

National Office for Suicide Prevention  

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Annual Report 2005



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# National Office for Suicide Prevention Annual Report 2005

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## Acknowledgments

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NOSP Annual Report Advisory Committee:

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This report is prepared in order to meet the statutory requirements of the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act, 2001, Section 14.

**Note:** This document is available to download on [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie) and is also available in the Irish language.

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# Overview

## Overview

This is the first annual report of the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) which was established by the Health Service Executive following the launch, in September 2005, of *Reach Out – A National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention*.

The activities relating to suicide prevention referred to in this report represent continued progress on suicide prevention activities of recent years. The partnerships created at local and national level, with statutory, voluntary and community organisations represent the building blocks on which we can make a real input in reducing the level of suicides in Ireland.

The actual number of suicides over the last few years has remained relatively stable, from a peak of 519 in 2001. The number of self-harm presentations to our A&E departments remains at around 11,000 per annum. Despite the relative stability in reported rates, we must seek to reduce this unacceptable level of suicidal behaviour while continuing to monitor age and gender patterns of suicide death. Only when we see a steady decline in self-harm and suicide can we be confident that our prevention measures are working.

*Reach Out* provides us all with clear, measurable actions. The NOSP will monitor and report on those actions over the course of strategy implementation. Among earlier priori-

ties for the NOSP has been the development of a suicide prevention network which will assist the process of coordination and consultation. The annual report also allows us to indicate short-term priorities and with this in mind the 12-point action plan for 2006 is included in this years report.

In 2005, the President of Ireland Mary McAleese hosted a forum on suicide prevention referred to later in this report. This approach will be followed by the NOSP who will hold an annual forum to present research, to discuss priorities and to consult with the many organisations and individuals involved in suicide prevention. New partnerships are required to give effect to the actions in *Reach Out*. The NOSP will develop these partnerships and build on those already established.

The NOSP has taken over the functions previously held by the NSRG (National Suicide Review Group). I want to express my thanks and appreciation to those members on the board of the NSRG who willingly gave of their time and expertise. *Reach Out* gives us a platform to make significant further progress in our suicide prevention efforts and I look forward to working with all those involved in this area to significantly reduce the current levels of self-harm and suicide.

**Geoff Day**  
**Head, National Office for Suicide Prevention**

# 1. Policy Context

## National

Building on the policy reference for suicide prevention set out previously in the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2001 and in policy and research documents such as the Report of the National Task Force on Suicide (1998) and the national health strategy Quality and Fairness (2001), some key developments were advanced in 2005.

### **Reach Out – National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention**

Launched in 2005 by the Minister for Health and Children, Mary Harney TD, Reach Out provides the policy framework for suicide prevention activities in Ireland until 2014.

The strategy calls for a multi-sectoral approach to the prevention of suicidal behaviour in order to foster cooperation between health, education, community, voluntary and private sector agencies. The strategy represents one of the first policy development collaborations between the Health Service Executive and the Department of Health and Children and was produced following extensive consultation with all of the major stakeholders, including the general public.

 [www.hse.ie/en/publications](http://www.hse.ie/en/publications)

### **A Vision for Change – Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy**

The National Office for Suicide Prevention contributed to the development of the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy throughout 2005 by liaising with members of that Group, informing on the experiences in developing and through participation on the sub-group on suicide prevention. The Expert Group which reported in early 2006 endorsed the approach to suicide prevention outlined in stating “the strategies recommended in to prevent suicide and to improve mental health provision for people engaging in suicidal behaviour should be adopted and

implemented nationally”. Furthermore, the Group has recommended that “Integration and coordination of statutory, research, voluntary and community activities is essential to ensure effective implementation of suicide prevention initiatives in the wider community. In this regard, the National Office for Suicide Prevention should be supported and developed.”

 [www.hse.ie/en/publications](http://www.hse.ie/en/publications)

### **Oireachtas Sub-Committee on Suicide Prevention**

In October 2005 it was ordered that “a sub-Committee (to be called the sub-Committee on the High Level of Suicide in Irish Society) be established to consider such matters as it may think fit in relation to suicide and to report back to the Joint Committee thereon”. Many agencies, including the NOSP, reported to the sub-committee in 2005. The report published by the sub-committee is available on the Oireachtas website.

 [www.oireachtas.ie](http://www.oireachtas.ie)

## International

### **World Health Organisation European Ministerial Conference**

Among the most significant international policy developments in 2005 was the publication of a *Ministerial Mental Health Declaration for Europe* following a World Health Organisation (WHO) European Conference held in Finland. Coinciding with this declaration was the publication of a new *Mental Health Action Plan for Europe* which highlights activity in the area of suicide prevention. Among the 12 areas for action identified in the Action Plan is a call to “prevent mental health problems and suicide”. While outlining a range of actions in the area of suicide prevention that are compatible with, the *WHO Action Plan* describes the task of suicide prevention as broad-based given that “the social precipitants of mental health problems are manifold and can range from individual causes of distress to issues

that affect a whole community or society.”

The WHO invited the European Commission to contribute to implementing the new framework for action and the result of that invitation was a Green Paper on improving mental health in the population published in late 2005.

 [www.euro.who.int/mentalhealth2005](http://www.euro.who.int/mentalhealth2005)

**European Union Green Paper on Mental Health**  
***Improving the mental health of the population: towards a strategy for mental health for the European Union***

In the Green Paper published in 2005 the European Commission confirmed that “the WHO European Ministerial Conference on Mental Health established a framework for comprehensive action, and created strong political commitment for mental health”.


The stated purpose of the European Commission is “to launch a debate with the European institutions, Governments, health professionals, stakeholders in other sectors, civil society including patient organisations, and the research community about the relevance of mental health for the EU, the need for a strategy at EU-level and its possible priorities.”

Describing the current situation with regard to mental

health in the European Union the Green Paper points to suicide as an indicator, reporting that “58,000 citizens die from suicide every year (in the EU), more than the annual deaths from road traffic accidents, homicide, or HIV/AIDS.” The suicide rate of member countries is also used to illustrate health inequalities with considerable variation in rates described, from 44 suicides per 100,000 population in Lithuania to 3.6 per 100,000 in Greece (the Irish rate is currently around 13 per 100,000).

A particular initiative highlighted is the European Alliance Against Depression or EAAD Project which is based on the development of regional information networks for health professionals, the voluntary sector, education and the wider community. The Irish site for the implementation of this project is being developed by the National Suicide Research Foundation with some HSE collaboration. The NOSP is represented on the project steering group.

In continuing to develop a European Mental Health Strategy (incorporating suicide prevention) a widespread consultation process is underway.

 [www.ec.europa.eu/comm/health/ph\\_determinants/life\\_style/mental\\_health\\_en.htm](http://www.ec.europa.eu/comm/health/ph_determinants/life_style/mental_health_en.htm)

## 2. *Reach Out* Strategy Development

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The major initiative in 2005 in terms of HSE activity in suicide prevention was the development of *Reach Out*, the National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention which is referred to above in the section on policy.

Consultation was central to developing this strategy. Five regional consultation meetings and one national consultation meeting were held with many of the key people from the statutory and voluntary sectors. The importance of the national and regional consultation meetings was in bringing together a diverse range of organisations and individuals that not only contributed to the development of the strategy but will also support its implementation over the coming years (proceedings reports from all consultation meetings are available at [www.nosp.ie](http://www.nosp.ie)). Many of the stakeholders in

the strategy development were invited to the Forum on Integration and Partnership hosted by President Mary McAleese (described in more detail below).

In addition to the consultation meetings, an advertisement was placed in the national press calling for submissions from interested members of the public and from private, public and voluntary organisations. Local media also covered the call for submissions ensuring that a wide section of the population would become aware of the strategy and its development. The level of interest and the attendance at the public launch of the strategy reflected the ethos of consultation and involvement adopted throughout the strategy development.



### 3. Suicide Prevention Network

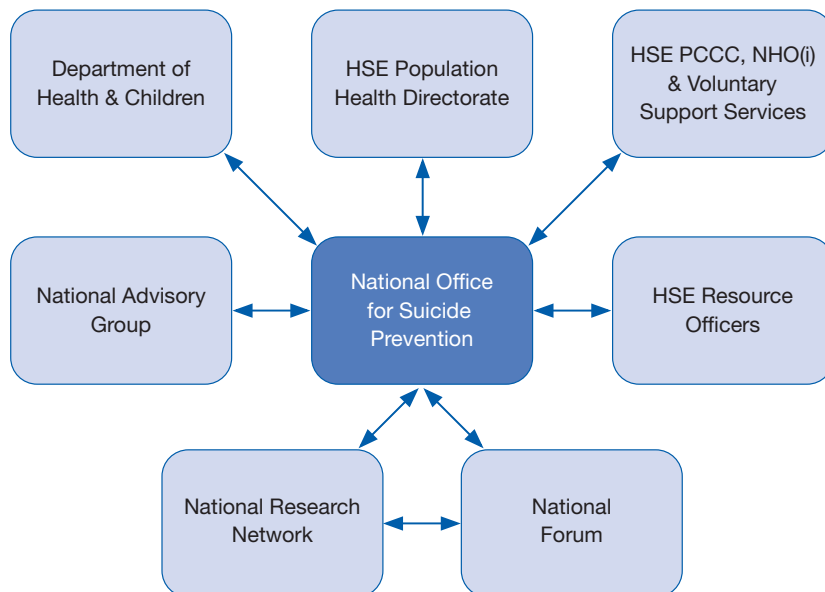


Figure 1 - Suicide Prevention Network

#### Suicide Prevention Network

A number of voluntary and statutory agencies are engaged in suicide prevention activities in Ireland and a principle function of the NOSP is to coordinate all of this activity – the *Reach Out* strategy providing the framework for these endeavours. Figure 1 is an overview of *Reach Out* implementation structures, and by extension outlines suicide prevention structures in Ireland for the coming years, from the perspective of the NOSP in its coordinating role.

#### HSE Population Health Directorate

The Population Health Directorate is responsible for promoting and protecting the health of the entire population and target groups, with particular emphasis on health inequalities. It achieves this by positively influencing health service delivery and outcomes through strategy and policy recommendations covering a range of areas. The NOSP

links in particular with the Assistant Director for Health Promotion within Population Health and other colleagues in Health Promotion nationally and regionally. The head of the NOSP reports directly to the Director of Population Health.

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

#### HSE PCCC, NHO(i) and Voluntary Support Services

The NOSP links directly as appropriate with both HSE providers in Primary, Continuing and Community Care (PCCC) and the National Hospitals Office (NHO) as well as with voluntary sector services. Direct links with service providers are in relation to issues such as primary care responses to suicidal crises, the management of deliberate self-harm, bereavement counselling and other specific initiatives recommended in *Reach Out*.

[www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

(i) HSE PCCC – Health Service Executive, Primary, Community and Continuing Care. HSE NHO – Health Service Executive, National Hospitals Office.

### HSE Resource Officers

The Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention have been central to the development of suicide prevention initiatives since they were appointed to each of the former health boards from 1998 onwards. They are a key resource to ensure implementation of *Reach Out* at a regional and local level. The NOSP and Resource Officers meet on a regular basis to progress the work of strategy implementation and future service planning. There are 11 Resource Officers employed by the HSE. See Appendix 3 for contact details.

 [www.hse.ie](http://www.hse.ie)

### National Forum

In *Reach Out* it was proposed that “a representative national forum would be briefed by the National Office on the achievements overall in suicide prevention and, in particular, in relation to strategy implementation. This forum would also provide an opportunity for the exchange of views on developments in suicide research and prevention.” Membership of the National Forum is reflective of the actions set out in *Reach Out* with stakeholders representing health, education, the media, voluntary and community groups. Stakeholders include agencies that the NOSP has started to develop links with along with agencies that have been dedicated to suicide research and prevention for a number of years such as the National Suicide Research Foundation, Irish Association of Suicidology, 3Ts, Console and Living Links.

### National Research Network

In response to the increasing volume of research into suicidal behaviour in Ireland the NOSP is committed to bringing together all those interested in suicide research in Ireland in order to promote collaboration and encourage the effective use of research findings in planning services and prevention activity.

### National Advisory Group

*Reach Out* recommends that “a steering group comprised of key individuals who can offer their expertise to guide the work of the National Office should also be appointed. This steering group would replace the National Suicide Review Group.” The National Advisory Group for the NOSP has been appointed and is comprised of individuals with expertise and experience in a range of disciplines relevant to suicide prevention work – rather than being representative of health regions. The function of the Group is to provide strategic direction and guidance to the NOSP in implementing *Reach Out*. The terms of reference and membership of the Group is listed in Appendix 5.

### Department of Health and Children

The Department of Health and Children's statutory role is to support the Minister in the formulation and evaluation of policies for the health services. It also has a role in the strategic planning of health services. This is carried out in conjunction with the Health Service Executive, voluntary service providers, Government Departments and other interests.

The Department was a partner in the development of *Reach Out* and continues to support its implementation, especially through the Mental Health Section of the Department.

 [www.dohc.ie](http://www.dohc.ie)

## 4. Progress Report - Suicide Prevention Activities 2005

This section reports on activities throughout 2005 under the Action Area headings in *Reach Out*. We will be using this framework in future annual reports.

Some of the activities described below were not developed in direct response to the specific actions of *Reach Out* but were planned prior to the launch of the strategy (ii).

### General Population Activities

#### Area 1 - The Family

- Formal links to provide family support in the aftermath of a death by suicide were developed in the Dublin area with the local HSE Bereavement Support Service. Initially, a pilot bereavement support camp for children will be run over an 18 month period, involving three residential weekends for children bereaved following a death by suicide in the family – with wider family participation also included.
- *Parentstop* is a drop-in centre in the North West which provides a listening, advocacy and referral service for parents needing support or advice in all aspects of parenting. It was established following a family support needs assessment in the area.
- An annual one-day conference run by the *Partners for Health in Education* (a health, education and voluntary group alliance formed in 2002) was held in Castlebar, Co. Mayo in April, 2005. The conference aimed to raise awareness of the importance of emotional and mental health in day-to-day living and explore ways of supporting the emotional and mental health of young people and also of parents, guardians and teachers. It was attended by 120 parents and teachers. This annual conference is a positive example of bringing together families, schools and the health sector.

#### Area 2 - Schools

- The *Working Things Out* programme for senior cycle secondary school students saw considerable developments during the year. A project leader was appointed, a pilot study using two lessons of the programme material was completed in three schools and training in programme delivery was provided for five teachers. Six representative Dublin schools committed to mainstreaming the material from September 2005. The HSE (Health Promotion) has provided funding for the employment of a research psychologist to evaluate the programme.

 [www.workingthingsout.ie](http://www.workingthingsout.ie)

- The *Mind Yourself* programme was set up initially in the counties of Monaghan and Cavan and has since developed as a partnership between the HSE and the National Suicide Research Foundation extending into counties Louth, Meath, Cork and Kerry. The programme is based on both the best available evidence and also on consultation with young people. It is a suicide prevention initiative with senior cycle students focusing on health promotion, problem solving, awareness of services and building capacity in the wider community. Up to the end of 2005 over 1000 young people had participated in the project.
- Successful partnership working in the area of education has seen the development of *Student Support Teams* between County Limerick VEC and the HSE. This initiative is aimed at crisis readiness and providing support for students through the training of school personnel in risk awareness and assessment and in responding to a critical incident in the school. Training (a three-day workshop) commenced in September 2005 and an evaluation involving students, members of the support team and the wider school community is planned.
- In the Midlands, a partnership has developed between the local coordinator for SPHE (Social, Personal and

(ii) For further information on any of these activities, please contact the NOSP or the relevant resource officer. Contact details are provided in Appendix 3 (Resource Officers) and Appendix 5 (NOSP).

Health Education) and the HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention to deliver a day-long programme for teachers of SPHE on both bereavement and emotional health issues. Further training to incorporate crisis management has been planned – revisiting a training programme delivered in the area in 2003.

- A mental health day was run in a secondary school in County Donegal for senior cycle students, parents and teachers. Workshops for students included ‘Stress Management’, ‘Dealing with Anger’, ‘Making the Most of Friendships’ and ‘Finding out about Services’. Teachers participated in workshops such as ‘Time Out for Me’ and an evening session was available to parents entitled ‘Parenting for Mental Health’.
- A one-day training course was provided for 13 teachers to facilitate the delivery of the *MindOut* programme in post primary schools in the North West. The training day introduces teachers to the *MindOut* programme and addresses the issue of dealing with mental health within the classroom.
- Training was delivered on developing crisis action plans with primary schools in Kildare where no NEPS service was available. The training was run by NEPS in partnership with the HSE, Mental Health Ireland and the home-school liaison service in Kildare.

### Area 3 - Youth Organisations and Services

- Youth Services in the Mid West received four training sessions covering the myths and facts of suicide, contributory factors to suicide and, engaging with a person in a suicidal crisis.
- The HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention collaborated with the Health Promotion Department in the Midlands to develop and deliver a Specialist Certificate Programme in Health Promotion for Youth Workers which is accredited by National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG). The programme covers suicide preven-

tion and mental health promotion.

- A series of lectures promoting positive mental health and well-being among third level students was run in the NUIG, using the theme Friends Supporting Friends. It was organised by the Health Promotion Department, NUIG and facilitators included both the Mental Health Promotion Officer and the Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention, HSE Western Area and Development Officer for Mental Health Ireland.
- The *MindOut* Programme was adapted, piloted and evaluated in YouthReach Centres in County Donegal.
- The HSE Southern area in partnership with Foróige have put in place a Healthy Living project in Castletownbere, West Cork. This project is aimed at improving the mental health of young people who may be at risk of suicidal behaviour.

### Area 4 - Third Level Education Settings

- Staff from a number of Third Level Colleges and Universities have received ASIST Training (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) including UCD, Trinity College Dublin, University of Limerick and Limerick Institute of Technology.
- Staff members of Letterkenny Institute of Technology have trained as trainers in the *Mental Health First Aid* programme.

 [www.healthscotland.com/smhfa](http://www.healthscotland.com/smhfa)

- A general mental health information and awareness programme for youth leaders, student counsellors and chaplains was planned in conjunction with Dundalk Institute of Technology, beginning with an Open Day to provide information in October 2005.
- The cinema advertisement *Don't Get Down, Get Help* which promotes Samaritans' services is being redeveloped in partnership with students from Athlone Institute of Technology.
- An online student counselling and support service has

been developed involving collaboration between Trinity College Dublin and the Health Service Executive.

#### Area 5 - Workplaces

- Planning work has been done in Dublin (Northern area) by the HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion and Health Promotion colleagues focusing on workplace settings to introduce ASIST and other initiatives into the workplace. However, in general, suicide prevention efforts in workplace settings are not well developed at this stage.

#### Area 6 - Sports Clubs and Organisations

- Discussions took place with GAA clubs in the south east of the country regarding the development of mental health promotion initiatives through the clubs themselves, with the support of the HSE, but this setting has not been fully developed in terms of the potential for suicide prevention and mental health promotion initiatives.

#### Area 7 - Voluntary and Community Organisations

- Wide-ranging support was provided for many local, regional and national voluntary organisations throughout 2005. In particular, training was organised in ASIST and other programmes such as Gatekeeper Training in the Mid West, South East and South Western areas and both the *Concerned about Suicide* and the *Better Mental Health for All* programmes in the North West. The types of organisation linked with the HSE included voluntary counselling services, mutual self-help groups and bereavement support organisations. Voluntary organisations operating at a national level are listed in Appendix 3.
- Schizophrenia Ireland launched their second occasional paper entitled *Supporting Life: Suicide prevention for mental healthcare service users*. The NOSP are among the contributors to this publication.

- A peer support education programme has been piloted in the Midleton area in Cork.

#### Area 8 - Church and Religious Groups

- Some clergy including school chaplains in HSE areas across the country have attended ASIST training, although in general offers of this training only seem to be taken up by clergy who have been directly affected by a suicide death in the community.
- In Waterford, an article on suicide prevention from the HSE perspective was published in the Diocesan magazine *Harvest*.

#### Area 9 - Media

- The cinema campaign *Don't Get Down, Get Help* was further rolled out in cinemas in the HSE Dublin-Mid Leinster region. The campaign promotes Samaritans' helpline and email support services.
- In the south east the IAS (Irish Association of Suicidology) and Samaritans guidelines for the portrayal of suicide in the media were re-distributed to local media contacts.
- Locally and regionally the HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention have forged strong media contacts to ensure issues around suicide and mental health are handled sensitively and responsibly. The HSE in the South is particularly proactive in terms of highlighting suicide prevention services available in the area – having featured on national radio and television programmes as well as local programmes.

#### Area 10 - Reducing Stigma and Promoting Mental Health

- In the Limerick area, a number of awareness building events were organised including a walk through Limerick city to build awareness of suicide prevention and, in September 2005, a seminar covering mental health

issues and young people was organised.

- In the North East, considerable anti-stigma and positive mental health promotion work is organised through SPAN, the Suicide Prevention Awareness Network.

#### Area 11 - Primary Care and General Practice

- Training initiatives in Primary Care were developed in 2005 and included participation in ASIST for GPs and practice nurses along with some basic awareness training for GP Trainees. Half-day Mental Health Promotion Seminars were delivered to the Primary Care Networks.
- In the Mid-West, there was considerable interest among GPs in participating in STORM training (Skills Training On Risk Management) with 12 GPs ultimately taking part in the training. The training has a more clinical focus in comparison with ASIST training.
- In late 2005 set-up costs were provided by the HSE in the east coast to develop Action 11.5 of *Reach Out*. This service development will involve the appointment of a specialist professional in self-harm/suicide prevention to work with Primary Care and the Liaison Mental Health Service. In addition to the clinical focus of this post, the post-holder will work with patients, their carers and GPs on the provision of education and advocacy as appropriate.
- The Mental Health and Primary Care initiative, representing a collaboration between the HSE South Western area and ICGP, completed and piloted ten modules relating to mental health and illness. One of these modules has been dedicated to awareness of suicide and parasuicide and is now available within the CME (Continuing Medical Education) training programme for GPs.

## Targeted Approach

#### Area 12 - Deliberate Self-Harm

- In the Mid-West, an Outreach Response Service is being developed following consultation with individuals who have engaged in deliberate self-harm and have come into contact with local health services. The service is being designed to engage all those presenting with deliberate self-harm behaviours at the A&E Department of the Mid-West Regional Hospital. The service will be provided by a Clinical Nurse Specialist from within the multi-disciplinary team of the designated sector and will have a formal liaison arrangement with the current Liaison Mental Health Service and the current out-of-hours Crisis Psychiatric Nursing Service. This initiative will facilitate the development of a significant community intervention and will complement current community service provision. Outreach work with clients will be proactive to ensure ongoing engagement with the service.
- An evaluation of the crisis nursing service available in the HSE Southern area was conducted in 2005. This service offers 24-hour access to specialist psychiatric nurses at the three Cork city hospitals. The main objective of this initiative is to improve the quality of care delivered to individuals attending A&E Departments, following deliberate self-harm and attempted suicide.
- In May, the 9th Annual Cross-Border conference on mental health focussed on deliberate self-harm and young people. The conference is organised annually by the Southern Health and Social Services Board in Northern Ireland and the HSE in the North East.
- NOSP funding has been provided to develop self-harm response services in hospital A&E departments in Cavan, Monaghan, Navan, Kilkenny, Tallaght, Letterkenny, Sligo, Mayo, Mullingar, Blanchardstown, Bantry and Mallow.

### Area 13 Mental Health Services

- In November, East Galway Mental Health Service organised a one-day conference on *Suicide and Depression*. The event included presentations from the Regional HSE Resource Officer, the NOSP, Samaritans and a number of researchers.
- Skills Training on Risk Management (STORM), a two day programme teaching clinicians how to assess and manage suicide risk, was delivered to Mental Health Service staff in the west of the country. Six part-time trainers, from multi-disciplinary backgrounds, delivered the training. Two further trainers completed the Training for Trainers programme in October 2005. A total of 16 workshops were held in 2005 (7 in Galway City and County, 3 in Mayo and 6 in Roscommon) with 197 participants completing the programme. The training was also delivered to staff from primary care services, including GPs and to staff of the GP out-of-hours cooperative, Westdoc. Mental health services in the Dublin area also received STORM training in 2005.
- ASIST training has been delivered through the post graduate training on 'Enduring Mental Illness' in the School of Nursing at Trinity College Dublin.

### Area 14 Alcohol and Substance Abuse

- Issues around the risk of alcohol and substance abuse are routinely incorporated into awareness training delivered by the HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention. For example, there is a section on *Alcohol and Suicide* in the *Concerned about Suicide* programme delivered in the North West and in the gatekeeper training in the South Western area.
- A brief alcohol intervention programme has been developed in partnership with GAA clubs in the North East, while also in the North East a system of self-referral to alcohol counsellors has been introduced.

### Area 15 - Marginalised Groups

- During 2005, two suicide prevention awareness sessions were delivered to traveller's groups and two sessions were delivered to lesbian, gay, bi-sexual and trans-gender representative groups in the North East.
- In Galway, a counselling service is being developed as a partnership initiative between the Galway Traveller Movement, Adult Survivors of Abuse Counselling Service and the HSE Resource Officer with funding support from the Traveller Health Unit, HSE West and the NOSP.

### Area 16 - Prisons

- A training needs analysis was developed in 2005 with prison officers in Mountjoy, the Dochas Centre and St Patrick's Institution. This action research analysis is being conducted with a view to developing a training programme for prison staff that can be delivered on a national basis.

### Area 17 - An Garda Síochána

- Members of An Garda Síochána attended ASIST training throughout the country. In particular there was an emphasis on training for Juvenile Liaison Officers in the Midlands and for Community Gardai in north Dublin.

### Area 18 - Unemployed People

- The JOBS programme for unemployed people has been successfully piloted in the North West and an evaluation report is available. The programme led to significant economic and mental health benefits for participants.

### Area 19 - People who have experienced Abuse

- Work began in 2005 on a research project examining risk and protective factors for suicidal behaviour amongst persons who have experienced institutional abuse. Meetings took place between the NSRF (National Suicide Research Foundation) and the survivors' group,

Right of Place, with an initial phase of research being approved for March - August 2006.

#### Area 20 - Young Men

- The Department of Health and Children supported the consultation process around the development of a specific Men's Health Policy during 2005, involving six consultation meetings. The NOSP participated in this phase one consultation process. In the development of consultation reports five key policy areas were identified, with the issue of suicide prevention being addressed in four of the five areas.

 [www.healthinfo.ie/menshealth/](http://www.healthinfo.ie/menshealth/)

- Overall, suicide prevention activities in a number of areas will indirectly aim to reduce risk among young men. However, there is a need to develop initiatives specifically for this group. Partnership working between the Men's Health Forum of Ireland and the NOSP is being established.

#### Area 21 - Older People

- In Dublin, the HSE have been working with the group Age and Opportunity to develop the programme Ageing with Confidence. A trainee's manual was published in early 2005 and the training of trainers programme is being redeveloped with a specific trainer's manual due to be published in 2006.
- In the South-East, the HSE Training and Development Officers continue to develop and deliver a programme around depression awareness in the elderly, targeting those working with older people. Similarly, the leaders of the Third Age Centre in County Meath also received suicide prevention awareness training in 2005.
- In the West, a poster and leaflet campaign was developed in 2005 with the support of Mayo Mental Health Services and the NOSP. The campaign, which aims to disseminate practical information on depression among

older people, is being developed under the acronym AGED (Assessment Guidelines on Elderly Depression).

- Community Care Services in the HSE (East Coast) have been briefed on the issue of suicide prevention and depression awareness among older people.

#### Area 22 - Restricting and Reducing Access to Means

- In 2005, a report on the *Disposal of Unwanted Medication Properly (DUMP)* campaign in the HSE South Western Area was finalised. The project, which involved the participation of 157 pharmacies, aimed to:
  - Reduce access to the means of overdose and parasuicide
  - Reduce accidental poisoning among children
  - Provide environmental protection/prevent contamination

Each pharmacy was provided with waste disposal containers, information leaflets and promotional posters for display to alert customers. In terms of monitoring and evaluation, each pharmacist maintained a record sheet for a minimum period of six weeks outlining the medicine returned, quantity, date and reason for return. The evaluation reports on a random sample of 31 pharmacies for a six-week period revealing a return rate of 1706 items – the majority of which (72%) can be classified as 'general medications', while 12% of items were classified as 'central nervous system medication'. A full evaluation will be conducted in collaboration with the School of Pharmacology, Trinity College Dublin. The DUMP project commenced in the HSE Midlands region where there is 99% involvement with community pharmacies in the region. Data is also being collected in this region to compare against types of medications used in overdose as compiled by NSRF report.



## Responding to Suicide

### Area 23 - Support following Suicide

- The organisation Console continued to develop in 2005 with the setting up of a counselling service in Galway, building on the range of support services offered by the organisation nationally. These services include a free-phone helpline (1800 201 890), individual and family counselling, support groups and practical information resources.
- There is a considerable network of statutory and voluntary bereavement support services across the regions and examples include the Living Links service which is widely promoted in the Mid-West (where it was founded) and in other areas of the country, a HSE Bereavement Support Service in the Midlands, the South, and the North West, Life Support and CRUSE in the North East and Talk it Over, an 'umbrella' organisation for support groups in the South East.
- Training is offered to voluntary support services in a number of ways, including, for example, through the HSE Resource Officer and the Health Promotion Department in the West.
- It sometimes happens that a particular community is acutely affected by a number of suicides in a relatively short space of time, requiring a dedicated and timely response to support the community in such difficult circumstances. In Galway in 2005 the HSE worked with the Family Support and Neighbourhood Youth Projects in Ballybane to develop a policy of response to sudden deaths in the community.
- In addition to counselling and other support services there are a wide range of information resources to help people through a bereavement by suicide and other sudden deaths. In many areas this information is produced under the banner of *You Are Not Alone* (originating in the Mid West). In 2005 the *You Are Not Alone* materials were

published in the HSE North West and South Western areas – and these resources are widely available elsewhere in the country.


 [www.hse.ie/en/Publications/HSEPublications](http://www.hse.ie/en/Publications/HSEPublications)

### Area 24 - Coroner Service

- A report of an attitudes survey involving coroners was prepared in 2005 by the NSRF and presented at the 13th Annual Medical Faculty Research Day in University College Cork in June. The report was based on a survey of 60 coroners and deputy coroners. The study will be submitted for publication in 2006.
- Further action is needed in relation to work with, and support for, the Coroner Service and their potential role in suicide prevention and research.

## Information and Research

### Area 25 Information

- In collaboration with the HSE North West, Community Creations launched a youth website, [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie) in 2005. This site was created by youth, health, media and design professionals who worked directly with young people aged 16 to 25. It combines a multi media web magazine, an online InfoZone, a Mind, Body and Soul health centre, and contacts database. Suicide prevention is one of many topics pertinent to youth culture that is dealt with on the web site.
-  [www.spunout.ie](http://www.spunout.ie)
- An information help line which has been running since 2004 in the North East was launched nationally. The number is 1850 24 1850. Information on public health and social services is offered to callers.
  - The Dublin West/South West Mental Health Directory was published in association with Clondalkin Mental Health Association.