



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date:
August 2023

Policy No.48

Issued: February 2022

Policy Statement

Links Childcare recognises that emergency situations, usually occur with little or no warning and can result in confusion and devastation. The outcome of a critical incident is dependent on how well the people involved have planned and prepared for such occurrences. The purpose of this plan, therefore, is to address basic emergency planning and response, for a range of childcare emergencies that may occur within the crèche setting. This policy is available to all on www.linkschildcare.ie (<https://linkschildcare.ie/about-us/our-policies/>) or contact us at info@linkschildcare.ie.

Aim

The aim of this plan is to provide guidance to management and staff of Links Childcare on the prevention of and effective response to a critical incident. Its purpose is to

- minimise the risks of a critical incident occurring.
- have an effective approach to responding to critical incidents if they occur.
- identify appropriate support and counselling structures in the event of an incident and afterwards.
- Identify and implement appropriate training and information resources for staff.

Definition of a Critical Incident

A critical incident may be defined as any incident or sequence of events which overwhelms the normal coping mechanisms of the crèche and disrupts the running of the crèche. The following list is indicative of the type of event within the scope of this policy, but is not exhaustive.

- The death of a member of the crèche community through sudden death, accident, permanent injury, terminal illness, suicide.
- A serious accident involving children or staff on or off the school premises.
- Intrusion into the crèche
- A physical attack on staff members or children
- The disappearance of a member of the crèche community.
- An accident / tragedy in the wider community which impacts the crèche.

Emergency Preparedness

Links Childcare is conscious of the need to be prepared and ready for a critical incident, if it is to be handled effectively. This involves assessing the likelihood of a specific critical incident occurring and then developing an emergency plan that identifies the services and resources required to make sure that we are ready and able to respond quickly and effectively in such an event.

Roles and Responsibilities in Emergency Planning and Response

1. The Regional Manager and Crèche Management Team



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

The crèche management team comprises the Manager, the Deputy Manager and the Assistant Manager. This team is advised and supported by the Regional Manager.

- A. Together they will ensure that the following aspects of crèche management are fully compliant with TUSLA regulations:
- First-aid
 - Medical assistance
 - Management and staffing
 - Registering of children
 - Records
 - Information for parents
 - Fire safety measures
 - Premises and facilities
- B. They will develop, with assistance from the planning team, the Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP)
- C. They will train staff and children in the provision of EPP.
- D. They will assign emergency responsibilities to staff members as required, with regard to individual capabilities and normal responsibilities.
- E. They will secure necessary training for staff members.
- F. They will conduct drills and initiate required plan revisions based on drill evaluations.
- G. They will keep parents and staff members informed of emergency preparedness plan revision.
- H. Supervises periodic safety checks of the physical facilities, equipment and vehicles.

2. Crèche Staff

All staff have a role to play in making the EPP as effective as it possibly can be.

Staff will :

- participate in developing the crèche's EPP
- participate in EPP training and drills
- help children develop confidence in their ability to care for themselves
- provide leadership during a period of emergency.

3. The Maintenance Team

Maintenance Personnel will

- participate in developing the crèche's EPP.
- conduct periodic safety inspections of the crèche
- identify shut-off valves and switches for gas, oil, water and electricity.
- provide for emergency shut-off of the ventilating systems (as applicable).



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

4. Chefs

Each crèche has a kitchen and on-site chef. The chef will

- Ensure that suitable, sufficient, nutritious and varied food is available at all times.
- Maintain adequate supplies of non-perishable food and water for emergency use.
- Rotate supplies to ensure freshness.

5. Parents/Guardians

At all times Links Childcare works in tandem with parents/guardians.

Parents/guardians will

- Become familiar with the EPP and procedures they are to follow.
- Know the procedures for picking up their children if an emergency causes the crèche to relocate to another site.
- Ensure that the information the crèche has on the children and parents is current and correct

6. Community

The following agencies can be a source of information and support in the planning and implantation of the EPP:-

- Government Departments
- Emergency Medical Services
- Gardaí
- Fire Department
- Non-governmental agencies
- Individuals with relevant expertise

The Critical Incident Team (CIMT)

In the Event of a critical incident, Links Childcare will immediately convene the management/planning team of key personnel known as the Critical Incident Management Team (C I MT). The composition of the CIMT is as follows:

From Head Office:-

- Director of Operations
- Child Protection Officer
- Director of Support Service



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

At the Crèche Location:-

- Regional Manager
- Manager
- Deputy Manager
- Assistant Manger
- Senior Lead Educarers
- Health and Safety Representative
- Maintenance Manager

Depending on the seriousness of the incident, others may be co-opted to the CIMT if deemed necessary. They may include:-

- NEPS psychologist
- Local Gardaí
- Tusla Advisory Personnel
- Media liaison person

Immediate Action

In the event of a critical incident, the Manager will contact and convene a meeting of the C I MT. The CIMT will put the EPP into operation immediately.

Responsibilities of the CIMT

- Risk assessment of situations which may require emergency action and to which the crèche may be vulnerable (Appendix A)
- Analysis of requirements to address these situations
- Development of an EPP for each critical incident identified
- Establishment of liaison with all relevant emergency services
- 24 hour access to contact details for all children and their families
- 24 hour access to contact details for all relevant staff members needed in the event of a critical instant
- Assisting with implementation of EPP's
- Organisation of practice drills
- Regular review of EPP's

The Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP)

While each crèche will have specific details peculiar to it alone, the following list of essentials will form part of all EPP's at Links Childcare:

- A current list of staff members' names, addresses and contact details for staff and next of kin
- A current list of children including special needs requirements
- A list of attendees
- A current list of parents and second named guardian including contact details



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

- Adequate first aid resources and a current list of staff with first aid training
- A quick reference guide with contact details for the Critical Incident Team and essential services (Appendix B)
- A clearly defined evacuation procedure which identifies pre-designated assembly areas and if required, a relocation shelter site
- Up to date facility floor plans and maps outlining fire exits and location of essential services

When an incident occurs, staff will immediately alert the Crèche manager or Regional Manager. Together (and with advice from HO if there is time) they will determine whether the incident is deemed to be critical. The Manager will lead the emergency response and will be guided by the Critical Incident Action Guide (Appendix E).

Critical Incident Procedures

Immediate Response - Day 1

The immediate response to a critical incident is entirely dependent on the nature of the incident. The following is the general approach used by Links Childcare:

- Identify the nature of the critical incident
- Implement the appropriate emergency preparedness plan
- Contact emergency services
- Delegate immediate first aid to trained staff
- If applicable, secure the area
- Ensure safety and welfare of children and staff
- Notify the critical incident team leader if not on site
- Liaise with emergency services, hospital and medical services
- Contact and inform parents and family members
- Identify children and staff members most closely involved and at risk
- Manage media and publicity

Secondary Response - Days 2 and 3

- Assess the need for support and counselling for those directly and indirectly involved.
- Provide staff, parents and wider community with factual information as appropriate.
- Arrange debriefing for all parents, children and staff most closely involved and at risk.
- Restore the facility to regular routine, curriculum delivery and play, as soon as practicable.
- Complete critical incident report.

Longer Term Response

- Identify any other persons who may be affected by the critical incident and provide access to support services for community members.
- Provide accurate information to parents and staff.
- Arrange a memorial service and occasional worship as appropriate.
- Maintain contact with any injured and affected parties to provide support and to monitor progress.



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

- Monitor staff and children for signs of delayed stress and the onset of post-traumatic stress disorder; providing specialized treatment as necessary.
- Evaluate critical incident and Emergency management plan.
- Be sensitive to anniversaries.
- Manage any possible longer term disturbances e.g. inquests, legal proceedings.

Managing Stress Following a Critical Incident

Links Childcare is acutely aware that Involvement in, or exposure to, abnormal workplace incidents can lead a person to experience distress. It is normal to react emotionally to a critical incident. It is important therefore that staff involved in a critical incident are kept informed and given the opportunity to rest and have time out from their routine duties following such an incident.

The Manager and the HR department will use the following strategies as deemed appropriate to the situation as it evolves:

- Convene a meeting for those involved as soon as possible
- Summarise the incident and clarify uncertainties
- Invite questions and discuss issues of concern
- Show care and support for the individual
- Draw up a plan of action, taking into account the needs of staff
- Make short-term arrangements for work responsibilities
- Ensure that staff are happy to leave the facility and are escorted home if necessary
- Seek expert advice on debriefing.

Communication with the Media

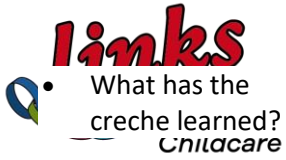
The CIMT at Links Childcare will balance the need for clear and effective communication with the rights of those involved to privacy. Where a critical incident involves issues of a sensitive nature, the CIMT will agree on the information which can be disclosed and that which should only be disclosed on a need to know basis.

There will be a clear direction for staff that communication with the media if deemed necessary will be handled through Head Office and that they must not engage on an individual basis to avoid mixed messages and/or inaccurate information. The importance of the privacy of those involved in the critical incident will be emphasised.

Evaluation and Review

After a critical incident, a meeting of the CIMT will be held to review the critical incident report, the effectiveness of the EPP and to establish what modifications may be required. The essential questions on the agenda for this meeting will be

- What worked? What didn't work?



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

- Were there unforeseen circumstances
- What would we do differently

The evaluation process will incorporate feedback gathered from those affected by the critical incident and an evaluation report will be drawn up.

Review

Management, in consultation with staff, monitors and reviews the effectiveness of this policy yearly, following an critical incident, or as required.

Review Dates:	August 2023		
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LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date:
August 2023

Policy No.48

Issued: February 2022

Appendix B: Emergency Preparedness Risk Assessment

Critical Incident Management Team		Name	Phone No. 1	Phone No. 2
	Director/Manager			
	Staff Member 1			
	Staff Member 2			
	H&S Officer			
	Facilities Manager			
	Parent Representative 1			
	Parent Representative 2			
	Psychologist			
	Media Contact			
	Health Services			

Life-threatening or time-critical emergency		999/112		
	Local Garda Station			
	Ambulance			
	Fire Services			
	Local Doctor			
	Hospital			
	Electricity			
	Water Supplies			
	Gas			
	Priest			
	County Childcare Services			
	HSE Pre-School Services			
	Health and Safety Authority			
	Local Authority			



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date:
August 2023

Policy No.48

Issued: February 2022

Appendix C: Emergency Preparedness Plan

Emergency: Severe cold / ice	
Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Damage to pipe work systems • Damage to premises or plant items exposed • Vehicle accident • Slips and falls
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Frost protection system in place • Heat sources near water tanks • Sourcing of salt supplies in early Autumn • Building is checked when unoccupied during cold spells • Monitoring of weather forecasting • First aid equipment on site • Emailing contact list in place
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Respond to warnings received from media or local authorities • Check facility systems, water, gas etc • Check the building • Contact maintenance re distribution of salt on all external pathways and driveways • Assess Health & Safety risks –structures, sources of heat and/or water compromised, grounds unsafe etc • Risk assess the need for shutdown of services • Use web texting for communication with parents <p>Plumber: _____ Electrician: _____ Facility manager: __</p>
Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full inspection of facilities and grounds • Repair structures as necessary • Liaise with parents in regard to restoration of services • Review emergency preparedness plan



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date:
August 2023

Policy No.48

Issued: February 2022

Emergency: Missing Child/Abduction

Risks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Injury, trauma or death of a child
Preparedness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Security systems in place • Up to date contact details for parents • Registration and log in of all visitors • CCTV monitoring • Staff training • Local protocol in place for field trips • Local procedure in place for child collection • Plan tested annually
Response	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Confirm that the child is missing • Ensure that all other children have been accounted for • Conduct search of building and local area <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inform facility manager/person in charge • Call Emergency services – 999 or 112 • Convene CIMT meeting • Gather information to establish when and where the child was last seen • Furnish Gardaí with photograph and accurate details of child's age and what the child was wearing • Notify the child's parents • Refer media enquiries to the designated person • Consider press release to local radio seeking assistance with advice from Gardaí • Undertake search of the locality under the direction of the Gardaí
Recovery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish the safety and wellbeing of the child when found • Arrange child medical review • Seek support from counselors where appropriate • Conduct root cause analysis and review of systems • Amend emergency preparedness plan as necessary • Initiate new systems as appropriate



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date:
August 2023

Policy No.48

Issued: February 2022

Appendix D: Critical Incident Accident Guide

Emergency Lead

1. _____ Ph: _____
2. _____ Ph: _____



Immediate Responsibilities/Actions:



Ring 999 / 112 Emergency Services Phone: GP: _____ Other: _____	Delegate roles to senior trained staff Immediate first aid • Airway • Breathing • Circulation Segregation of children	Contact CIMT members Initials Contact 1. _____ Ph: _____ 2. _____ Ph: _____ 3. _____ Ph: _____ 4. _____ Ph: _____ 5. _____ _____ Ph.	Follow Specific Emergency Management Plan Consider: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Evacuation • Lockdown • Securing grounds • Communication needs • Locations for parents, media, briefings etc • Shutting off systems • Documentation of time lin
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Secondary Response

- Maintain the security of children & staff
- Maintain communication with emergency services, parents and media
 - Assess need for support and counselling
- Arrange debriefing • Inform regulatory bodies as appropriate:
 - HSE _____
 - HSA _____
 - CCC _____
 - Public Health _____
 - Insurance company _____
- Restore facility to regular routine as soon as possible
 - Complete incident report
- Evaluate, review and if necessary amend the Emergency Management Plan



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date:
August 2023

Policy No.48

Issued: February 2022

Appendix E: Emergency Operating Procedure and Time Log

Emergency:

Date:

Time of Initiation:

Time of Stand down:

Issues to Be Addressed	Time	Comments
Coordinator identified		
CIMT members contacted		
Initiate appropriate emergency preparedness plan		
Assess child/staff safety		
Outside sources to be contacted		
Gardai/Ambulance/Fire Brigade		
Will evacuation/lock down be required		
Activate fire alarm		
Do children need to move to relocation site?		
Delegation of duties to Staff		
First aid		
Segregation of children		
Services need to be isolated		
Are all entrances secure		
Front door		
Emergency exits		
Assistance required for evacuation		
Secure Site Have off duty staff to be contacted?		
Do parents need to be contacted?		
Do services need to be cancelled		
Organize for collection of children		
Consider impact on electricity supply		
Consider impact on gas supply		
Consider impact on water supply		
Consider impact on other services		
Consider impact on security Is there an Infection risk?		
Are there P.R. issues to be addressed		
Involve commercial services		
Locate supply of specialist equipment		



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date:
August 2023

Policy No.48

Issued: February 2022

Locate approved subcontractors		
Record specialist contractor contact details		
Emergency lead calls stand down		
All Parties informed of stand down		



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Appendix F: Emergency Operating Procedure and Time Log

Contacting Emergency Services – What to Expect

What happens when you call 112 or 999

When you dial 112 (or 999), your emergency call is answered at a Public Safety Answering Point (PSAP). The specially trained call-taker will request you to state which service you require (i.e. An Garda Síochána, Fire Service, Ambulance Service or Coast Guard) and will also check your location with you. The call is then transferred to the Emergency Service Control Centre you requested based on your location and handled accordingly. Most importantly if the line is busy, please do not hang up. The call will be answered as quickly as possible.

You will be asked the following:

Depending on which emergency service you request, you will need to clearly communicate the following information:

Where the emergency is: Give the exact address of the incident or emergency and/or any noticeable landmarks nearby. Try to give clear directions to the scene of the emergency

Contact details: The telephone number you are calling from

What has occurred: Details on the incident itself, when it occurred and whether it will require more than one of the services e.g. ambulance and fire services

Who is involved: The number of persons involved, the description of any visible injuries and knowledge of any pre-existing medical conditions

Remember, it is important to wait for the call-takers instructions, try and stay calm and don't hang up until they tell you to. Placing the facility address with accompanying directions near the telephone can help staff, children, or even visitors, should they have to dial 112 (or 999).



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Appendix G: Principles of Evacuation

General

- The emergency procedures for facilities should include evacuation plans for the building.
- All members of staff should be familiar with the details of these plans and be trained in fire safety.
- It is essential that the plans are practised on a regular basis to ensure that evacuation can be carried out effectively in a real emergency.
- Because of differences in the layout of buildings, the evacuation methods should be developed to suit the individual circumstances.
- The procedures and techniques involved should be as simple as practicable and easily performed by a minimum number of staff.
- The presence of an adequate number of staff at all times to deal effectively with any emergency and to carry out evacuation as required is essential.
- The evacuation bag will be taken whenever evacuation is to occur.

Assessing the Situation

The situation should be assessed before the decision to evacuate is made. In doing this, consideration should be given to:

- the location of the fire;
- the seriousness and extent of the fire;
- the presence and extent of smoke;
- the proximity of flammable materials;
- whether the immediate action taken to control the fire is having the desired effect;
- the age and ability of children in the vicinity.

IF IN DOUBT, EVACUATE!

The authority to order the evacuation should be clearly established in the emergency procedures. The authorized persons should act on their own initiative, pending the arrival of the fire brigade. Evacuation should be conducted in distinct stages, as follows:

Stages of Evacuation:

Phase 1: Evacuation from the room/area of origin of the fire

Phase 2: Evacuation to a place of relative safety (behind a fire door)



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Phase 3: Evacuation of parts of the building

Phase 4: Total evacuation of building to identified assembly points

Phase 5: Evacuation from assembly points to the identified relocation site

Evacuation Priorities

The first priority is to move any children or staff who are in immediate danger to a safe area.

For the purpose of speedy evacuation, it is normal to carry out the evacuation in the following order of priorities:

- (a) ambulant children requiring only a member of staff to guide or direct them;
- (b) non-ambulant children/babies who have to be physically moved or carried.

Evacuation Techniques Special care will be needed in the evacuation of nonambulant children/babies. Various items of equipment may be employed to assist with evacuation, including wheeled trolleys and wheelchairs, blankets, carry sheets, stretchers, evacuation sheets, etc. It is important to ensure that a sufficient number of staff are available for effective evacuation, when required.

Shelter Outside the Facility (Relocation Site)

If the hazard is more widespread, it may be necessary to relocate the children and the staff to a shelter in a safe area. This relocation site should be convenient to the facility but far enough away to ensure safety. A relocation site should be agreed during emergency planning and all parents should be aware of its location. You may wish to have a formal agreement with the relocation facility and it is advised that you visit the potential relocation facility and explain the types of circumstances under which you may need to use their facility. This is a good opportunity to agree issues of notification, access and requirements while on site.



LINKS CHILDCARE POLICIES & PROCEDURES

Critical Incident Policy

Last Review Date: August 2023	Policy No.48	Issued: February 2022
----------------------------------	--------------	-----------------------

Appendix H: Principles of Lockdown or Sheltering on Site

Lockdown

If there is a dangerous person inside or immediately outside the facility, the best procedure may be to lock all interior doors and to protect the staff and children in their rooms. To do this requires immediate action on the part of staff and should be done quietly and in an orderly fashion.

- A coded signal should be agreed during the emergency planning process and all staff must be trained to recognise this signal which warns them that there is a danger and that all rooms should be locked.
- Children should be kept inside the rooms, away from doors or windows where they can be seen
- The senior on-site person should summon the Garda Síochaná. Efforts to get the dangerous person(s) to leave the facility should only be taken if it is safe to do so.
- Staff should only unlock the doors to their rooms if they hear a previously agreed-upon “stand down” signal.

Shelter in the Facility

If it is unsafe for the occupants of the facility to go outside, provisions should be made to provide “protected spaces” inside. Depending on time available to move the children, it may be necessary to try to shelter in a “close” part of the facility, rather than the most protected space.

In either case, these spaces should:

- Be in the interior of the building away from glass that may shatter.
- Not be in rooms with large ceiling spans (like gymnasiums or auditoriums) that may fall if subjected to strong winds
- Have furniture and wall-hangings secured so that they will not fall onto occupants. Suggestions on where to find these “protected spaces” are:
 - Interior hallways, toilets/bathrooms, or other enclosed small areas away from large glassed-in areas or open rooms. These locations should be identified during the planning process and made known to all staff. Consider marking these sites on a facility floor plan
 - If hallways are not suitable, use the inside wall of a room on the opposite side of the corridor from which the storm is approaching.
- Check the space available and number of persons who will use each area (match people with space).
- If you are being kept inside because of smoke or toxic chemicals outside, all air intakes and openings should be closed to protect the atmosphere inside.