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To ask the Minister for Health if he considered piloting a 24/7 mental health ambulance service similar to Sweden to assist with suicidal behaviour and other mental health incidents within our communities; and if he will make a statement on the matter.

Dear Deputy,

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) has been requested to respond to your question above.

An initiative such as the one outlined in your question (the provision of a “mental health ambulance” in Stockholm) does not currently form part of our research driven efforts to develop services in this area. You might find the following information helpful in this context;

- Connecting for Life, Ireland’s National Strategy to Reduce Suicide was developed in line with best national and international [evidence](#). The recent publication of a new and responsive [implementation plan](#) for Connecting for Life, for 2020 to 2022, is rooted in the principle of learning from previous experience of implementation to date, and in consultation with implementation partners, stakeholders and government departments.
- A Vision for Change, and [Sharing the Vision, a Mental Health Policy for Everyone](#) (2020) also outline objectives and priorities in this space. For example;
 - The enhancement of Crisis Resolution, offering after-hours and urgent mental health assistance as an integral part of each community mental health team, providing 24-hour advice and assessment for people presenting in crisis associated with a known or suspected mental health problem.

- The development of out-of-hours crisis cafés (currently in pilot phase) as a new referral option to support individuals to deal with an immediate crisis and to plan safely, drawing on their strengths, resilience and coping mechanisms to manage their mental health and wellbeing.
 - The development of tele-psychiatry models as a way to provide 24-hour psychiatry consultations to service users of all ages, who can access supports from a variety of locations such as primary care centres, GP practices and community services.
 - Investment in, and prioritisation of, acute medical emergency services under the HSE's Acute Medicine Clinical Programme.
 - Continued investment in, and implementation of the [National Clinical Care Programme for the Assessment and Management of Patients Presenting to Emergency Departments Following Self-Harm](#).
- The 24 hour HSE Your Mental Health Information Line (Freephone 1800 111888) is primarily an information and signposting service. Nevertheless, it is manned by specifically-trained personnel within the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) of the National Ambulance Service, who have the ability (in certain circumstances) to transfer the call to the emergency personnel to enable an emergency resource to be dispatched to the scene.
 - Similarly, the HSE-funded Text50808 service (available free, 24/7) also operates a protocol which allows direct escalation to the National Ambulance Service.

Both these services are important elements to providing a rapid response and intervention on a 24 hour basis, nationwide. I trust this information is useful for you. Please do revert should you require anything further.

Yours sincerely,



Mr John Meehan

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