



Cúram Sláinte  
Phobail, Iarthar  
ag freastal ar Ghailimh,  
Maigheo agus Ros Comáin

Community  
Healthcare West  
serving Galway, Mayo  
and Roscommon

Ceannasaí na Seirbhísí Meabhairshláinte  
Cúram Sláinte Phobail, Iarthar, Ceanncheathrú N. Muire,  
Caisleán an Bharraigh, Co. Mhaigh Eo, F23 HP58.  
T: 094 9049242 R: [Mentalhealth.cho2@hse.ie](mailto:Mentalhealth.cho2@hse.ie)

Head of Mental Health Services  
Community Healthcare West, St. Mary's Headquarters,  
Castlebar, Co. Mayo, F23 HP58.  
Tel: 094 9049242 Email: [Mentalhealth.cho2@hse.ie](mailto:Mentalhealth.cho2@hse.ie)

[cathy.kennedy@hse.ie](mailto:cathy.kennedy@hse.ie) 094 9049242  
[aidan.sweeney@hse.ie](mailto:aidan.sweeney@hse.ie) 094 9049241  
[laura.costello@hse.ie](mailto:laura.costello@hse.ie) 090 6637543

01<sup>st</sup> March 2021

**Róisín Shortall T.D.**  
**5 Main Street**  
**Finglas**  
**Dublin 11**

PQ ref 9902/21

*To ask the Minister for Health the inter-disciplinary measures that have been taken recently to reduce the loss of life in the Corrib river in view of recent tragic loss of life in waters in County Galway; if further measures will be investigated such as an inter-disciplinary taskforce; if such measures will be implemented to address the urgency of these concerns; and if he will make a statement on the matter.*

Dear Deputy Shortall,

The Health Service Executive has been requested to reply directly to you in the context of the above Parliamentary Question which you submitted to the Minister for Health for response. I have examined the matter and the following outlines the position;

The *Connecting for Life, Galway, Mayo and Roscommon Suicide Prevention Action Plan 2018-2020* was launched in 2017 [ConnectingforLifeGMR](#). It is one of 17 local, multi-agency suicide action plans, developed throughout Ireland, which align with the goals and objectives in *Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide*, so as to ensure their local implementation, while also responding to particular local needs, strengths and challenges ([ConnectingforLife](#)). *Connecting for Life* nationally is being extended to 2024. A complete set of revised local action plans are also in the process of being developed to reflect activities until 2024.

In Galway, Mayo and Roscommon a Connecting for Life Implementation Steering Committee has been established, with wide representation from all key stakeholders. It is chaired by the Head of Mental Health Services, HSE.



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The following are examples of some of the actions being undertaken in the plan to address tragic loss of life in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon (including Galway City):

- An Garda Síochána, who are the lead agency, are working in partnership with Galway City Council and the Galway RNLI on a water safety initiative, to advance the purchase and installation of three thermal imaging cameras. Two cameras are installed at the Galway City Museum in the Spanish Area and the remaining camera located on the Harbour Company building at the Docks. The cameras have a wide angle focus and will communicate the thermal images back to the Garda Station at Mill Street. The thermal imaging cameras will be able to detect when a person enters the water and will be a significant aid to search and rescue operations. This water safety initiative plans to provide early warning for emergency services which may help prevent loss of life. The system may also provide information which will assist in the early recovery of people lost in the Corrib or washed out to sea. An updated interagency protocol has been developed for water rescue in Galway City and this will be used when the system is commissioned. Galway City Council would like to acknowledge funding support of €24,000 received from the Department of Rural and Community Development under the Digital Innovation Fund to support this water safety initiative. This is the first Thermal Waterway Monitoring System in Ireland [Goal 6.2.1(a)].
- The Western Drug and Alcohol Task Force is taking a lead role in implementing the Galway Safe App in key areas within Galway City. This app uses GPS technology to offer support to people detected lingering in particular waterside areas of the city late at night or early in the morning. It provides a system whereby an individual can easily contact up to three individuals when the app believes the person is in a potentially risky situation and also provide access to the emergency services. The app has been downloaded over 2,500 times in the last 12 months.

Working in partnership with others, including Galway City Council and third level colleges, the Western Drug and Alcohol Task Force wish to continue to develop the system, expand it to provide a greater area of safety for students and the general public in Galway and increase app downloading figures [Goal 1.1.4 (b)].



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- With the support of the HSE Head of Mental Health Services, a 'Westbewell' Working Group was established in September 2020. Its aims are to: develop a coordinated Mental Health Communications Strategy for Community Healthcare West, including the promotion of timely, safe, evidence-based mental health messages and mental health supports; develop and build awareness of the Westbewell brand in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon; and support/reinforce national mental health campaigns at a local level. 'Numbers if you need them' materials (flyer, poster and wallet cards) are being widely distributed, including through traditional and social media in Galway, Mayo and Roscommon and online via [www.westbewell.ie](http://www.westbewell.ie) (see [www.westbewell.ie/flyer](http://www.westbewell.ie/flyer), [www.westbewell.ie/poster](http://www.westbewell.ie/poster) and [www.westbewell.ie/walletcard](http://www.westbewell.ie/walletcard)) [Goal 1.3.1(a)].
- The START online, interactive suicide prevention programme, which is free to complete, has been made available by the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention throughout Ireland, including in Community Healthcare West. This programme is for those aged 18 years and older who would like to learn the skills and knowledge to keep others safe from suicide (to book a place see [START](#)) [Goal 2.3.2].

Another new support initiative includes:

The development and recent launch of a new Galway Community Café by Community Healthcare West, in December 2020. It is a café-based, out of hours, free adult mental health service open from Thursday - Sunday from 6:30pm – 11:30pm at night. It is located in the Mr. Waffle Café near University Hospital Galway. Mr. Waffle will continue to operate as normal during the daytime. However, during Level 5 restrictions, Galway Community Café is operating on a virtual basis only.

The café aims to provide a safe environment for individuals experiencing mental health challenges. The service has been designed by people with lived experience of mental health challenges and is staffed by people with both the lived experience and training to provide peer support, assist individuals to access services and to provide social connections. The project is co-funded by the Service Reform Fund and HSE Mental Health Services. For more information see: [www.galwaycommunitycafe.ie](http://www.galwaycommunitycafe.ie)



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I trust this information is of assistance to you, but should you have any further queries, please contact me.

Yours sincerely,

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**Charlie Meehan**  
**Head of Mental Health Services**  
**Community Healthcare West**



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