

## Critical Incident Plan 2021-2022



St Louis Dundalk cherishes its close community spirit and warm and respectful atmosphere. The school has formulated a number of policies and procedures to be followed with a view to ensuring the physical and psychological safety of both staff and students during the normal course of the school day. Occasionally, an incident occurs which is termed 'critical' which cannot be dealt with in the normal way.

All partners in the school community -staff, students, parents and members of the wider community, are likely to be seriously affected by it. Such a crisis must be managed in order to provide a sense of continuity and order, while at the same time providing maximum care for the affected parties. This plan offers guidelines – all of which might or might not be followed, as each different crisis will demand a different set of responses.

St. Louis Dundalk has drawn a provisional Critical Incident Management Plan as one element of the school's policies and plans.

### **Definition of the term 'critical incident'**

The staff and management of St. Louis Dundalk 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
- A serious 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
- A traumatic event involving the school

This list is not exhaustive.

### **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 enhance a return to normality as soon as possible.

Creation of a coping supportive and caring ethos in the school.

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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

Plans and procedures are in place to ensure that our school is as safe as possible.

- Evacuation plan formulated
- Regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Pre-opening supervision in the school
- At break and lunch times teachers are on supervision duty in the school building and in the school grounds.
- A safety statement is in force and reviewed regularly

### Psychological safety

The management and staff of St. Louis Dundalk 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
- Resources on difficulties affecting the post primary school student are available on school website and Guidance social media account
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety
- Staff are informed in the area of suicide awareness and some are trained in interventions for suicidal students
- The school has developed links with a range of external agencies – School Completion Programme (SCP), PPFs, NEPS, CAMHS, Department of Education, TUSLA

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- Additional supports 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
- There is a care system in place in the school using the "Continuum of Support" approach which is outlined in the NEPS documents published in 2010 for post primary schools. See also Student Support Teams in Post Primary Schools 2021  
file:///C:/Users/miche/Downloads/40693\_a844644845444034bb6a33b2e90cb2f2.pdf
- 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
- Staff are informed about how to access support for themselves. (Appendix 3)

### **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 CIMT (Critical Incident Management Team) have access to resource documents available to schools on [www.education.ie](http://www.education.ie) and [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) including:

- Responding to Critical Incidents Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)

The members of the team will meet annually to review and update the plan.

Each member of the team has a dedicated critical incident folder.

This contains a copy of the plan and materials particular to their role, to be used in the event of an incident.

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### Team leader: Michelle Dolan, Principal

- 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
- In the case of bereavement liaises with the bereaved family

### Garda liaison- Michelle Dolan, Principal

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

### Staff liaison- Michele Dolan, Mary Gilmore ( Deputy if Principal not available ) Dara Mee ( Guidance Counsellor or NEPS representative.

- 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 info below:

*The EAS provides advice to employees on a range of issues including wellbeing, legal, financial, bereavement, conflict, mediation etc. The EAS also provides advice and support to managers and delivers interventions to help them deal with health and wellbeing issues in the workplace.*

*Where appropriate, short-term counselling is available to employees and their family members. A family member includes a spouse, civil partner or dependent, where the family member can be described as a person over the age of 18 and residing at the family home. In addition, online cognitive behavioural therapy is also provided to employees.*

*A bespoke wellbeing portal and app is available offering a host of online services with access to live chats, videos, podcasts and blogs on topics around mental health, family life, exercise and nutrition. The platform is available via Web, iOS App or Android App.*

*As part of the EAS, a Mental Health Promotion Manager is also available to develop and deliver evidence based mental health and wellbeing initiatives. Spectrum.Life also provides a series of webinars and presentations to promote wellbeing in schools.*

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### *How do I access the EAS?*

The EAS is accessible through the dedicated **Free-phone Confidential Helpline** at **1800 411 057** and is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. Alternatively, text 'Hi' to 087 369 0010 to avail of EAS support on SMS & WhatsApp.

Employees can access the Spectrum.Life wellbeing portal as follows:

- Sign Up link at: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login?org=yIVIIU17>
- Organisation code will be pre-populated. If not, organisation code is yIVIIU17
- Log in thereafter at: <https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/login>
- Access the Wellbeing Webinar Calendar via the online portal at:  
<https://wellbeingtogether.spectrum.life/personal/my-company>

Access the weekly Wellbeing Live Events at: <https://wellbeing.spectrum.life/wellbeing-series-2020/>

### **Student liaison - Dara Mee, relevant Year Head / programme coordinator, Deputy Principal**

- At post-primary level, coordinates 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

### **Community/agency liaison M Gilmore Deputy Principal**

- 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- Michelle Dolan, Mary Gilmore, Dara Mee, Year Head**

- In the case of bereavement, visits the bereaved family with the team leader
- Arranges parent meetings, if appropriate.
- May facilitate such meetings, and manage 'questions and answers'
- Manages the 'consent' issues in accordance with agreed school plan
- 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

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- Provides appropriate materials for parents (from their critical incident folder)

### Media liaison -Michelle Dolan & Orla Drumgoole

- 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 where relevant (as agreed by school management)

### Administrators

Theresa Dullaghan/ Maureen O' Connell- School secretaries.

#### Role

- Maintenance of up to date telephone numbers of
- Parents or guardians and Teachers
- Emergency services
- Takes telephone calls and notes those for follow up
- Ensures that templates are on the school system in advance and ready for adaptation
- Prepares and sends out letters, emails and texts
- Photocopies materials needed
- Maintains records

### Record keeping

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.

Mrs. Theresa Dullaghan and Maureen O' Connell, school secretaries will have a key role in receiving and logging telephone calls, sending letters, photocopying materials, etc.

### Confidentiality and good name considerations:

Management and staff of St.Louis Dundalk 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.

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### Critical Incident Rooms

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

Room	Designated Purpose:
Principal's office	Private, sensitive conversations with individuals / small family or staff groups meeting Principal
Parlour	Private , sensitive conversations with individuals / larger family or staff groups Base for Visiting Counsellors/ NEPS
Staffroom	Meet the staff. Staff congregate to support
Canteen	Area for students to congregate & have a hot drink
Chapel hall	Larger assemblies- Classes /Year Groups
Guidance Library / Guidance Office	Emotional Support meetings
Deputy's Office	Meeting students

### Consultation and communication regarding the plan

Our school's final plan in relation to responding to critical incidents will be presented to all staff. Each member of the critical incident team will have a personal copy of the plan. The plan will be shared with all stakeholders on our website.

All new and temporary staff will be informed of the details of the plan in their induction course.

<https://assets.gov.ie/40700/21b5193521d147c890b4309fe4bfce9d.pdf>

[https://www.cypsc.ie/\\_fileupload/Neps%20Critical%20Incidents%20Resource%20Material%20Schools.pdf](https://www.cypsc.ie/_fileupload/Neps%20Critical%20Incidents%20Resource%20Material%20Schools.pdf)