

## **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 our business 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.

# REFUGEES WELCOME

Westminster Road, Macclesfield SK10 1BX (Reg Charity No 1169909)

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## **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 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 disaster in the locations Refugees Welcome are working

### **3. Risk Management**

Refugees Welcome's **Risk Assessment** will seek to list all identifiable risks to the organization, and will include

- A description of the risk
- The likely impact should this event occur
- The probability of its occurrence
- Risk Score (the multiplication of probability and impact)
- 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.

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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.

## 4. Responding to critical incidents

Whilst each identified risk listed in the Risk Assessment will hold tailored responses 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 change 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 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

- In a critical incident always call 999
- CEC Commissioner lead (for Contracted Projects)
- CEC Emergency Control Centre 0300 123 5025
- CEC Social Care Emergencies 0300 123 5022

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## **4.4 Roles at scene.**

The examples below are envisaged for a critical incident occurring:

### **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 be the Volunteer Lead (in liaison with the Case Coordinator for VPRS).

### ***Families/Volunteer Supervision***

- An experienced volunteer should be assigned to look after the needs of the families and other volunteers. For example, 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 Supervisor Project Leads and Trustees
- Refugees Welcome Management 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 over-looked role but extremely important for post incident management.

### ***Communications***

The Incident Manager should also allocate 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 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 has 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.

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Where possible the media lead should refer all requests for external communications to Cheshire East Council Communications Team. **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 the families of Refugees Welcome projects, Refugee Welcome trustees, volunteers, partners (CVS, CEC, HO) and other stakeholders,

and

**EXTERNAL** - comprising principally the media in all its guises and the general public. The initial requirements will be to consider appointing individuals into specific roles and determining where to manage enquiries from. The default position will be to locate at the 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)
- **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. CEC will also be notified via the Relevant Project Manager of any proposed responses. In the case of active CSS under Home Office Supervision the Home office will also be notified via the Project Manager.

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

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ensure accurate and relevant information is disseminated to those who need to know.

In the immediate aftermath of any incident a 'debrief' will be carried out 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 to Cheshire East Council, and Home Office 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 23**

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

**DATE: 28.9 23**

**POSITION in REFUGEES WELCOME: Chair of Trustees**

**Next Review date: Sept 2024**

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## Key Roles referred to in this policy as at May 2022:

RW Volunteer Supervisor (CVSCE) – Alex Major 01270 763100  
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RW Chair of Trustees – Nicky Campbell – 07753 619372  
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## Commissioner:

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