



Ceann Seirbhíse, Meabhairshláinte
Baile Átha Cliath Theas, Cill Dara & Iarthar Chill Mhantáin
– Cúram Sláinte Pobail

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04/10/2021

Deputy Mark Ward
Dail Eireann
Leinster House
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PQ ref 44256/21: To ask the Minister for Health the status of the connecting for life plan; and the details of the plan with a particular reference to CHO7.

Dear Deputy Ward,

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.

Ireland's national suicide prevention strategy, Connecting for Life (CfL), was launched in June 2015 and the Implementation Plan for 2017-2020 was published in late 2017. In December 2019 the Department of Health supported an extension of CfL for a further five years, with official approval by Cabinet granted in November 2020. To align with this the 17 local action plans are currently being updated to reflect the new national implementation plan.

This process was informed by the **Interim Strategy Review of Connecting for Life 2015-2020**, in which a review of the national implementation of the CfL strategy to date was completed. One of the specific aims of the review was to identify longer-term strategic goals for CfL, beyond 2020, to assist ongoing implementation of a whole of government approach to suicide prevention in Ireland. The review concluded that the strategic vision of CfL and the seven strategic goals of CfL remain relevant beyond 2020 and that a more concentrated, intensive and consistent implementation of the strategy beyond 2020 is required.

While the first cycle of CfL illustrated an effective example of whole of government working, (with 23 government departments working together with other statutory and non-statutory implementation partners), it is currently a case of much achieved, more to do at a national level and this is reflected in Dublin South Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare area.

In Community Healthcare Dublin South Kildare and West Wicklow, there were two plans; Connecting for Life Kildare and West Wicklow 2018 - 2020, and Connecting for Life Dublin South 2018 - 2020. The decision was made to bring the two plans together, and to produce a single implementation plan for the Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare area for 2021 - 2022. The process for the preparation of the new plans is shown in Section Three, and was aligned to the development of the national Connecting for Life Implementation Plan 2021 – 2022.

In Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare, progress against both local plans was encouraging with particular successes in relation to:

- Recruitment of a third Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention
- Suicide prevention training delivery
- Timely and coordinated responses in the aftermath of suicide including suicide bereavement support e.g. the new Suicide Bereavement Liaison Officer role, and awareness campaigns
- Specific projects in parts of the Community Healthcare area e.g.:
 - Jobstown Safetalk project
 - Kildare and West Wicklow perinatal mental health project
 - Suicide Prevention and Community Engagement (SPACE) project, including the Ballyfermot Women's Rapid Research Project (focused on young mothers)
 - Targeted work with undergraduates in specific professions e.g. doctors, dentists
- Gathering of real time data to inform more effective and timely responses to suspected suicides
- Establishment of the three Connecting for Life local interagency implementation groups (Dublin South County, Dublin South City, and Kildare and West Wicklow)
- Mental Health Promotion activities and initiatives for priority groups and the general population across the Dublin South Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare area

The development of the new plan has been led by the three Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs) in the Community Healthcare area in partnership with the three new CfL Interagency Implementation Groups, the Mental Health Management Team, the National Office for Suicide Prevention and national Mental Health Operations and other HSE directorates such as Health & Wellbeing and Primary Care.

The development of Connecting for Life Dublin South, Kildare and West Wicklow Community Healthcare is based on the principle of learning from the preparation and implementation of CfL Kildare and West Wicklow and CfL Dublin South from 2018 – 2020. The new plan is aligned in format and structure to the new national CfL implementation plan for the 2021 – 2022 period.

Commencing in autumn 2020, there were a number of strands to the preparation of the new plan which supported the review of the current plans and the development of the new plan for the Community Healthcare area:

- Alignment to other relevant national plans and policies e.g. Sharing the Vision, Slaintecare, the National Psychosocial Plan
- **Connecting for Life Interim strategy Review.** Published in January 2019, the aim of this independent review was to examine the extent to which the actions in the national strategy were on track to being achieved, to help identify what was working well, where the implementation challenges were, and to help in setting strategic priorities for the remaining period of the national strategy.
- **NOSP local CfL suicide prevention plan Self-Evaluation Project.** The aim of this project was to review implementation progress on the 17 local action plans, using a Best Practice self-evaluation checklist for suicide prevention at sub-national (regional/local)

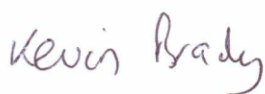
level prepared by Professor Stephen Platt, NHS Health Scotland. Under four headings; General Implementation Progress, Suicide Prevention actions, Local Plan Monitoring and Review and Suicide Prevention Awareness and Training, local plan stakeholders shared their feedback through a survey and focus groups. All of the feedback was collated and provided to all ROSPs from a shared learning perspective to support the new plan development.

- **NOSP local suicide prevention innovation project.** The aim of this project was to identify and showcase innovation in local suicide prevention. ROSPs were invited to submit projects and initiatives for selection for a national showcase. The Covid 19 global pandemic prevented the showcase element of the project, however those project selected for the showcase were presented to the RO SP group for consideration for inclusion in the new local plans.
- Detailed review of the implementation progress of the action in the first plans to inform the new actions.
- Development of new draft actions for review by the three Community Healthcare CfL Interagency Implementation Groups. In developing the new actions the following considerations were taken into account:
 - Consideration for actions to be included has taken account of what worked well in the Community Healthcare area in the first plan, and what worked in other local action plans, the feedback provided in the recent consultation survey
 - The evidence base for the action.
 - Minimising duplication of actions form other relevant plans
 - Not including actions that can only be delivered at a national level. Where appropriate actions aligned to the national action have been included in the plan.

The Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSP) Learning Community of Practice (LCOP) was instrumental in the development of the approach to preparing the new CfL plans across the country, providing a platform and safe space for all ROSPs to discuss and agree a consistent process for the new plan development, supported by the NOSP and Mental Health operations nationally. This ensured the minimisation of duplication of effort, sharing of lessons learned and draft actions for inclusion in the new plans.

At present the Connecting for Life Plan for Dublin South, Kildare & West Wicklow is being finalised for final review by the local Interagency Implementation Committees and the Connecting for Life Oversight Group. The plan will then require review by the NOSP and national Mental Health Operations before being launched. The timeframe for completion of this process is end of October 2021.

I trust this clarifies matters.



Mr. Kevin Brady
Head of Service Mental Health Dublin South Kildare West Wicklow