CRITICAL INCIDENT MANAGEMENT

POLICY & PROCEDURES

POLICY STATEMENT

A critical incident is any occurrence involving REFUGEES WELCOME and its stakeholders, which is likely to attract public interest and where our response has the potential to impact on our service continuity and/or reputation.

We will seek to minimize the occurrence of such incidents by proportionately managing risk. When a critical incident occurs, we will work with others to respond quickly and professionally to reduce harm and address any consequences.

POLICY & PROCEDURES

1. Purpose and Scope

Critical incidents can affect people physically and psychologically, as well as affecting Refugees Welcome's ability to continue to function as an effective organization.

The purpose of this policy is to ensure we prepare for and effectively respond to critical incidents through the appropriate use of resources. The prevention and effective management of critical incidents can assist to minimize the negative impact of an unexpected event.

We will therefore firstly seek to minimize the potential for critical incidents to occur through proportionately managing risk. Thereafter, if/when a critical incident occurs, we will respond quickly and work with others to reduce harm and address any consequences.

This policy applies to all trustees, contractors, advisors and volunteers of all projects under Refugees Welcome.

2. Definition of a Critical Incident

For our purposes, a critical incident is any occurrence involving Refugees Welcome and its members, which is likely to attract public interest and where our response has the potential to impact on our ability to continue functioning effectively and/or our reputation.

Examples of a Critical Incident might include:

- Death
- Serious crime involving any member of Refugees Welcome
- Missing service user, volunteer, contractor or trustee
- Major fire, flooding or other natural disasters in the locations where Refugees Welcome are working.
- Cyber-attack on essential infrastructure, or internet outages of more than a few hours

3. Risk Management

Refugees Welcome keeps a Risk Register of the most important risks to the organization which is monitored by the Trustee Board.

Refugees Welcome's ***Organizational Risk Assessment*** will seek to list all identifiable risks to the organization, which are reviewed bi-annually and will include:

- A description of the risk
- The likely impact should this event occur
- The probability of its occurrence
- The organization owner/lead individual
- A summary of the mitigation (the actions taken in advance to reduce the probability and/or impact of the event) and the steps still to be taken to mitigate risk.

Each ongoing group activity within Refugees Welcome services will have its own Risk Assessment, and one-off Risk assessments are completed for occasional events.

From this source Refugees Welcome will develop a logical and focused approach to proportionately preparing, training and responding to incidents which are most likely to occur and have the greatest impact. Refugees Welcome will take advantage of any Emergency Planning or Critical Incident-related training and undertake to distribute relevant information to Volunteers and Refugee families.

4. Responding to critical incidents

Whilst each identified risk listed in the Risk Assessment identifies the steps necessary to manage small-scale risk events, there may be more serious events beyond our control, such as local or national disasters, weather related events or infrastructure shutdowns.
There are common components to each which Refugees Welcome will seek to apply to any critical incident. The most important of these are:

4.1 Calling it

- Time is of the essence in dealing with any critical incident and the most important first step is declaring an occurrence a critical incident.
- This simple act immediately elevates the response and puts in place a structure and process to ensure the best response can be given.
- It is always possible to de-escalate a critical incident after it has been called if circumstances/information changes, but you can never buy back the time and response lost by not calling it.

The senior person at the scene of the occurrence has the responsibility to call a critical incident and in so doing he/she will notify all other members of the relevant team and all Trustees.

IS ALWAYS BETTER TO CALL A CRITICAL INCIDENT AND DE-ESCALATE AFTERWARDS THAN DELAY AND RISK MORE HARM BEING CAUSED.

4.2. Protect families and volunteers,

At the scene of any critical incident our first responsibility is to ensure that people are protected from harm. Where appropriate this will involve systematically and quickly physically evacuating everyone from the source of potential harm.
If it is possible to ***safely*** take immediate steps to remove or diminish the cause of harm this should be considered but not at the cost of evacuating others, especially children.

4.3 Notify external services immediately.

As soon as a critical incident is called, immediate consideration should be given to

which external services need to be informed. This will normally be the Emergency Services and relevant Social Services to request assistance.

- In a critical incident always call 999
- CEC Emergency Control Centre 0300 123 5025
- CEC Social Care Emergencies 0300 123 5022

Refugees Welcome will defer to those in charge of major emergencies if appropriate, especially if involving more than just our refugee families, or involving crime or missing persons where the Police will be leading.

4.4 Roles at scene.

The examples below are envisaged for a major critical incident occurring that is outside the normal scope of risks managed by Refugees Welcome Risk Assessment:

Incident Manager

The senior person at the scene of the critical incident, will be in charge initially and should assign roles and briefly explain to those individuals their function and what additional resources they should use. This will normally then be passed on to a Chair of Trustees to lead as soon as possible.

Families/Volunteer Support

- An experienced volunteer should be assigned to look after the needs of the families and other volunteers. For example, in the event of fire or flood: finding somewhere dry, warm and safe to locate, sourcing food and drinks, toilet facilities etc. until something more permanent can be found.
- Assistance for this can be drawn from amongst volunteers and those present. In the main it is expected this lead would come from the Volunteer Support Worker and Trustees
- Refugees Welcome Trustees would provide support where required and, in the case of a critical incident not relating to supporting a refugee family, Refugees Welcome Trustees would be responsible for looking after the needs of their contractors and volunteers.

Log Keeper

The Incident Manager should allocate someone to stay with him/her and keep a written record of all occurrences, approaches, decisions and actions taken and what time they occurred. This is a vital and often overlooked role but extremely important for post incident management.

Communications

The Incident Manager should also appoint someone to stay with him/her and manage communications on his/her behalf.
There will be a need to make calls to various people and organizations, and the Incident Manager should, as far as possible, be kept clear of this function in the initial

stages so that he/she can focus on the range of other tasks needed to be carried out.

Media Spokesperson

The media could arrive on the scene at a very early stage and there should be clarity from the outset that the Incident Manager, or someone nominated by him/her, is the only person who will speak to the media at this juncture. In the initial stages, until a communications infrastructure and plan have been put in place the Incident Manager should limit him/herself to a simple holding statement acknowledging that an incident has occurred, that external agencies are involved and a more detailed statement will be issued later. No details of any casualties or other information should be given at this stage.

Please note, all communication, internal and external, must adhere to the Information Sharing protocol (as laid out in RW Confidentiality and Information sharing policy)

4.6 Communication Structures

It will be the responsibility of the Trustees to ensure that an appropriate structure is put in place at the earliest opportunity to deal with the communication requirements of any critical incident.
There are two principal audiences to consider, namely:

INTERNAL - comprising families of Refugees Welcome projects, Refugee Welcome trustees, volunteers, partners and other stakeholders,

and

EXTERNAL - comprising principally the media in all its guises and the public.
The initial requirements will be to consider appointing individuals into specific roles and determining from where to manage enquiries. The default position will be to locate to an appropriate local venue and to consider the requirement and appointment of the following roles:

- ***Organizational Spokesperson*** (the Chair of Trustees, or another relevant member of the Trustee board who would also take overall charge of the incident and liaise with emergency services)
- ***Media monitor*** (to be nominated by the Chair)
- ***Call Handling & Admin Support*** (to be nominated by the Chair)
- ***Office Log Keeper*** (to be nominated by the Chair)
- ***Family and Volunteer Liaison*** (to be nominated by the Chair)

4.7 Internal Consultation

At the earliest opportunity, the Board of Trustees will be briefed regarding the incident, the initial actions taken, an assessment of the likely public/media interest issues and the proposed responses to these. Agreement will be sought on any amendments and further actions to be taken.

If the incident has the potential to overwhelm the resources of Refugees Welcome the

Chair of Trustees will request CEC to provide additional support.
Regular updates and discussions at this level will be organized and led by the Chair of Trustees.

4.8 Post Incident Management

After the incident has passed, consideration will be given to any support that might be needed, psychological or otherwise, by those impacted by the incident and professional medical advice should be sought in this regard.

Internal post incident communications will be constantly reviewed and considered, to ensure accurate and relevant information is disseminated to those who need to know.

In the immediate aftermath of any incident a 'debrief' will be conducted to capture immediate learning and interest points ahead of a more structured debrief. From the latter an Incident Report will be prepared and submitted to Refugee Welcome's Trustees, and any statutory agencies as required.

5. Review

This policy will be reviewed annually for currency and accuracy by the Chair of Trustees or individuals delegated by him/her. This does not prevent any changes taking place to this policy at any other time due to changes in practice or legislation.

Status V2 May 19

Reviewed: Sept 26

SIGNED BY: N.A. Campbell **DATE: 14.10.26**
[Trustee/Chair of Trustees]

POSITION in REFUGEES WELCOME: Chair of Trustees

Next Review date: Sept 2027

Key Roles referred to in this policy:

RW Chair of Trustees: Nicky Campbell

To contact the chair of Trustees and any other Trustee please email:

refugeescheshireeast@gmail.com

and put FAO: (the name) in the subject bar

There is a list of all Trustees on the 'Refugees Welcome Current Trustee List' on the Website on the meet the Trustees Page.
www.refugeeswelcome.co.uk