



east glendalough school

CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT PLAN

A CRITICAL INCIDENT IS ANY INCIDENT OR SEQUENCE OF EVENTS WHICH OVERWHELMS THE NORMAL COPING MECHANISMS OF THE SCHOOL.

Aim

The aim of this plan 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.

Policy

The following policy is based on guidelines developed by NEPS in their 2016 document, *Responding to Critical Incidents*. It also builds on previous policies which in turn drew on the Irish Association of Pastoral Care in Education. It is designed to assist the school in responding in an effective way to a serious crisis within the school. There may be many kinds of serious crisis; examples include death or suicide of a student or staff member, serious accident in the school or on a trip, severe violence associated with the school or the disappearance of a student. The Principal will decide what constitutes a serious crisis necessitating the implementation of this policy.

Reference in this document may be made to the following support documents, all of which are helpful and available on the relevant websites:

- Responding to Critical Incidents: Guidelines and Resources for Schools (NEPS 2016)
- Well-Being in Primary Schools - Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion (DES, DOH, HSE 2015)
- Well-Being in Post-Primary Schools Guidelines for Mental Health Promotion and Suicide Prevention (DES, DOH, HSE 2013)
- Suicide Prevention in the Community - A Practical Guide (HSE 2011)
- Suicide Prevention in Schools: Best Practice Guidelines (IAS, National Suicide Review Group (2002)

Prevention

Measures are in place to underpin the safety and wellbeing of our community. The School is conscious of its role in creating a supportive and caring ethos, taking in physical safety and psychological and emotional safety. In particular, reference may be made to

- EGS' Safety Statement
- EGS' Wellbeing plan
- EGS' SPHE plan
- EGS' Guidance plan
- EGS' suite of Child Protection Policies
- National Employee Assistance Service (Inspire)

- NEPS: *Responding to Critical Incidents*
- *Friends for Life* programme (2nd Year SPHE)

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 plans and regular fire drills occur
- Fire exits and extinguishers are regularly checked
- Code of Behaviour
- Safety Statement
- Regular meetings of School Safety Committee

Psychological safety

The management and staff of East Glendalough School 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.
- 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 the primary/post primary school student are available
- Information is provided on mental health in general and such specific areas as signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety, taken from mental health professionals, looking at positive mental health (e.g. AWARE).
- 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: Lucena Clinic, Aware, NEPS, TUSLA, CAMHS,
- 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 Circular 0023/2010
- The school has a clear anti-bullying policy 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.
- Students who are identified as being at risk are referred to the Guidance Counsellor, Chaplain 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.
- A whole school Guidance Plan is in place.

Managing an incident

1. CIMT: Critical Incident Management Team

The members of the Team are selected on a voluntary basis and remain in their roles until the plan is re-evaluated. The Team will meet annually to review and update the CIMP where necessary. The Team will also meet to review any incident where the CIMP was enacted.

The CIMTeam will be assigned to the following roles, as appropriate, during any Critical Incident.

- Team Leader
- Garda Liaison
- Staff Liaison
- Student Liaison
- Community/Agency Liaison
- Parent/Guardian Liaison
- Media Liaison
- Administrator

2. Record keeping

Each CIMTeam member will keep a record of communications relevant to the incident. The School Administration Staff will keep a log of phone calls, sending letters, providing materials for meetings, etc¹.

3. Confidentiality and good name

The management and staff of East Glendalough School have 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. Members of school staff will bear this in mind, and will seek to ensure that students do so also. For instance, the term 'suicide' will not be used unless there is confirmed information that this was the cause of death and the family have consented to its use. Terms such as 'tragic' or 'sudden' death may be used instead. Similarly the word 'murder' should not be used until it is legally established; the term 'violent death' may be used.

4. Critical Incident Rooms

- Staff room – used to meet staff
- Assembly Hall – used to meet large groups of students or parents
- Offices – used as appropriate for smaller meetings with students, parents, staff or agencies
- ASD Unit Room 27 – used as a CIMT meeting and co-ordination room.
- ASD Unit Room 28 – used as a quiet space for students as needed

5. Consultation

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 the Principal. The plan will be updated annually in October.

¹ *It is particularly important that the work to be done is facilitated by good organisational policies, so lists of telephone numbers will be made available immediately by office staff to those involved. Organisers of school trips and outings will ensure that a list of all pupils and teachers involved, including the mobile telephone numbers of teachers, will be left with the Secretary prior to a trip or outing.*

RESPONSES:

Depending on the nature of the incident, judgements will have to be made regarding the appropriate response. The following is intended as a guide. Additional assistance may be sought from *Responding to Critical Incidents* NEPS.

A. IMMEDIATE RESPONSE (SHORT TERM ACTIONS - 1ST DAY)

1. Establish Facts

It is important to obtain accurate information about the incident, otherwise rumours will take over and add to the distress of those involved. Gardaí may be contacted if appropriate. This is to be done by senior management.

- What happened, where and when?
- What is the extent of the injuries?
- What is the location of those injured and not injured?
- How many are involved and what are their names?
- Is there a risk of further injury?
- What agencies have been contacted already? Contact appropriate agencies. See Appendices 1-4, and *Responding to Critical Incidents*. Agencies where student(s) are clients may need to be informed.

2. Convene a meeting with Critical Incident Management Team to discuss the following:

- Use *Responding to Critical Incidents* 4.3: Agenda for CIMT (pp. 22-3).
- Assign CIMT roles
- Agree a statement of the facts for staff, students, parents and the media. There should be a written version of this.
- Appoint ONE person to deal with enquiries from the press – usually the Principal [proceed with great caution].
- Send a letter home to parents. See Appendix 4 and *Responding to Critical Incidents*.
- Delegate responsibilities to the Critical Incident Management Team.
- Appoint one person to handle phone enquiries and to deal with the media.
- Ensure that a phone line remains open and available for enquiries.
- Organise the timetable/routine for the day. (Adhering to the normal school routine is important if this is possible).
- Organise a staff meeting as soon as possible.
- Organise the supervision of students during any staff meetings.
- Decide whether an outside professional be invited to the staff meeting.
- Decide whether to contact school network for additional support².

² Note: Where necessary, Guidance Counsellors of schools may be released by their Principals to attend affected schools for a period. The advantage of such co-operation is the immediate presence in the school of a number of additional trained counsellors. The visiting counsellors will work under the direction of the counsellor of the school affected, who will consult with the Principal and then arrange their most effective deployment. The Principal may also decide to involve the NEPS psychologist for the school.

3. **Hold Staff Meeting**

It may be necessary to do this in two shifts therefore ensuring staff are available for support to students and for cover at all times. Remember to include auxiliary staff. The areas which might be covered are listed below.

- An account of the facts as known.
- An opportunity for staff to express their views and feelings.
- Discussion with the staff about how the facts will be shared with students.
- An outline of the routine for the day.
- Information for staff about which outside agencies have been contacted, or are involved and the supports that will be put in place for both students and staff.
- Information pack to be given to all teaching staff (appendices).
- A procedure for identifying vulnerable students.
- The weight of responsibility surrounding a crisis may be enormous. Staff should be aware of the need to support senior staff who are dealing directly with the crisis [NB: the onus is on the CIMT to share only verified, factual information with the whole staff. This may prove frustrating, but is part of standard procedure].

4. **Inform parents/guardians**

Children directly involved

Parents/guardians should be contacted as soon as possible and this first contact will need to be handled with great sensitivity. The steps involved are set out below

- Agree who should share information with parents and how this should be done.
- Make a list of parents/guardians who have been contacted and those who still need to be told to avoid giving duplication of messages
- Give parents/guardians relevant and factual information
- Set a room aside for distressed students to meet their parents/guardians.
- Provide support to parents who are on their own when they arrive at the school
- Give telephone numbers for enquiries

Children not directly involved

The parents of other children in the school should be informed of the incident and that their child may be upset. Send a letter stating the facts and brief details of the incident. It may not be appropriate at this point to disclose the names of those involved (see Appendix 4 for sample letter).

5. **Inform students**

- Ideally, students should be informed in their tutor groups by their tutor.
- Give facts and avoid speculation. This will help to dispel rumours which can cause unnecessary stress.
- Allow pupils to ask questions and express feelings.
- Help students realise that overwhelming emotions are natural and normal following a critical incident. (See resource documents for handout)
- Tutors should try to identify vulnerable students who may need extra care or to go home.
- Focus on the friends of a bereaved student as they can be the best source of support. Often the bereaved student may not wish to speak to an adult and may

rely heavily on friends. These friends may need support as they attempt to find ways to be of help.

6. Organise the reunion of vulnerable students with their parents, if necessary

- Contact parents of vulnerable children, asking them to collect their children.
- Inform students that their parents/guardians will be collecting them as soon as possible.
- Facilitate distressed students and their parents by providing a private room where they can meet following an incident. This could be a very emotional time. Provide tea/coffee.
- Where appropriate offer help with transport, especially for younger children.
- Make contact with the bereaved family.

7. Dealing with the media

In the event of a very serious incident there may be media interest. Media enquiries should be dealt with by one person, normally the Principal or Chairperson of the Board of Management. However, in some instances it may be useful to brief staff and students and advise them on dealing with unsolicited media attention. The School may need to consider setting aside a room for the media.

If necessary, the Principal will prepare a written statement to include:

- the facts about the incident
- what has been done already
- what is going to be done
- positive information or comments about the deceased person(s).

Some points to remember if you are asked to give a live interview:

- consider assigning the task to someone skilled or familiar with dealing with the media
- take some time to prepare
- remember that everything you say is on record and, therefore, keep it simple, factual and brief
- decline if you are not ready or think it inappropriate.

8. Others to be informed, as necessary

- Board of Management
- Parents' Association
- School website/social media updates – see Appendix 8 on dealing with Social Media

B. MEDIUM-TERM ACTIONS (24 – 72 Hours)

1. Review the events of the first 24 hours

- Reconvene Critical Incident Management Team. Possible discussion areas might be:
 - Need for outside agencies
 - Funeral arrangements
 - Handling of media
- Have review staff meeting with all staff if necessary. Ensure all staff are kept up to date on any developments.
- Establish contact with absent staff and pupils.
- Arrange support for individual students, groups of students, and parents, if necessary.
- Arrange individual or group support meetings with NEPS personnel if necessary. Arrange parental permission. (See Appendix 6 and *Responding to Critical Incidents* for sample letter for parental permission)
- Update media, if necessary.

2. Plan visits to injured / bereaved

- Name key person(s) to visit home/hospital.
- If possible, representatives of the school should visit the home of the bereaved. If students request to visit the home, the school should phone ahead to check that this is appropriate. Visiting the bereaved may be distressing - support those involved.

3. Liaise with the family regarding funeral arrangements/memorial service

- Designate staff member to liaise with family, to extend sympathy and clarify the family's wishes regarding the school's involvement in funeral/memorial service.
- Decide what form of representation is appropriate. It is essential to consult the family concerned. Do not presume that the bereaved family will appreciate a very public presence of the school.
- Have regard for different religious traditions and faiths.
- Prepare students ahead of the funeral. For some this may be the first occasion they have been exposed to a major grief.
- Take time after the event to de-brief students.
- For those students who wish, encourage and assist them to write a personal message of sympathy. Consider also a common expression from students and/or staff.
- Check out, perhaps with the funeral directors, the arrangements concerning floral tributes

4. Plan for the reintegration of students and staff (eg. absentees, injured, siblings, close relatives etc.)

- Name key person(s) to liaise with above on their return to school.
E.g. presence of Form Teacher/Year Head/SNA in locker area on return.

5. Attendance and participation at funeral/memorial service

- Decide this in accordance with parents' wishes and school management decisions and in consultation with close school friends.

6. School closure

- Request a decision on this from the Chairperson of the Board of Management.

7. Staff assistance

- Assign and announce that an identified member of the CIMT will be available for staff to talk to about the Critical Incident. The School may make counselling available as necessary.

8. Parent information

- As necessary, keep the parent body (of the whole school or of specific year group(s) as appropriate) informed of developments and plans.

C. LONG-TERM ACTIONS

The following is a selection of the possibilities worthy of consideration, but it is not an exhaustive list.

- Monitor students for signs of continuing distress
- Ensure new staff or pupils are informed of the critical incident and policy and procedures in place
- Consider if a special day of reflection would benefit the class affected by a tragedy.
- Consider whether a bereavement programme from an outside agency would be of assistance.
- Review of curricular provision, e.g. in RE, SPHE CSPE classes in the area of change, loss, death and crisis issues. Courses which raise the issue of family (languages, History, Geography, etc.) should also be reviewed.
- An annual remembrance service for all those connected to the school community who have died. Students, staff and parents can be encouraged to record the names of those they would like remembered.
- The dedication of a tree, special garden, piece of artwork, notice board to recall those who have died. A 'memory book' for the family(ies) involved.

D. EVALUATION AND REVIEW

Evaluate response to incident and amend the Critical Incident Management Plan appropriately. This policy will be reviewed after an incident, should there ever be one, or every five years in the absence of an incident. The policy should be reviewed yearly to ensure all information is up to date.

- What went well?
- Where were the gaps?
- What was most/least helpful?
- Have all the necessary onward referrals to support services been made?
- Is there any unfinished business?

Introduction

When a person dies through suicide, those who know the person experience a deep sense of shock. The unexpectedness of the death and the taboo associated with suicide can leave a school community feeling unsure of how to proceed. The key to this is planning.

The term 'suicide' should not be used until it has been "established categorically that the student's or teacher's death was as a result of suicide" (ASTI Guidelines 1997). The phrases 'tragic death' or 'sudden death' may be used instead.

The following is a guide to how a school can support the bereaved family, school staff and students.

Family

- A staff member should contact the family to establish the exact facts and the family's wishes about how the death should be described.
- Acknowledge their grief and loss.
- Organise a home visit by two staff members.
- Consult with the family regarding the appropriate support from the school e.g. at the funeral service.

Staff

- Convene a staff meeting to brief staff on the above details. It may be necessary to do this in two shifts therefore ensuring staff are available for support to students and for cover at all times. Remember to include auxiliary staff.
- Students need to be with people they know and trust. If possible, it is better if the teachers provide support for the students. The external "expert" visitor should therefore be primarily used to brief the teachers.
- Help teachers to prepare for breaking the news to students. Close friends and relatives of the deceased in the school need to be told first. This needs to be done in a private location.
- Outline the possible reactions
- Provide resources/information from the NEPS documentation on dealing with the students in the classroom and on reactions to grief.
- Identify high-risk students and what supports are available.
- Remind them of the school's critical incident plan.
- Decide on the strategy to deal with queries from parents/guardians. Prepare a letter setting out the facts, how the school is dealing with the events and how parents or guardians can support their child.
- Ensure that a quiet place can be made available for students/staff.
- Hold further staff briefings as necessary to update information, to offer support and to further identify high-risk students.

Appendix 2

Critical Incident Management Team

Chairman of Board of Management – Geoffrey Perrin

Principal – Craig Petrie

Deputy Principal – Vivienne Weir

Guidance Counsellor – Mary O’Callaghan

Chaplain – Rev Sheila Zeitsman

Admin Staff – Annette Keenan, Sally Carton

Year Head(s) – Colette Coonan, John McGettigan, Tom Heaney

Form Teacher(s) – as appropriate

Dear Parents

I need to inform you about a very sad event that has happened.

*(*EDIT*Give accurate information about the incident, but avoid using the word murder as this will not be established until the court case is completed).*

We have shared this information and had discussions with all of our students so that they know what has happened. School staff members have been available for students on an on-going basis today. Other support personnel (**EDIT*including psychologists etc, according to actual arrangements*) are available to advise staff. This support will continue to be available to advise staff in their support of students(**EDIT*if appropriate insert how long*).

The death of any young person is tragic, but a violent death is even more difficult. It is hard to have to teach our children about the violence in our world and to accept that sometimes we do not have the power to prevent it.

This death may cause a variety of reactions in your child. Some children/young people may be afraid for their own life and for the lives of those they love. Take time to listen to their fears and reassure them that what has happened is rare.

We have enclosed some additional information that may be useful during this time.

The media are in the vicinity of the school and may approach you or your children. You need not respond to their questions if you are approached. We will not allow the media to interview your child at school and our general advice is that you should not let your children be interviewed. They are not mature enough to judge what to say and may say something they will regret later.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

(If planned) A support meeting for parents is planned for (date, time and place). At that time we can talk further about how to help ourselves and our children.

Our thoughts are with (**EDIT* family name*) and with each of you.

Yours sincerely

Craig Petrie

DATE

Dear Parent/Guardian

The school has experienced (**EDIT* the sudden death, accidental injury, etc.*) of Name of student(s). We are deeply saddened by the deaths/events.

(**EDIT* Brief details of the incident, and in the event of a death, perhaps some positive remembrances of the person lost.*)

Our thoughts are with (**EDIT* family name*).

We have support structures in place to help your child cope with this tragedy. (**EDIT* Elaborate*).

It is possible that your child may have some feelings and questions that he/she may like to discuss with you. It is important to give factual information that is appropriate to their age.

You can help your child by taking time to listen and by encouraging them to express their feelings. All children are different and will express their feelings in different ways. It is not uncommon for children to have difficulty concentrating or to be fearful, anxious, or irritable. They may become withdrawn, cry, complain of physical aches and pains, have difficulty sleeping or have nightmares. Some may not want to eat. These are generally short term reactions. Over the course of the days to come, please keep an eye on your child and allow him/her to express their feelings without criticism.

Although classes will continue as usual, I anticipate that the next few days will be difficult for everyone.

(**EDIT* Optional*) An information night for parents is planned for (**EDIT* date, time and place*). At that time, further information about how to help children in grief will be given.

We have enclosed some information which you may find useful in helping your child through this difficult time.

Young people frequently turn to social media to see what others are saying, or to find out more. At these times it is important that you monitor their use and engage with them about what they read. We urge you to emphasise and reinforce the need to be extremely sensitive and careful about what they post.

If you would like advice you may contact the following people at the school. (**EDIT* Details*).

Yours sincerely,

Craig Petrie

APPENDIX 6

LETTER TO PARENTS (3)

(sample letter requesting consent for involvement of outside professional/s)

Date

Dear,

Following the recent (*tragedy, death of x*) we have arrange professional support for students in school who need particular help. (*X.....*) is available to help us with this work. This support will usually consist of talking to children, wither in small groups or on a one-to-one basis and offering reassurance and advice as appropriate.

Your son/daughter has been identified as one of the students who would benefit from meeting with the psychologist. If you would like your child to receive this support please sign the attached slip and return it to the school by

If you would like further information on the above or to talk to the psychologist, please indicate this on the slop or telephone the school.

Yours sincerely,

Craig Petrie
Principal

.....

I/We consent to having our daughter/son met by a psychologist employed by the Minister for Education and Science.

I/We understand that my daughter/son may met the psychologist(s) in an individual or group session depending on the arrangements which are thought to be most appropriate.

Name of student: _____

Class/Year _____

Date of Birth: _____

I would like my daughter/son to avail of the support being offered by the psychologist.

Signed (Parent/Guardian)

APPENDIX 7

SAMPLE LETTER TO STAFF
(in the event of a tragedy)

Date

Dear Staff Member,

Please come to the staff room immediately at the end of this period for an emergency meeting.

Please advise your students to

Yours sincerely,

Craig Petrie
Principal

Date:

Name of Student:

Male:

Female:

Form:

Date of Birth:

Form Teacher:

School Staff Members involved in situation:

Principal informed: TIME _____

Presenting Situation:

Level of Risk:

- 1. Observation of warning signs/behaviours**
- 2. Written or verbal intent of suicide**
- 3. Suicide attempt**

Parent/Guardian Notification:

Date:

Time:

Response:

Recommendations to parents/guardians:

Follow up scheduled:

Date:

By:

Signed _____ Date:

Position _____

Appendix 8:

GUIDANCE ON SOCIAL MEDIA USE AND CRITICAL INCIDENTS

Taken from 'Responding to a Critical Incident'

Social media is now part of everyday communication and information sharing. Most students are avid and competent users. Social media messages speed up the rate at which information is shared. This can have a significant influence on the behaviour of young people during a critical incident. Some social media communication may occur without the knowledge of school staff that leads to distress among students or their parents/guardians.

The following information may help schools to consider issues related to social media use when dealing with a critical incident.

- It is essential that schools take account of the need to have competency in the use of social media among management and staff.
- If the members of the CIMT have particular concerns or fears about social media, they should consult those familiar with its use. Senior-students e.g. sixth-year members of the student council could also be asked for help.
- Normalising social media use by the students during a critical incident is very important.
- It is essential that school management, staff and students understand the role of social media, and its positive and negative aspects. A positive disposition to social media by the school may encourage thoughtful use by students during a critical incident.
- All school staff should follow agreed online professional protocols as prescribed by the New Code of Professional Conduct by Teachers i.e. "Teachers should ensure that any communication with pupils/students, colleagues, parents/guardians, school management and others is appropriate, including communication via electronic media, such as email, texting and social media etc." (The Teacher Council, 2012). The CIMT may also remind staff, students and other relevant community members about their AUP during times of crises.
- When dealing with a critical incident it is advised that schools act quickly and with caution. A message could be placed on the school website and on any other school social media account along the following lines: School can use social media to provide up to date information for all concerned throughout the various stages of the incident.
- Positive messages and appropriate advice for young people and their parents/guardians can be provided. One important message would be to remind parents/guardians to discuss social media use with their children and monitor use more actively following a crisis. 'You may be aware of a recent event within the school community. We ask you to respect the family's privacy and sensitivities by considering if you should post any comments, especially on social media. We will inform you through the normal channels of any relevant developments.'

- It is important that CIMT members are familiar with safe messaging guidelines and the document Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide and Self-harm. Safe messaging guidelines should be followed when sending messages to staff, students, community or the media following a death by suicide.
- Media personnel if making contact with the school during a critical incident should be provided with the guidelines.
- Should the need arise during a crisis, schools can contact the Department of Education and Skills Press Office for advice and support or in the case of Education and Training Board schools the Board head office.
- Young people often post Rest-In-Peace (RIP) messages on social media sites when tragedies occur. These posts can be heartfelt and emotional particularly in cases of death by suicide. Messages such as “I miss you and will see you soon” or “I will follow in your path” should cause concern and be followed up with the individual concerned. The death by suicide of an individual may influence others. Young people are especially prone to contagion. Those who are emotionally vulnerable may act on suicidal impulses.
- Activity on social networking sites during a critical incident can be a source of potentially important information, such as suicide pacts, identification of vulnerable groups or individual young people who may be at increased risk of suicide. Given privacy restrictions to people’s personal web pages, distressing information may be posted without the knowledge of parents or school management. It is likely that users will block access so activity of this nature will not be accessible to everyone. Monitoring sites raises issues of privacy and surveillance. Schools are not advised to engage in monitoring. However, should schools become aware of inappropriate posts by students, they could inform the parents/guardians and encourage them to request that it is deleted. The easiest way to have a post removed is for the person who originally posted it to delete it from their account or request its removal. Service providers will not usually remove posts unless content is contrary to their AUP.
- Avoid linking to or mentioning the names of websites that encourage or glamorise suicide. Helpful websites offering support are listed at www.ias.ie and www.samaritans.org/ireland/links.
- Try to exercise care and judgment in the creation of news stories that will appear online, as they can often be surrounded by adverts and commentary which are outside the control of the author. Additional features on the page can create a negative context, allowing, for example, adverts promoting depression aids to appear alongside articles on mental health. Add hyperlinks to sources of support to ensure that people in distress can access useful resources quickly.
- Consider promoting www.samaritans.org within the UK and Ireland, or our worldwide equivalent, www.befrienders.org, beyond these regions.
- webwise.ie is an internet safety initiative funded by the DES, focused on raising awareness of online safety issues and good practice among students, their parents/guardians and teachers. www.webwise.ie

The following advice for journalists is provided in the Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide and Self-harm. The internet has created additional opportunities and challenges for journalists due to the speed and ease of accessing and publishing information. Points of view can now be presented more quickly and easily but sometimes without review or factual basis. It can be difficult for some readers to understand the distinction between what is fact and what is opinion.

If you are posting your story on a news website or blog please consider the following points:

- The ability to comment on articles or blog posts gives readers the opportunity to glamorise suicide or present controversial opinions about suicidal tendencies and mental health.
- The relative anonymity of these comments can encourage debates that are inappropriate for a news website, and potentially damaging to other readers.
- Responsible websites ensure that the terms and conditions each commentator agrees to when contributing online are explicit in what constitutes inappropriate material, and how it will be dealt with. In addition, site owners and moderators should understand the implications of allowing these comments to be published on their website.
- Wherever possible, attempt to educate your audience to understand how to use the feedback section with full consideration for everyone's health, safety and wellbeing, and the right of the publisher to remove inappropriate content.
- Consider making it clear to users that feedback services are moderated, whether manually or electronically.