised by another group (school/scouts etc) the club may wish to advise club members of this.

MEMORIALS:

While memorials are a common way of paying respect to a lost loved one, they also bring with them some considerations such as the wishes/customs/religion of the family.

If a physical memorial (photo with candles, etc.) is placed on club grounds/in the clubhouse it should be done with the family's consent, including a planned timeline for removal and an assigned person to keep the area neat.

The retiring of a jersey is a common expectation when a prominent sports person passes away. In the case of an amateur club such as Ranelagh Gaels it would be appropriate for the first match back were a player to have lost his/her life. However, anything beyond that timeframe would be impractical.

Useful guidance on memorials/vigils:

<https://www.publichealth.hscni.net/sites/default/files/2018-09/>

[Memorial%20Advice%20for%20Communities%20Groups%20and%20Schools%20A4%2009_18_FINAL.pdf](#)

Review

This Critical Incident Response Plan will be reviewed at yearly intervals, within 2 months of a critical incident and/or when there is a change to the team members involved.

The review date will be recorded on the plan and a copy of the plan will be sent to each member of the response team and the club secretary after each major amendment.

Useful references

https://www.gaa.ie/api/images/image/upload/t_q-best/ngebrt0hshk48ksrr516.pdf

https://www.gaa.ie/api/images/image/upload/t_q-best/qa82fmzyh8lniqnkhpv.pdf

Ranelagh Gaels Critical Incident Response Team

Team Role & Name

Contact

Lead liaison:

Harry Magee

087 2631920

Alternative Lead liaison:

Louise Donohoe

086 0638581

Support team:

Caroline Chambers

087 2817946

Tim Gill

087 9793532

Social Media/Media liaison*:

Sean O' Reilly

085 1198563

Family Liaison:

Will be decided upon on a case by case basis. The CIR team will nominate one person to liaise directly with the impacted family or families, preferably someone known to them. In the absence of an obvious person within the club the role will fall to the Chairperson of the club.

Useful GAA Contacts:

County Health & Well-being Chair, chair.hwc.dublin@gaa.ie

County Chairperson, 01-8312099 / info@dublingaa.ie

County PRO, 01-8312099 / info@dublingaa.ie

Community & Health Department Croke Park, 01-8658600 / community.health@gaa.ie

Other organisations/contacts that may be required:

An Garda Siochana

Rathmines Garda Station, 01-6699499

Donnybrook Garda Station, 01-6669200

Rathmines/Terenure Community Policing: Robert Reid, robert.reid@garda.ie

Donnybrook Community Policing: Kieran O' Neill, kieran.a.oneill@garda.ie

Kevin Street Garda Policing: Shane Conlon, Shane.j.conlon. 01 6669467

HSE

Niamh Crudden, Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, 086 2535529

Karolina, Suicide Bereavement Liaison Officer, 0818 111126 / sblo.referrals@pieta.ie

Local HSE facilities

SVUH, 01-2214000

St James Hospital, 01-4103000

Out of Hours, Luke Doc, 01-6699499

Pieta House therapeutic bereavement support service:

<https://www.pieta.ie/how-we-can-help/bereavement-support-counselling/suicide-bereavement-therapy/>

Bernardo's bereavement service, 01 4732110

<https://barnardos.ie/support-and-information/work-with-families/bereavement-services/>

Samaritans, telephone 116 123

www.yourmentalhealth.ie

*It is important to note that while the club PRO is the person designated to deal with media they do not have to undertake this job if they feel the burden is too great. They can decide on a case by case basis and can instead defer to the County PRO.

Ranelagh Gaels is committed to following this Critical Incident Response Plan as needed.

Club Chairperson _____

Healthy Club Officer _____

Date _____

Planned review date _____