

# Annual Report 2023

HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)



This report was published in June 2024 and is available; To download at **www.nosp.ie** or **www.connectingforlifeireland.ie** 

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The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) acknowledges people with lived experience of mental health difficulties, suicide and self-harm, and the experiences of people who have been bereaved by suicide, carers, families or supporters. We are always mindful that suicide prevention work is underpinned by these real experiences, and remember real lives that have been lived, and that have been lost.

The initiatives outlined in this report, are targeted to ultimately prevent suicide – by providing a wider understanding of suicidal behaviour and preventative interventions in Ireland, with a view to influencing policy and practice intended to save lives in the future. However, sometimes this type of content can be sensitive, upsetting or triggering to read. We encourage readers to be mindful of this, and to be aware of their own needs and self-care in this space.

- Listening support is available anytime day or night, from Samaritans on Freephone 116 123, visit www.samaritans.ie.
- Text support is available anytime day or night, from spunout Text About It text HELLO to 50808, visit www.textaboutit.ie.
- Suicide and self-harm prevention and bereavement services are available from Pieta, visit **www.pieta.ie**.
- More information on mental health, services and supports is available at www.yourmentalhealth.ie.
- Information on getting urgent help is available at www.nosp.ie.
- If you are a journalist or media professional covering a suicide-related issue, consider the Samaritans Ireland Media Guidelines for Reporting Suicide because of the potentially damaging consequences of irresponsible reporting. In particular, the guidelines advise on terminology to use and to include links to sources of support for anyone affected by the themes in any coverage.
- Information on crisis supports and helplines in over 50 countries, is also available from the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP).

#### Foreword



#### from David Walsh

On behalf of the HSE it is with pleasure that I present the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) Annual Report for 2023.

The commitment within the HSE to realise the vision of our national suicide prevention strategy – Connecting for Life – of 'an Ireland where fewer lives are lost to suicide' remains resolute. Suicide's impact is far-reaching, and its consequences on the overall health and wellbeing of our population, are significant. It is imperative that the HSE, alongside partners from diverse sectors, collaborate strategically and collaboratively to mitigate the occurrence of such tragedies and their enduring impact.

I am pleased to note that the ongoing implementation of Connecting for Life has remained a steadfast objective in the HSE National Service Plan in recent years. The role of the HSE NOSP in achieving this objective is pivotal, especially within the context of implementing Sharing the Vision, a Mental Health Policy for Everyone (2020), and Stronger Together, the HSE Mental Health Promotion Plan (2022-2027). The adaptable and collaborative approach of the HSE NOSP to its program of work has been instrumental in numerous achievements outlined in this Annual Report, exemplifying broader cross-service initiatives aimed at accomplishing significant and shared goals.

As the HSE undergoes significant structural changes in 2024 – including the establishment of six new Health Regions, Integrated Health Areas, Community Health Networks, and a reconfigured 'corporate centre' – the shift towards more integrated care will enhance accessibility to health services for patients and service users, regardless of their location. It will also facilitate the delivery of more cohesive care by our staff, prioritising patients' needs within a patient-centric system. I have every confidence that the HSE NOSP will adapt and persist in delivering an effective strategic and operational agenda within the evolving integrated structures across our healthcare system.

I extend my sincere appreciation to the wide range of partners and collaborators with whom the HSE NOSP collaborates annually, including the Department of Health, other Government Departments, and various HSE departments such as Mental Health Operations and networks of HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs) nationwide. The range of agencies funded by the HSE NOSP also serve as invaluable strategic partners to the HSE – thank you for your ongoing collaborative work and successes. I acknowledge and appreciate your efforts and contributions to the accomplishments outlined in this report.

Finally, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to the entire team at the HSE NOSP for their dedication and performance in 2023. Your hard work and achievements serve as a reminder that a progressive, cross sectoral, and collaborative approach is indispensable in our efforts to prevent suicide and realise the overarching vision of Connecting for Life – of an Ireland where fewer lives are lost to suicide.

#### David Walsh

National Director - Access and Integration

#### Introduction



#### from John Meehan

On behalf of the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), I am pleased to introduce this Annual Report for 2023. The work outlined in this report is the result of concerted efforts and contributions across Health Services and many other agencies spanning multiple sectors. While the HSE NOSP is the designated lead for implementing Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2020-2024), progress would be unattainable without this cross-sectoral support and collaboration.

I would like to extend my gratitude to the Department of Health for their leadership in 2023 of the Connecting for Life National Cross-Sectoral Steering and Implementation Group. Their commitment

to fostering shared ownership and responsibilities with government departments and other leading agencies has been instrumental. I would also like to express my sincere thanks to Minister Mary Butler TD, Minister for Mental Health and Older People for her continued support.

Additionally, in 2023, the independent insights and advice from the Connecting for Life Data and Intelligence Advisory and Expert Advisory Groups have been invaluable to our Team. Their contributions have ensured that our direction and priorities remain focused and supported by the highest standards of evidence. I would like to pay particular tribute to, and thank, Emeritus Professor Steve Platt (University of Edinburgh) who retired in 2024, after many years chairing the Connecting for Life Expert Advisory Group. His insights have also assisted the preparatory work that took place last year, for the overarching evaluation of Connecting for Life, which has been in place since 2015. Our office, along with the Department of Health, worked in 2023 to commence an external evaluation of the strategy, and to consider how suicide prevention strategy should comprehensively evolve from 2025, across current multi-sectoral landscapes.

Looking back, this report outlines key achievements of the NOSP office, and many others, during 2023. For example, over 13,000 people availed of suicide prevention training from our office – and network of training partners – last year. Our office supported the considerable work of 22 HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs) who coordinate the implementation of 10 regional Connecting for Life Suicide Prevention action plans across the country. Almost 57% of our offices expenditure was to 21 national NGOs that work tirelessly on supports and services, promotional activities and initiatives that are aligned with our suicide prevention efforts. Investment in the HSE NOSP and support for our national suicide prevention strategy have significantly increased over the past decade, growing from approximately €5 million in 2012 to approximately €14 million last year.

In conclusion, I express my gratitude to the cohort of HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs) and other HSE colleagues who collaborate daily with the HSE NOSP team across a broad spectrum of initiatives and projects. I also extend my heartfelt thanks to the entire HSE NOSP team for their ongoing efforts throughout 2023 and beyond. This dedicated team encompasses diverse work streams, including strategy coordination, education, training, monitoring and evaluation, suicide bereavement, communications, finance, and administration. Each member has maintained a steadfast focus and innovative approach to suicide prevention. I deeply appreciate your hard work and unwavering commitment to Ireland's national strategy and suicide prevention efforts.

#### John Meehan

HSE Assistant National Director, Mental Health Planning, and Head of the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)

Section I

# Background and strategic context

#### I.O. Background and strategic context

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) was established to strategically lead on suicide prevention efforts across the HSE and in collaboration with multiple partners. This work is underpinned by **Connecting for Life (CfL), Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015-2024).** The HSE NOSP sits within Access and Integration in the HSE.

#### I.I. The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)

The HSE National Service Plan describes the high-level context for the work of the HSE NOSP. It sets out the services to be provided to the people of Ireland for the investment entrusted to the HSE. These commitments to services and developments are also in line with the **HSE Corporate Plan 2021-2024**.

The HSE National Service Plan outlines key objectives that include the ongoing implementation of actions and recommendations in Sharing the Vision, a Mental Health Policy for Everyone (2020) and Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015-2024).



CfL has shaped the core functions of the HSE NOSP.

- Of the 69 actions in CfL, the HSE NOSP is the lead agency assigned to deliver on 16 actions, the joint lead on 2 actions and a supporting partner for 21 further actions.
- The HSE NOSP has a pivotal role in driving the overall implementation of CfL. The strategy mandates the HSE NOSP to support, inform, coordinate and monitor the implementation of CfL across the HSE, Government departments, statutory agencies and non-governmental organisations (NGOs).
- Broadly, the HSE NOSP also works with the HSE, Government departments and within the NGO and community sector, in an advisory and supportive role, on activities or projects aligned with the CfL Strategy or on suicide and self-harm prevention, postvention and awareness.

As a whole-of Government strategy, CfL requires the HSE NOSP to provide a strategic view of implementation progress, and within an implementation structure established in 2015. The HSE NOSP fulfils a central role in this implementation structure and reports to the National Cross-sectoral Steering and Implementation Group (chaired by the Department of Health) on a quarterly basis. Furthermore, the HSE NOSP is a specifically named lead for, or supporting partner of, actions in additional frameworks and strategies, or significant national projects such as:

- Sharing the Vision, a Mental Health Policy for Everyone
- Stronger Together, HSE Mental Health
   Promotion Plan 2022-2027
- National LGBTI+ Inclusion Strategy
- National Traveller and Roma Inclusion Strategy
- National Traveller Health Action Plan
- High Level Task Force on Forensic
   Mental Health

During 2023, team members represented the HSE NOSP on additional networks such as:

- The UK and Ireland Roundtable Network of Suicide Prevention Leads – including representatives from England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.
- The International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP) - a proactive forum that creates strong collaborative partnerships and promotes evidence-based action to reduce suicide and suicidal behaviour internationally.
- The Global Leadership Exchange (GLE) which connects mental health leaders to help spread innovation and best practice to improve mental health and addiction services around the globe.
- The National Implementation and Monitoring Committee (NIMC) for Sharing the Vision – which is collectively responsible for driving and overseeing the long-term implementation of Sharing the Vision, A Mental Health Policy for Everyone.
- CSO-Suicide Mortality Statistics Liaison
   Group
- The Pan-European Mental Health Coalition.

#### I.2. Areas of work

#### 1.2.1. Strategy Coordination

The Strategy Coordination work stream in the HSE NOSP focuses specifically on the lead agencies assigned to actions in CfL. There are 22 lead agencies, mainly across Government departments and health settings (HSE and non-HSE). The HSE NOSP engages with these agencies to ensure an appropriate level of commitment is assigned to their CfL actions, to advise on, and support the approaches required to deliver on assigned actions and to maintain the close cross-sectoral relationships and partnerships that are required to ensure successful implementation of the strategy.

#### 1.2.2. Education and Training

The Education and Training work stream in the HSE NOSP has oversight of the national delivery of a suite of evidenceinformed training programmes in suicide prevention, intervention and postvention. The Connecting for Life Education and Training Plan and accompanying Quality Assurance Framework provide the overarching frameworks to support the coordination, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation of education and training actions identified in in the strategy. This work also aims to build the capacity of Government departments, funded agencies, the HSE, community organisations, groups and individuals to identify and respond appropriately to people at risk of suicide and self-harm.

#### 1.2.3. NGO Support

The HSE NOSP works directly with the non-governmental organisation (NGO) sector – presently 21 agencies receive national funding from the Office to deliver on work aligned with the objectives and actions in CfL. Services and initiatives delivered across this diverse sector play a decisive role in advancing suicide and self-harm prevention, postvention and mental health promotion efforts in Ireland.

This work stream focuses on relationship management with these funded agencies. Together with HSE Finance, the HSE NOSP manages the Service Level Agreements with each organisation and undertakes ongoing and regular assessment of service activity levels against agreed schedules.

#### 1.2.4. Local Implementation Support

This work stream supports the local implementation of CfL, primarily through the network of 20+ **HSE Resource** Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs) working across a range of Community Health Services and areas

nationwide. Reporting within local mental health services, the ROSPs coordinate the development and support implementation of 10 regional CfL Suicide Prevention Action Plans, each aligned to the national strategy.

The HSE NOSP provides funding support to the implementation of local actions and the delivery of suicide prevention training at a area level. The office also supports the network of ROSPs in an advisory capacity and maintains a twoway collaborative relationship with the group.

#### 1.2.5. Bereavement

The Bereavement work stream in the HSE NOSP focuses on the coordination of supports for people bereaved by suicide, as outlined in the **Improving Suicide Bereavement Supports in Ireland** report, as well as engagement with providers of general bereavement supports, both internally in the HSE, e.g., Palliative Care and with external partners, e.g., Irish Hospice Foundation. The work is aligned with the objectives and actions in CfL to improve the uniformity, effectiveness and timeliness of support services to families and communities bereaved by suicide.

#### 1.2.6. Evaluation

The Evaluation work stream focuses on monitoring the progress of the implementation of CfL and works with a range of stakeholders and experts in the area of suicide prevention to drive and guide this work.

In order to monitor, routinely track, and report on priority information about the strategy, the HSE NOSP uses continuous processes of collecting and analysing data on specified indicators. The HSE NOSP monitors the implementation of 69 actions across CfL, as outlined in the current implementation plan.

Evaluation analysis helps the HSE NOSP Team and other key stakeholders gain a better understanding of all aspects of their work, from design through implementation and on to completion and subsequent consequences. The Monitoring and Evaluation work stream also designs, implements and manages a broad programme of research work that informs different aspects of the strategy and approaches to particular projects, actions and objectives.

#### 1.2.7. Communications

The Communications work stream supports the overall communications requirements of the Office, and those associated with CfL and its national implementation. Regular channels and areas of oversight include: online content, social media, HSE NOSP reports, publications and print; other public information (leaflets, resources, World Suicide Prevention Day); email newsletter; press and media (with support of HSE Press Team); written correspondence (including collating responses to Parliamentary Questions, or preparing material for Oireachtas committees, reps and briefings); and events (online, in person).

#### 1.2.8. Clinical Support

The Clinical Advisor in the HSE NOSP supports all other work streams in the Office, providing clinical oversight, advice and input to all projects and initiatives underway. The Clinical Advisor also has leadership in advancing communications, education and training, and research projects, in specific clinical and healthcare settings.

The team in the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP)

#### 1.3. Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide

CfL - launched in 2015 - is Ireland's national strategy to reduce suicide. CfL sets out a vision of an Ireland where fewer lives are lost through suicide, and where communities and individuals are empowered to improve their mental health and wellbeing.

Connecting for Life, Ireland's National
 Strategy to Reduce Suicide

In 2020, the Minister for Health, Stephen Donnelly TD and the Minister of State for Mental Health and Older People, Mary Butler TD, announced the extension of Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide, to 2024.

The extension of the strategy was an opportunity to advance and embed local implementation structures throughout the country. There are presently 10 accompanying local CfL Action Plans nationwide.

CfL has 69 actions, under 7 strategic goals.

- Goal 1: To improve the nation's understanding of and attitudes to suicidal behaviour, mental health and wellbeing
- Goal 2: To support local communities' capacity to prevent and respond to suicidal behaviour
- Goal 3: To target approaches to reduce suicidal behaviour and improve mental health among priority groups
- Goal 4: To enhance accessibility, consistency and care pathways of services for people vulnerable to suicidal behaviour
- Goal 5: To ensure safe and high-quality services for people vulnerable to suicide

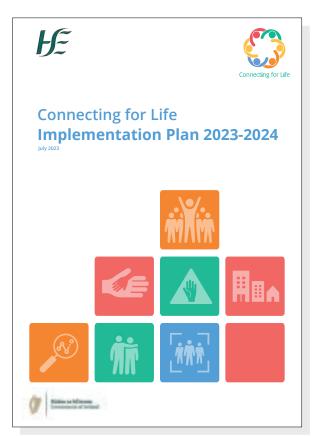
- **Goal 6:** To reduce and restrict access to means of suicidal behaviour
- **Goal 7:** To improve surveillance, evaluation and high-quality research relating to suicidal behaviour

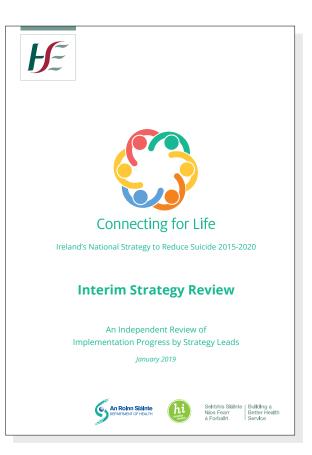
The HSE NOSP has responsibility for developing implementation plans for the strategy. These plans set out the agreed milestones for each of the 69 actions. They describe the strategic and operational agenda needed to drive the implementation of the strategy.

Connecting for Life
 Implementation Plans

In 2019, the HSE NOSP invited the Connecting for Life Evaluation Advisory Group to undertake an independent interim review of the strategy. The aims of the review were to examine the extent to which the key actions of the strategy were on-track to being achieved (by 2020), to help identify what was working well and where the challenges lay, and to help set strategic priorities for the following implementation period.

Connecting for Life
 Interim Strategy Review





#### **HSE Mental Health Literacy Campaign**

The HSE NOSP participates in the Campaign Team for the delivery of the national HSE Mental Health Literacy Campaign, and is a primary funder of campaign activity. HSE Mental Health Operations lead the Campaign Team, with HSE Communications (Programmes and Campaigns) and members from HSE Digital and HSE Health and Wellbeing.

While looking to build on the launch of the campaign during 2022, there were a number of key objectives for 2023:

- Collaborate with colleagues in the Digital Team on development and promotion of new online interactive tool, including design and naming.
- Build on 2022 campaign launch and media plan to continue to build awareness of campaign and understanding of key pillars, and drive traffic to website.
- Develop a new social strategy.

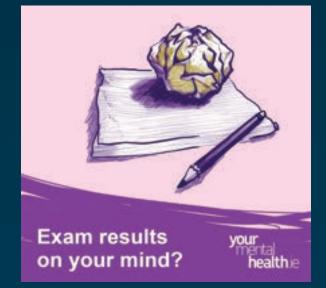
#### 2023 Campaign overview

- Audio partnerships with podcasts were an essential component of the campaign and over delivered on planned impressions.
- Close collaboration took place with HSE Digital on developing name and design for My Mental Health Plan online tool, due to be launched in 2024.
- Change in media budget mid-year lead to a pause in most paid activity in Q2 and Q3. Website traffic and campaign recall were not significantly affected due to maintaining search and social presence. Paid and organic search and social were the top drivers of traffic to the website.
- Social media refresh performed well, with a lower cost per click and higher click through rate. Engagement and sentiment also improved with the new creative.



Take time to check in #WorldMentalHealthDay





- Radio listenership figures indicated that 74% of all adults heard the radio ad at least once and 58% hearing it at least 3 times.
- Active behaviours were improved between May and Nov campaign tracking, with 74% saying they were likely to visit the website after seeing the campaign (up from 63%) and 83% being likely to recommend a friend or family member visit the website (up from 81%).
- The main channels utilised for the campaign focussed on reaching a wide audience.



#### Video on demand

- In 2023 there were almost 4 million campaign impressions – 2.5 million in January and 1.5 million in April.
- YouTube performed extremely well delivering over 500k bonus impressions in January and over 200k in April.
- 80% of impressions were delivered on English copy and 20% were delivered on Irish copy.

#### Radio

- There were 880 campaign spots across stations nationally. 170 in January, 202 in April and 508 in October.
- 20% of spots played Irish copy (100% on Radio Na Life).
- Digital audio ran across Acast, Audio XI and Spotify. Over delivery of planned impressions across all platforms and bursts.

#### Sponsored reads

Sponsored reads on podcasts performed very well.

- Catch up with Louise McSharry -118% delivery.
- The Stand with Eamonn Dunphy delivered 81,430 added value impressions. Very strong reach with a total of 601,430 impressions delivered across the month.
- Majority of impressions across platforms delivered on mobile or tablet representing an engaged opt-in audience who can act on messaging e.g., search for HSE.ie while listening.
- Spotify showed higher interaction with the younger demographic in January, March and April and the older generation in February. Heath and Wellness segment was highest audience.

#### Out-of-home

- A selection of out-of-home campaign ads ran throughout January.
- Spots were in both Irish and English and placed in key commuter points for top visibility.

From January 2023 to year end the new campaign performed strongly.

- Sessions on the <u>www.yourmentalhealth.ie</u> site increased by 116.8% from the previous year.
- New users to the site increased by 66.4%.
- 165,154 sessions were recorded on the site, for the combined pages on stress, anxiety, low mood and sleep difficulties (as per the Campaign topics).
- Anxiety was the most searched topic.

Section 2

# Management and accountability

#### 2.0. Management and accountability

The HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) leads, facilitates and supports a wide range of networks and structures, with key stakeholders across different sectors and involved in the implementation of Connecting for Life.

#### 2.1. Structures and stakeholders

#### 2.1.1. Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Services

The Cabinet Committee on Social Affairs and Public Services is chaired by An Taoiseach. It provides high-level political leadership and is accountable at Government level for the implementation of CfL. Membership of this Committee (of the 33rd Government) includes:

- Tánaiste and Minister for Foreign Affairs and Minister for Defence.
- Minister for the Environment, Climate and Communications and Minister for Transport.
- Minister for Public Expenditure, National Development Plan Delivery and Reform.
- Minister for Finance.
- Minister for Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media.
- Minister for Social Protection and Minister for Rural and Community Development.
- Minister for Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.
- Minister for Health.
- Minister for Justice.

#### 2.1.2. Connecting for Life, National Cross-sectoral Steering and Implementation Group

The National Cross Sectoral Steering and Implementation Group's role is to review and drive the implementation of CfL, applying a cross-sectoral approach. The group is chaired by the Department of Health. Membership (at time of publication) includes:

- Siobhán McArdle (Chair) -Department of Health.
- Ciarán Shanley Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media.
- Kevin Byrne Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media.
- Ian Smith Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media.
- James Lavelle Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport & Media.
- Annette Doherty Department of Rural and Community Development.
- Des Connolly Defence Forces.
- Hugh O'Reilly Department of Education.
- Christopher McCamley Department of Social Protection.
- Orla Fanthom Department of Social Protection.
- Ellen Stewart Department of Taoiseach.
- Adam Gunning Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

- Catherine Keogh Department of Enterprise.
- Fiona Kilcullen Department of Enterprise.
- Alice Wainwright Department of Justice.
- Declan Costello Department of Justice.
- Enda Kelly Irish Prison Service.
- Emer Clarke HSE Mental Health Operations.
- Dr Eamon Keenan Clinical Director of the HSE South Western Area Addiction Service.
- Aisling Sheehan HSE Health and Wellbeing.
- Aleisha Clarke HSE Health and Wellbeing.
- Ciaran Browne HSE Acute Operations.
- Catherine Brogan President, Mental Health Europe.
- Krystian Fikert MyMind.org.
- Dr Ella Arensman National Suicide Research Foundation.
- Professor Kevin Malone St. Vincents Hospital.
- Gerard Plunkett Department of Agriculture.
- Catherine Halley Department of Agriculture.
- Claire O'Kelly TUSLA.
- Dr Brian Osborne Irish College of General Practitioners.
- Marina Duffy The Local Government Management Agency.
- John Meehan HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.
- Sarah Woods HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.
- Ciaran Austin HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.
- Professor Philip Dodd HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.
- Dr Gemma Cox HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.
- Aoife Sweeney Health and Safety Authority.
- Declan McLoughlin Comisiún na Meán.

#### 2.1.3. Connecting for Life, HSE Crossdivisional Implementation Group

The HSE Cross-divisional Implementation Group provides strategic direction on the implementation of 40 CfL actions, for which the HSE is assigned as lead. The group is chaired by HSE Mental Health Operations. Membership includes representatives from:

- HSE Mental Health Operations.
- HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.
- Mental Health Heads of Service (x2).
- HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (x3).
- HSE Primary Care.
- HSE Health and Wellbeing.
- HSE Acute Operations.

#### 2.1.4. Connecting for Life, HSE Crossdivisional Implementation Group

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- HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.
- Mental Health Heads of Service (x2).
- HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (x3).
- HSE Primary Care.
- HSE Health and Wellbeing.
- HSE Acute Operations.

#### 2.1.5. HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs)

HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs) work nationwide and are funded by the HSE NOSP. HSE ROSPs are the designated leads for the coordination and implementation of CfL Suicide Prevention Action Plans at a local level. Collectively they collaborate as part of a Learning Community of Practice (LCOP), which provides a formal mechanism for efficient and effective sharing of knowledge, skills and experience for the 22 HSE ROSPs. The LCOP serves as a reference group for the HSE NOSP and HSE Mental Health Operations, advising on issues relating to suicide prevention at area and community level.

Contact details for HSE Resource
 Officers for Suicide Prevention
 (ROSPs)

#### 2.1.6. Connecting for Life, Data and Intelligence Advisory Group (DIAG)

In 2022, the CfL DIAG was established as a new group replacing the previous CfL Technical Advisory Group. This was to take account of the broad data and intelligence needs and priorities relating to CfL during the final two years of implementation (2022-24), and in preparation for the development of strategy post 2024. The CfL DIAG was established with a wider purpose and remit than the previous Technical Advisory Group.

The main purpose of the Group is to support the implementation and evaluation of the strategy, and to inform the work through effective application of data, information and intelligence relevant to the prevention of suicidal behaviour in Ireland. The main areas of activity include, but are not limited to:

- The Irish Probable Suicide Deaths Study (IPSDS): carry out further data collection, data analysis and reporting of findings; set out implications of findings and recommendations for CfL and post-CfL suicide prevention strategy and action in Ireland.
- Implementation and evaluation of CfL: meet data and intelligence requirements and provide support.
- Planning for post-CfL suicide prevention: identify data and intelligence requirements, and generate/acquire relevant data, as required.
- Suicide statistics: collaborate with the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) and Central Statistical Office (CSO) to improve the timeliness and reliability of data on suicide and self-harm in Ireland.
- Deaths by suicide in mental health services: contribute to the data completeness project between the Health Research Board (HRB) and the HSE (National Incident Management System) NIMS, as required.
- Ensure alignment of CfL with relevant suicide data recommendations in Sharing the Vision, A Mental Health Policy for Everyone (2020).
- In collaboration with appropriate bodies in Northern Ireland, promote an all-Ireland approach to the generation, collection, analysis and dissemination of data and intelligence on suicide and self-harm.

The membership of the DIAG (at time of publication) was:

- Professor Siobhan O'Neill, Professor of Mental Health Sciences, Ulster University and Mental Health Champion for Northern Ireland (Chair).
- Professor Philip Dodd, Clinical Advisor, HSE NOSP.

- Dr Brian Farrell, Dublin District Coroner emeritus.
- Dr Katerina Kavalidou, Data & Research Officer, HSE NOSP.
- Dr Suzi Lyons, Health Research Board (HRB).
- Professor Kevin Malone, University College Dublin.
- Dr Gemma Cox, Evaluation Manager, HSE NOSP.

#### 2.1.7. Connecting for Life, Expert Advisory Group (ExAG)

The purpose of the CfL ExAG is to provide advice and guidance to the Head of the HSE NOSP on a range of strategic and operational issues relating to the implementation and evaluation of CfL and post-CfL arrangements for suicide prevention in Ireland. The ExAG also provides oversight of the DIAG.

The operational and strategic issues considered by the ExAG include, but are not limited to:

- The implementation of CfL from 2022 to 2024, including arrangements for monitoring and evaluating progress towards delivery of outstanding actions (as set out in the strategy).
- The design and conduct of the proposed over-arching (summative) evaluation of CfL (2023-24).
- The development of a sustainable and feasible national strategic approach to suicide prevention in Ireland post-2024.
- Ongoing oversight of the work of the DIAG (via receipt of regular reports and standing meeting agenda item).

The ExAG comprises the following members:

- Emeritus Professor Steve Platt, University of Edinburgh, UK (Chair), *retired 2024*.
- John Meehan,
   HSE Assistant National Director, Mental Health Planning, and Head of the NOSP.
- Professor Ella Arensman, Chief Scientist, National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF).
- Stephanie Bartley, volunteer with Turas Le Cheile.
- Emer Clarke, Senior Project Manager, HSE Mental Health Operations.
- Dr Paul Corcoran, Head of Research, National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF).
- Professor Barbara Dooley, Acting Registrar and Deputy President, University College Dublin.
- Dr Claire Hickey, Head of Socio-economic Research, Houses of the Oireachtas.
- Professor Agnes Higgins, Professor in Mental Health, School of Nursing and Midwifery, Trinity College, Dublin.
- Sally Lovejoy, National Nurse Lead, National Clinical Programme for Self-harm and Suiciderelated Ideation.
- Dr Gemma Cox, Evaluation Manager, HSE NOSP.

Cabinet Committee on Social Policy and Public Service Reform Chaired by An Taoiseach

Connecting for Life National Cross-sectoral Steering and Implementation Group Chaired by the Department of Health



#### **Connecting for Life Implementation Structure**

# HSE National Clinical programme for Self-Harm and Suicide-related Ideation

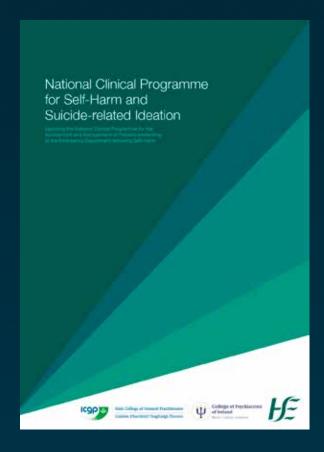
The HSE's National Clinical programme for Self-Harm and Suicide-related Ideation

(NCPSHI) was introduced to acute hospital emergency department (ED) settings in 2016. It had the overall aim to provide a caring and expert professional response to people presenting in self-harm crisis. The programme is now implemented in all 26 adult and one paediatric hospital ED setting that operate on 24/7 basis.

Currently, 49 Clinical Nurse Specialists (CNS) funded through the programme, are dedicated to a role whereby all patients who present to the ED following self-harm or with suicidal ideation:

- receive a prompt biopsychosocial assessment
- their next of kin receive support and advice on suicide prevention
- the patient is linked with the next appropriate step in follow up, and
- both the patient and their general practitioner receive a written plan of care.

The success of the NCPSHI has been demonstrated in its delivering the key clinical pillars of the programme. Accurate recording, analysis and dissemination of clinical data in relation to key performance indicators (KPI) is crucial in this regard and has been a recognised strength of the programme since its inception. This important function has relied on funding through the HSE NOSP of a part-time data manager post since 2019. The data manager (seconded to the NCPSHI from the National Suicide Research Foundation) has developed the national database of the programme from 2018 onwards.



The aims of the database are:

- to monitor the KPIs of the programme and the data submission process from the CNS staff
- to analyse patterns and trends of either self-harm or suicide-related ideation presentations nationally, and
- to provide evidence regarding hospital presentations for self-harm or suicidal ideation for specific population groups, i.e. ethnic minorities, unemployed, etc.

The NCPSHI database has been further used in research outputs through data requests, either internally to the HSE or externally, and a number of scientific papers with clinical data from Irish ED presentations with of people in suicidal crisis have been published. Between January 2018 and July 2023, the NCPSHI received 81.727 referrals for both self-harm and suiciderelated ideation. 90% were assessed in the emergency department or on medical/surgical/ICU wards.

For those not being assessed, the primary reason was leaving the ED before assessment conducted or completed (79%), followed by being transferred for a mental health assessment offsite (20%).48% of presentations were from males, and 52% were from females.

- The most prevalent age group reaching EDs was people aged 20 to 29 years (29%).
- 15% (n=12.505) were admitted to an approved centre.
- 51% of presentations assessed were males, and 49% were females. A small proportion of presentations had a non-binary gender recorded (<1%, n=180).</li>
- The most prevalent age group reaching EDs was people aged 20 to 29 years (29%).
- Half of all assessed presentations were due to suicide-related ideation only.
- A higher proportion of males reached EDs for suicide-related ideation only (56% male, 43% female). Self-harm was more prevalent among females (57% females, 44%).
- Following suicidal ideation, the second most frequently recorded reason of referral to the NCPSHI was drug and/or alcohol overdose (25%), followed by cutting (11%).
- 37% (n=27.347) of all assessed presentations were of people attending mental health services at the time of their presentation to the NCPSHI service.
- In 46% of NCPSHI assessed presentations, substances (involving alcohol and/or drugs) were recorded as contributory factors.
- There was a significant increase in presentations for suicidal ideation only between January 2018 and July 2023 (2018: 42%, 2019: 42%, 2020: 43%, 2021: 46%, 2022: 48%, 2023: 51%).

Section 3

# What was delivered in 2023

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#### 3.0. What was delivered in 2023

#### 3.1. Key achievements

#### 3.1.1. Implementation monitoring

In 2023, the CfL National Cross-sectoral Steering and Implementation Group met quarterly (on 30th March, 6th July, 5th October and 7th December). To facilitate the work of the Group, the HSE NOSP uses a monitoring system, which includes monitoring 'dashboards'. The office collates updates from lead agencies assigned to actions in the strategy, on milestones as set out in the Implementation Plans. Lead agencies mark milestones as 'on track', 'off track' or 'needing attention'. They are also requested to highlight any issues arising that may be hindering the implementation of actions. These issues are brought to the attention of members of the National Cross-sectoral Steering and Implementation Group for discussion and resolution, if possible.

In 2023, the HSE NOSP published quarterly progress reports that were provided to National Crosssectoral Steering and Implementation Group. These provide summaries of implementation progress from both statutory lead agencies and NGO (nongovernmental organisation) partners.

- Q1 2023 Progress Report (NGO)
- Q2 2023 Progress Report (Statutory)
- Q2 2023 Progress Report (NGO)
- Q3 2023 Progress Report (Statutory)
- Q3 2023 Progress Report (NGO)
- Q4 2023 Progress Report (Statutory)

#### 3.1.2. Connecting for Life Implementation Plan 2023-2024

In 2018, the HSE NOSP invited the CfL Evaluation Advisory Group to undertake a review of the national implementation of the strategy to date. The EAG concluded that the strategic vision of CfL and the seven strategic goals of CfL will remain relevant beyond 2020 and that a more concentrated, intensive and consistent implementation of the strategy beyond 2020 is required. They recommended that the Department of Health should extend the timeframe and funding of CfL to 2024.

In December 2019 the Department of Health presented this recommendation to the Senior Officials Group, who indicated their support for the extension of the strategy. The Department of Health then asked the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention to lead the development of an implementation plan for 2020–2022 and another for 2023–2024.

The HSE NOSP began a process of consultation with key stakeholders which included: an online survey to gather feedback on any emerging areas of focus for the new implementation plan and updated monitoring and reporting system; and planning meetings with each lead agency. A logic model process was used during the planning meetings to identify inputs, milestones and outputs for each action. In late 2022, milestones were reviewed and updated for 2023 and 2024. The 2023 and 2024 milestones are reflected in section 7 of this plan.

Connecting for Life Implementation
 Plan 2023-2024

#### 3.1.3. Safe sales of paracetamol

A new educational campaign targeted at staff in pharmacy and retail settings, aims to remind them of the restrictions on the sales of paracetamol-containing medications that they should always know and follow. Launched in October by Minister Butler at the Department of Health, the campaign has been developed to promote the safe sales of paracetamol, from a self-harm and suicide prevention perspective – and to reduce the incidence of paracetamol-related intentional drug overdose in Ireland.

As part of this campaign, new information packs are now available to order or download for pharmacy settings. They contain informative posters and postcards suitable for display in staff areas or noticeboards. They also contain shelfriders/stickers that might be suitable for public-facing or staff-facing display units where paracetamol-containing products are displayed.

This campaign is the work of the Preventing Paracetamol-Related Drug Overdose Working Group (WG), led by the Department of Health (Chair), the HSE NOSP, and National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) - with membership including the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU), Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA). The group was established in 2021 to decipher next steps to prevent intentional paracetamol overdose in Ireland. This works supports the implementation of CfL, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015-2024), and specifically action 6.1.2, 'continue improvements in adherence to the legislation limiting access to paracetamol through raising awareness amongst retailers and the public and the use of point of-sale systems.'



Safe sales of paracetamol in pharmacy settings:

# Self-harm and suicide prevention

**Information Pack** 

#### 3.1.4. Planet Youth

In 2022, Dr. Bernadine Brady, Dr. Charlotte Silke and colleagues in the Nation University Galway were awarded HRB funding for the "Informing Youth Suicide Prevention and Mental Health Promotion (Inform-YSP)" project. The project involved a collaboration between stakeholders in research, policy (including HSE NOSP) and practice. It sought to expand current knowledge about risk and project factors for youth mental health and suicide ideation.

Drawing on data collected from Planet Youth surveys with approx. 5,000 15-16-year-olds in the West of Ireland in 2018, 2020 and 2022, the research examined rates of self-reported suicidal and self-harm behaviours among adolescents in the west of Ireland from 2018-2022. The research also examined the connection between adolescents' adverse experiences and their engagement in suicidal and selfharm behaviours, and attempts to identify the patterns of adversities that are most strongly associated with adverse mental health outcome. Protective effects of social support and safety are also explored.

A range of activities were reported in 2023, including Plant Youth Conference: From research to policy and practice; developing primary prevention in an Irish context.

## Connecting for Life Implementation Plan 2023-2024

#### 3.1.5. Evaluation of Connecting for Life

Connecting for Life is a 'complex' policy intervention, meaning that there are several interacting components, working across different settings, levels and contexts, targeting different attitudes and behaviours. The strategy aims to produce certain principal outcomes i.e. reduced suicide rate in the whole population and amongst specific priority groups and reduced rates of presentation of self-harm in the whole population and amongst specified priority groups.

In trying to measure the performance of CfL there are a number of challenges including measuring whether or not the principal outcomes are actually occurring given the delay in the availability of data on death by suicide in Ireland. The complexity of the strategy also has implications for many aspects of its evaluation, including the difficulty in attributing any observed results to the strategy rather than other factors. How much of the success (or failure) in achieving the intended outcomes can we attribute to the strategy? As there are many other factors at play in addition to the impact of CfL's activities, such as other government actions, economic factors, social trends, COVID, cost of living crisis and the like, that can all have an effect on (any) changes in suicide and self-harm rates in Ireland.

Evaluating complex initiatives requires an approach that values improving theories and understanding of how interventions contribute to change, including how they interact with their context and wider dynamic systems. To this end, the overarching evaluation of Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Suicide Prevention Strategy (2015-2024) has 3 components;  Work Package 1: the Implementation/ Process Evaluation of CfL:

This evaluation will develop the underlying theory(s) of change for the strategy. It will assess various aspects of CfL's implementation, including the national and area-level implementation, the factors affecting implementation, including contextual factors supporting implementation, the results of implementation, and the critical differences between the planned & actual implementation of the strategy. There will be significant focus on area-level implementation of CfL via the local action plans. The finding will help the HSE NOSP and partners improve implementation processes and it will inform future policy development.

- Work Package 2: Outcomes Evaluation: This evaluation will assess the contribution of CfL activities and funded projects to the (23) intermediate outcomes identified in the strategy. This evaluation will also help HSE NOSP and partners understand the extent to which the objectives of the strategy are being met. It will build upon the implementation evaluation – which will clarify how the anticipated outcomes and impact are to be achieved. Explaining change is difficult; the outcomes evaluation will seek to provide a nuanced view of the strategies contribution to impact.
- Work package 3: Expert panel to assess
   CfL's contribution to impact. This process
   will apply a systematic consensus method
   to assessing contribution of CfL to reduced
   suicide incidence in the whole population
   and in specific priorities groups and on
   the rates of A&E presentations for self harm. HSE NOSP will compile a dashboard
   presenting indicator data on impact (i.e.
   changes in incidence of suicide and self harm). An expert panel will be convened
   in 2025 to review the implementation and
   outcome evaluations along with the impact
   data.

The findings from both the implementation and outcomes evaluation of CfL will be used by the HSE NOSP, wider HSE and the Department of Health to provide direction for post-CfL suicide prevention strategy and operations in Ireland. More specifically it will:

- support the identification and prioritisation of objectives for the next phase of work;
- (ii) inform allocation of resources;
- (iii) assist with the implementation of the next phase of work; and
- (iv) refine and strengthen systems for monitoring and measuring progress and outcomes.

A Request for Tender for the evaluation of the strategy was issued on etenders in quarter 3 2023 and a preferred candidate was selected. The necessary evaluation governance structures were established, and the evaluation will commence in 2024.

#### 3.1.6. Suicide Prevention in the Community

Suicide Prevention in the Community (2023) - Connecting, Communicating, Caring: A Practical Guide was published by the HSE NOSP in 2023. This book was produced by Mary O'Sullivan (HSE Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention) in collaboration with HSE colleagues, and other statutory, voluntary and community groups working in suicide prevention in Ireland and aims to offer practical, evidence-based guidance to help and encourage communities who want to get involved in suicide prevention by building their understanding, knowledge and skills.

It promotes consistent and safe messages and provides information on how to respond to suicide in a balanced and sensitive way. Informed by experiences and knowledge built up over the years, real-life case study examples are outlined of activities, initiatives and programmes being carried out throughout Ireland.

## 3.1.7. A short directory for GPs and GP Practices

#### A practical short directory for General

**Practitioners** (GPs) in Ireland was produced in 2023 to assist GPs, Practice Nurses and others working in GP practices (group or single practices), primary care centres and health centres to easily and effectively recommend mental health supports and services to people in need.

For information purposes, it lists NGOs and agencies providing supports and services for people who may be experiencing mental health difficulties, suicidal ideation, engaging in deliberate self-harm, bereaved by suicide or for family members, carers or supporters.

It includes the main organisations who receive funding nationally, from the HSE NOSP and from HSE Mental Health (in line with Sharing the Vision, Irelands' National Mental Health Policy). The services and initiatives listed range from local support groups, self-help groups, voluntary and community-based counselling services to larger organisations with multiple branches.

# HE.

Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Supports and Services Provided by Non-Governmental Organisations

A short directory for GPs and GP Practices

Representatives from the NGO sector who participate in the national implementation oversight group for CfL compiled this directory.

#### 3.1.8. #chatsafe

#chatsafe is an Australian suicide prevention program that aims to equip young people with the skills and knowledge to communicate safely online about self-harm and suicide. In 2018, Orygen developed the world's first evidence-informed guidelines for young people to communicate safely online about suicide.

The guidelines were developed in partnership with young people, media professionals and suicide prevention experts. #chatsafe also includes resources that aim to give adults the knowledge and skills they need to support young people in their lives to communicate safely online about self-harm and suicide. In 2023, the HSE NOSP in partnership with Orygen published the **#chatsafe for parents and carers guide in Ireland**.

#### 3.1.9. Deaths in HSE Mental Health Services

In alignment with CfL actions 5.2.3 and 7.2.2, this project is a collaboration between the HSE NOSP, the Mental Health Commission and HSE Mental Health Services. It involved a retrospective review of suicide mortality data reported to the Mental Health Commission and to the NIMS on all probable suicide deaths in Mental Health Services from 2015 to 2020.

In 2022, the analysis of data was completed and the learning from this project has demonstrated the need for more permanent data enhancement, in order to support targeted service quality improvement and better risk management, aligned with best international practice. Towards the end of 2023, the resources required to develop a feasibility study to look to the development of a comprehensive National Patient Suicide Register was identified, to be carried out in 2024.

In addition, in 2022 the HSE NOSP led work to develop new guidance for enhancing the use of the HSE Incident Management Framework in cases of community based probable suicide. The guidance document was developed and consulted on in 2022.

In 2023 a pilot of the use of the guidance document was completed in several HSE Community Health areas. This has enabled to document to be further improved. The document is due for final approval and completion in 2024.

#### 3.1.10. Deaths in Public Places

In 2023 the HSE NOSP has established an advisory group of key stakeholders and contracted an independent research consultancy to develop a toolkit to prevent deaths by suicide in a range of different public locations and support areas to implement measures in at least three locations of the country.

Strategic Goal 6 of Connecting for Life aims to reduce and restrict access to means of suicidal behaviour. Under this goal, the HSE NOSP works with Local Authorities to consider, develop and implement measures where practical to restrict access to identified locations and settings where people are at risk of engaging in suicidal behaviour, and assist generally in reducing risk factors in public locations.

#### 3.1.11. Policy Submissions

The HSE NOSP engaged in two significant public consultations in 2023.

#### 3.1.11.1. Development of Ireland's first Online Safety Code

In September 2023, the HSE NOSP answered Coimisiún na Meán's public consultation regarding the development of Ireland's first Online Safety Code.

Subsequently, a Draft Online Safety Code was published in December 2023; the HSE NOSP submitted a response to consultation on this Draft Online Safety Code in January 2024.

More information on the Online Safety Code, a record of submissions, and related information, can be found at https://www.cnam.ie/coimisiunna-mean-to-notify-online-safetycode-to-european-commission/

#### 3.1.II.2. Coroner Reform Consultation

The HSE NOSP submitted a response to this public consultation on how the Coroner Service might be reformed in the future.

More information is available at https://www.gov.ie/en/ consultation/473f5-coronerreform-consultation/

#### 3.1.12. Supporting the ROSPs Learning Community of Practice

HSE ROSPs meet as a Learning Community of Practice that facilitates collaboration and the sharing of knowledge and skills.

Through the existing LCOP structure, the issue of self-care and support for ROSPs was raised. While individual support is available through the HSE's EAP service, access to peer support was identified as a gap. In 2023 the HSE NOSP trialed a peer support programme for Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention with the following objectives:

- To provide appropriate space for ROSPs to further develop critical awareness and promote on-going reflection on their work
- To increase the capacity of ROSPs for reflection and understanding of the complexity of their roles
- To promote personal and professional development
- To support ROSPs in their ongoing work providing support to communities in relation to suicide prevention and postvention

## 3.1.13. Undergraduate suicide prevention module for healthcare students

In 2023 the HSE NOSP funded the National Suicide Research Foundation to develop a suicide prevention module for Health & Social Care professionals in line with Action 2.3 of the National Education and Training Plan - 'the HSE NOSP will advise on the incorporation of suicide prevention as part of the undergraduate curriculum of undergraduate curriculum of relevant professionals'.

The module has been designed to provide undergraduate healthcare students with the fundamental knowledge and skills necessary to support individuals at risk of suicide or self-harm. The module has been developed as a 5 credit module with six core components. Student centred self-care and wellbeing education has been integrated throughout the module, working also to enhance professional capacity building. The suicide prevention module will be piloted in 2024.

#### 3.1.14. Grant Scheme for Collaborative Research Projects

The HSE NOSP introduced its first grant scheme for collaborative research projects on priority groups in Ireland, at the end of 2020. The purpose of the scheme was to:

- Further understanding of the groups that are at increased risk for self-harm and suicide
- Promote and support collaborative research projects between researchers and services working in the area of suicide prevention in Ireland.

Successful projects under the scheme are summarised in the HSE NOSP Grant Scheme for Collaborative Research Projects Book of Abstracts (July 2021). The scheme was completed in 2023 with the publication of a range of papers associated with the 11 projects. In addition, HSE NOSP hosted a one-day event showcasing findings from some of these innovative research projects.

Grant scheme paper 1

The effects of COVID-19 on a marginalised cohort in the Dublin region: A longitudinal qualitative exploration.

Grant scheme paper 2

"What's your story?" Exploring the acceptability of a digital storytelling intervention to promote mental health and wellbeing among Traveller men affected by suicide.

Grant scheme paper 3

Research to support Dublin Simon Community's response to client Suicidality and Self-harm incidents.

Grant scheme paper 4

Closing the gap: Exploring the covariates of suicidality among Irish Travellers Project.

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HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention Grant Scheme for Collaborative Research Projects

The effects of COVID-19 on a marginalised cohort in the Dublin region: A longitudinal qualitative exploration

AUTHORS: Paula Byrne, Joanne Fenton, Kathyan Kelly. September 2023

Connecting for Life

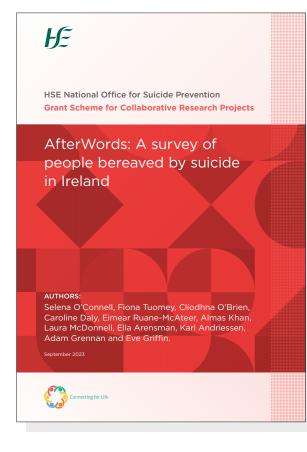
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AUTHORS

HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention Grant Scheme for Collaborative Research Projects

Research to support Dublin Simon Community's response to client Suicidality and Self-harm incidents

Kevin Cullen, Tim Creedon, Derek Dempsey.



#### Grant scheme paper 5

AfterWords: A survey of people bereaved by suicide in Ireland.

#### Grant scheme paper 6

Community Engagement for Suicide Prevention: Exploring Sex Worker Experiences in Ireland.

#### Grant scheme paper 7

A blueprint for providing resources to parents of adolescents who self-harm.

#### Grant scheme paper 8

Safety Planning Group Intervention (SPGI) delivered with people experiencing Suicidality in an Adult Acute Mental Health Unit.

#### Grant scheme paper 9

A detailed investigation of high lethality Intentional Drug Overdose (IDO) via retrospective emergency department chart review.



John Meehan, Head of the HSE NOSP; Dr Maria Quinlan, HSE Research Development; Dr Stephanie O'Keeffe, HSE Operations Planning; Dr Siobhán Hargis, Department of Health; Professor Philip Dodd, HSE NOSP

#### Grant scheme paper 10

Lived Lives Revisited: An enduring Art -Science Suicide intervention project in priority community groups, including young people, frontline community mental health workers, primary care workers and 1st Responders (An Garda Síochána).

#### Grant scheme paper 11

Dying to Farm: Developing a Suicide Prevention Intervention for Farmers in Ireland

Two projects funded under the Grant Scheme received following on funding in 2023. The University College Dublin collaboration (of the Department of Agriculture and the Department of Psychology) received funding for their proposal to develop a tailored, evidence-based psychological intervention targeting suicidal ideation, mental health, and stress among farmers in Ireland. In addition, the University of Galway and HSE West collaboration received funding for their proposal to manualise the 3 week Safety Planning Group Intervention (SPI) that assists mental health patients, who have experienced recent suicidality, understand their personal warning signs of suicidal crisis using the booklet.

## 3.1.15. Developing suicide bereavement supports

Following a successful tender, the NSRF commenced work in 2023 to identify the postvention needs of children and young adults (aged 12 to 25) bereaved by suicide, which was one of the key recommendations that emanated from AfterWords: A survey of people bereaved by suicide in Ireland.

New suicide bereavement information, particularly in relation to children, went live on **www.hse.ie/grief** in 2023 with a burst of related social media activity on HSE channels following in Q3.

In 2023, author Patricia Forde and illustrator Bronagh Lee, continued their work on Safe Harbour, a first-of-it-kind illustrated story book for children and their families bereaved by suicide, with additional offerings also commenced e.g. podcast, audio book.

The NSRF completed Bereavement supports provided through the coronial system – a scoping study, which identified international bereavement support models that are provided through the coronial system along with best practice in this area.

#### 3.1.16. Education and training

The HSE NOSP is involved in a wide range of **education and training** initiatives encompassing suicide and self-harm prevention, and suicide bereavement. These have been identified as key components of work to achieve the vision of CfL. Gatekeeper training in suicide prevention is available to anyone over the age of 18 years in Ireland, free of charge.

In 2023, the HSE NOSP worked with a range of stakeholders to support the delivery of suicide prevention gatekeeper programmes. These programmes include:

- Livingworks START a 90 minute online interactive training programme that gives participants the skills and knowledge to keep others safe from suicide.
- safeTALK an internationally recognised half-day training programme that supports participants to recognise and engage persons who might be having thoughts of suicide, and to connect them with community resources. The programme stresses safety while challenging taboos that inhibit open talk about suicide.
- ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) – a 2-day skills-based workshop that equips participants for an effective suicide intervention role. The emphasis is on first aid – helping a person at imminent risk stay safe and seek further help.
- STORM® a 2–3 day skills-based interactive workshop designed to accommodate the needs of people with differing levels of engagement and responsibility for safety planning.
- Suicide Bereavement Professionals Workshop – a one-day programme that provides individuals with the skills and knowledge to support those bereaved through suicide.

 Understanding Self-harm – a 1-day programme that works to reduce the stigma of self-harm, improve individual and care agencies' awareness and sensitivities to self-harm issues and promote effective care services for those who self-harm.

Programme	Participants
safeTALK	6,186
ASIST	2,858
Understanding Self-harm	1,138
Postvention	301
START	2,171
STORM®	198
Introduction to Understanding Self Harm	188
Total	13,040

#### Participants in training programmes in 2023

#### **Programme Development**

Throughout 2023, training programme material was revised to incorporate the voice of lived experience. The one day, Understanding Self-Harm programme videos were revised to draw on the expertise and insight of people with lived experience of self-harm, documenting the supports and interactions that supported them on their journey. The insights and contributions of people who have been bereaved by suicide were also incorporated into the one-day Suicide Bereavement training programme.

"The lived experience voice adds so much to the training material – it brings it to life, makes it tangible and I can see how I can apply the skills in my role."

#### **Training partnerships**

- The HSE NOSP in partnership with HSE Mental Health and Wellbeing worked in collaboration with the Veterinary Medicine degree course at University College Dublin (UCD) to identify a programme of work to support the mental health and wellbeing of veterinary students. The HSE Minding Your Wellbeing programme was incorporated into the Professional Growth module, a component of the Veterinary degree programme. The programme of work recognises the continuum of mental health and each academic year will incrementally build on the scope and depth of material covered.
- In collaboration with STORM UK, the HSE NOSP worked with the ICGP to secure the delivery of STORM suicide prevention training to trainee GPs in Sligo. To inform systematic future roll out NOSP is working with the ICGP to tailor programme delivery specific to the needs of GP's.

"I have asked what can be these difficult questions with more confidence and been surprised by the frank and honest responses I have obtained."

#### Let's Talk About Suicide

In 2023, the HSE NOSP continued to develop Let's Talk About Suicide, a free online suicide prevention training programme. The programme will be officially launched in the summer of 2024.

For more information please visit www.nosp.ie/training

#### 3.1.17. Data sharing protocol with An Garda Síochána

Accessing more timely data on suspected suicides is a strategic action within CfL. To this end, the HSE NOSP has been working with the Garda Victim Liaison Office which is part of the Garda National Protective Services Bureau (GNPSB) on a joint working protocol and Memorandum of Understanding, including a data sharing agreement. Under the protocol, An Garda Síochána would share daily records of suspected suicides from their Pulse system as well as providing a pack and referral to bereaved families, if appropriate.

The protocol has gone through the various stages within An Garda Síochána, was reviewed by their Senior Leadership Team and changes were made accordingly. When implemented the data will form a key part of community response planning as well as enhancing prevention and postvention initiatives.

#### 3.1.18. Secondary Analysis of Healthy Ireland Data

In 2023 HSE NOSP and the NSRF submitted a proposal to the Department of Heath to conduct an in-depth analysis of some of the variables gathered in the Healthy Ireland Survey (Waves 7, 8 and 9) on suicide bereavement and suicidal behaviour. This information will benefit HSE NOSP, the Department of Health and the NSRF in terms of improving understanding of suicide bereavement and suicidal behaviour in individuals in Ireland. In addition, this information will inform the provision of services and the targeting of resources to individuals who are bereaved by suicide and those who are displaying suicidal behaviour.

The current research aims are to:

- Explore the factors that are associated with suicide attempts in Ireland e.g. alcohol use, age, gender, employment status and health difficulties.
- Explore the impact of suicide bereavement on individuals and any correlations between bereavement and suicide attempts.
- Explore risk (e.g., alcohol use) and protective factors (e.g., being married and having children) for suicide prevention.

The proposal was approved and supported by the Department of Health and access to the data was granted.

#### 3.1.19. National Probable Suicide Monitoring System (NPSMS)

The Department of Health, and Health Research Board (HRB) worked in 2023 to reestablish data collection on probable suicides using the HRB's existing coronial data collection methodology. This new system will be called the National Probable Suicide Monitoring System (NPSMS). Business cases were prepared for the Department of Health for two medical research posts to facilitate data collection on probable suicides by NHIS. Sanction for these posts is awaited, and the next data collection cycle begins in Q3 2024 if approved.

#### 3.2. HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs)

The main role of HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention is to coordinate the development, and support the implementation of the regional CfL Suicide Prevention action plans. As such, HSE ROSPs work across a range of Community Health Services, CHOs and areas nationwide to assist all relevant services and stakeholders in implementing the relevant actions of each plan. They are supported in their work by the HSE NOSP to ensure that each local action plan is evidence based and in line with national programme goals and performance metrics. Ten local CfL Implementation Plans (for the current implementation period) are in place around the country.

In 2023 the HSE NOSP:

- Funded each health area to deliver suicide prevention training in line with the national Connecting for Life Education and Training Plan.
- Resourced a fortnightly Learning Community of Practice and a programme of Continued Professional Development for the HSE ROSP network.
- Resourced a Pilot Peer Support Programme based on group sessions supervision to promote ongoing reflexive practices and critical awareness of HSE ROSPs work.

The HSE NOSP also provides additional annual funding to specific areas, for individual projects that support the implementation of their local CfL plans. Annually, ROSPs submit business cases for initiatives requiring funding. The management of the allocation, monitoring and evaluation of such funding is integral to the work of both the HSE NOSP and the HSE ROSPs. Each CHO area is required to provide quarterly financial and activity reports to the HSE NOSP.

The following are initiatives and projects that were successful in receiving additional funding to areas, in 2023.

Contact details for HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention (ROSPs): https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/ list/4/mental-health-services/nosp/ resourceofficers/

### Community Healthcare Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo

- The implementation of a new Communications Plan for Cavan Monaghan, including the development of:
  - + Resources for print and social media on signposting to local supports and services, supporting someone at risk of suicide, and supporting people bereaved by suicide.
  - + Printed resources for front-line professionals on referral pathways for people at risk of suicide.
  - + A social media strategy for communication of information on managing risks of suicide and signposting to supports.
  - + The Community Response Plan to suicide.
  - + Articles and interviews for local print and radio coverage.
  - + Development of a new CfL Webpage to reflect the outputs of the activities implemented.
- The allocation of funds to local community and voluntary groups to support initiatives to reach at risk groups in relation to supporting their mental health and reducing risks of suicide and self-harm. Specific at risk groups targeted included:
  - + People bereaved by suicide (e.g., development of Suicide Bereavement Support Group in Monaghan).
  - + Young men (e.g., support toward the development of early intervention youth mental health services).
  - + Travellers (e.g., identification of champions in Traveller community to help signpost Travellers to local mental health supports and services).
  - + Refugees and asylum seekers (e.g., work with local agencies on wellbeing initiatives to support residents in local reception centres.
  - + Victims of domestic violence (e.g., work with local Dochas for Women Service on improving access to supports for victims of domestic violence.
  - + Other groups as determined by local need.

### **Community Healthcare West**

- Continuation of the Eden Programme on a phased approach, in Community Healthcare West.
- The provision of the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service in Roscommon (through Vita House in Roscommon).
- The provision of the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service and Flourish Services in Mayo (through the Family Centre, Castlebar).

### **Mid West Community Healthcare**

- Support the implementation of actions in the Mid West Connecting for Life Communications Plan, including the facilitation of annual networking events for stakeholders.
- The update, reprint and circulation of Mid West crisis service cards, leaflets and services posters.
- Support participation in annual Mental Health Week events and festivals across three counties.

### Cork, Kerry Community Healthcare

- Support participation and planning for the annual Cork and Kerry Mental Health and Wellbeing Fest, and the distribution of 40,000 Green Ribbons across the region.
- The delivery of Cork and Kerry CfL stakeholder conferences.
- The update, reprint and circulation of Cork/Kerry crisis service cards, leaflets and services posters and Cork youth booklet.
- Support the delivery of media campaigns across the region through Radio adds print and on line supports in conjunction with the social proscribing and health managers networks.
- Continue to support the development of crisis signage for high-risk locations.
- Support the development of Traveller signposting resources, with representatives of HSE Mental Health Services and the HSE Traveller Health Unit Cork/Kerry and in collaboration with Traveller organisations across Cork/Kerry.
- Support wellbeing in the workplace programmes like Psyched for Cork and Kerry.
- Development of an information pack for CAMHS service users.
- Developing a key well-being plan for the islands, this will include signage and events on the islands.

### South East Community Healthcare

- Supporting mental health promotion in South East Community Healthcare including among priority groups, on World Mental Health Day and World Suicide Prevention Day.
- The development of resources/literature/publications for the five counties.
- Support for partner organisation initiatives and events in suicide prevention and mental health promotion.
- Continued support of facilitated and peer supported suicide bereavement support groups in Waterford, Wexford, Carlow, Kilkenny and South Tipperary.

### **Community Healthcare East**

- Support for the development, updating, reprinting and circulation of information resources across Community Healthcare East.
- Promotion of the WITH Project in Dublin South and East Wicklow.
- Delivery of HELLO Campaign across Community Healthcare East.
- Support and delivery of the Connecting for Life Community and the Trainer in CHO6 events.

### **Dublin South, Kildare, West Wicklow**

- Support the development of communications and campaign resources, for World Suicide Prevention Day, World Mental Health Day, the Green Ribbon Campaign and other signposting materials.
- Dissemination of mental health supports and services pathways booklet for Children/young people and parents guardians.
- Production of promotional signage and signposting materials for construction workers locally.
- Continuation of work of Minding me working group, including events World Maternal Mental Health Week, and a range of bespoke resources and workbooks.
- Continue to support the promotion of the WITH (Wellbeing in the Home) Programme a young person's guide to parental mental health across the area.
- Continuation of work with Naas General Hospital on the development of a suicide intervention and bereavement support project.
- Continue to provide ongoing funding support to the Village Counselling Service (Tallaght).
- Continue to support the development of an illustrated storybook for children who have been bereaved by suicide.
- Complete a service mapping exercise between HSE Mental Health Services, HSE Primary Care and Hospital Groups to determine where improvements can be made to ensure safe transitions of care.

### Midlands, Louth, Meath

- Support community and statutory organisations in the delivery of Mental Health Awareness Weeks and information events for the annual Green Ribbon Campaign.
- The update, reprint and circulation of crisis service cards, leaflets and services posters across six counties.
- Support for the development of the Midlands Louth Meath CfL Action Plan, to 2024.

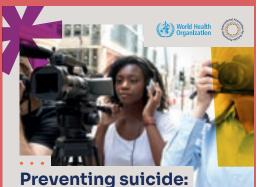
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### Midlands, Louth, Meath continued

 Delivery of the Travelling to Wellbeing programme by Offaly Traveller Movement. Continue to support the delivery of MenPower project by Offaly Local Development Company. Development of Crisis Response Plan for the Traveller Community in Laois, Westmeath, Longford, Louth and Meath.

### **Dublin North City and County**

 Support for the development, updating, reprinting and circulation of information resources across Dublin North City and County.



a resource for media professionals Update 2023

### World Health Organisation

This revised edition of **Preventing suicide: A resource for media professionals**, produced in collaboration with the International Association for Suicide Prevention, summarises current evidence on the impact of media reporting of suicide, and provides practical guidance for media professionals on how to report on suicide responsibly.

### 3.3. The NGO sector

The HSE NOSP allocates over 50% of its budget to supporting mental health and suicide prevention non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that are strategically linked to CfL.

# Please see Section 5.0 Financial Summary

NGOs apply for annual funding from the HSE NOSP through an SLA (Service Level Agreement) process. The HSE NOSP NGO Programme Manager ensures that funded activities align to CfL actions, and ensures quarterly reporting from each funded agency, of their activity levels and achievements. Understanding particular service needs and demands – as informed by services experiences, research, evidence, standards and best practice – is important for the HSE NOSP in assessing funding applications or making allocations.

All HSE NOSP SLAs are considered within the context of relevant HSE budgets – and funding is provided and governed under the national HSE Governance Framework for the funding of Non-Statutory Agencies.

The following information are highlights from self-reported activity in 2023, from each NOSP-funded NGO.

# Aware

www.aware.ie



The HSE NOSP supports the delivery of Aware programmes that are designed using the principles of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy (CBT). These programmes are evidence-based and delivered free of charge by trained Aware facilitators. Adults with depression and mood related conditions are offered free programmes in their local communities, and online.

### In 2023

- There were 1,464 participants in the Life Skills Adult Programme (across 86 programmes).
- There were 2,248 participants in the Life Skills Online Programme.
- There were 113 participants in the Living Well with Bipolar Disorder Programme (across 15 programmes).

# **Belong To Youth Services**

www.belongto.org



HSE NOSP funding supports BeLonG To's National Network members and a range of services and mental health initiatives for young LGBTI+ people delivered nationally and through local networks across the country. They support the wider objectives of the national organisation, to ensure young LGBTI+ people are equal, safe, and valued in the diversity of their identities and experiences in Ireland.

### In 2023

- The National Network membership comprised of 46 youth services in 2023. Five meetings of the National Network were held in 2023 and following request they returned to in person/ hybrid meetings. These meetings continued to provide a forum for knowledge exchange, peer support and collective planning.
- BeLonG To continues to respond to increasing requests for supports from National Network members in relation to targeted attacks on services from anti-LGBTQ+ groups and individuals.
- BeLonG To carried out a review of the National Network as part of the Youth Service Operational Review and plan to implement an Engagement Plan in 2024.
- Provision of additional supports continued for National Network Youth Work members including external supervision and therapeutic supports.
- The national Being LGBTQI+ in Ireland research study continued (for completion in 2024) with Trinity College Dublin, and co-funded by the HSE NOSP, HSE Social Inclusion and the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth.

# **Community Creations**

www.spunout.ie



Funding from the HSE NOSP supports spunout in their provision of high quality and trusted online content, video content, information and campaigns for young people. This helps to promote help-seeking behaviour among young people, and improve their mental health literacy, including on lesser-understood mental health issues such as eating disorders, self-harm, suicide and mental health disorders.

### In 2023

- Spunout continued the provision of specific information to at-risk groups who require more targeted information services (e.g. Disability, Traveller, LGBTI+, Migrants, BIPOC), and in line with CfL 'priority groups'. There was continued use of a priority group lens framework, used for all mental health information on their site.
- The new suicide campaign and related content were delivered in Q3. This campaign reached over 213,000 young people on Instagram and Facebook, and over 279,000 on TikTok. Campaign factsheets were read almost 3,000 times.
- The new self-harm prevention campaign and related content were delivered in Q4. This campaign reached over 111,000 people on social media and campaign factsheets were read over 6,000 times.

# **Dublin Simon Community**

www.dublinsimon.ie



Dublin Simon Sure Steps Counselling Service receives funding from the HSE NOSP, specifically to facilitate the provision of the service out-of-hours, at evenings and weekends. This is a low threshold, primary care level service for the homeless client base as well as for an increasing number of other homeless services across the Dublin Region. The service has evolved to provide two interlinked strands – general counselling and a suicidality/self-harm focused programme of interventions, including the CAMS (Collaborative Assessment Management Suicidality) approach.

### In 2023

- At the end of the year, 263 clients (189 male, 74 male) were active, with a counsellor assigned.
- 1,025 one-to-one sessions were delivered (day and out-of-hours, remote and face-to-face).
- There were 719 drop-in visits 425 were to day services and 294 were to out-of-hours services.
- Day interventions were provided for emotional support (42 hours), general counselling (1,178 hours) and crisis/ad hoc interventions (54 hours).
- There was significant volume of requests to Sure Steps for general counselling from other homeless service providers, although limited capacity and resources have resulted in waiting lists.

# **Exchange House Ireland**

www.exchangehouse.ie



Exchange House Ireland receives funding from the HSE NOSP for the National Traveller Mental Health Service to provide Traveller specific mental health and suicide prevention services. Their aim is to improve the overall wellbeing of Travellers and reduce the likelihood of suicide or self-harm within the community.

### In 2023

- There were 556 presentations to the Duty Service in the National Traveller Mental Health service. The main issues presenting included accommodation, mental health and suicide ideation and addition. Additional connected issues included racism/discrimination, domestic violence, family relationships, child protection, bereavement, child education, physical health and training/learning.
- Cases were also handled on an individual basis by the Mental Health Social Worker, Peer Support
   Worker/Men's Suicide Prevention Worker, Mental Health Peer Support/Prison InReach Worker,
   and Family Support/Psychotherapist.
- 25 Travellers participated in the NUIG Level 7 Programme (Midlands & NUI Galway Community Development and Mental Health Programme). Of the 23 participants who completed the Programme, 13 attended NUI Galway Graduation Ceremony in October 2023.
- Exchange House worked closely with a range of service providers, responding to incidents of suspected suicide, in Traveller communities. Work also progressed to accurately record and track in real-time such incidents, in partnership with the National Suicide Reseach Foundation, HSE and others.

# **First Fortnight**

www.firstfortnight.ie



FIRST FORTNIGHT

First Fortnight works to challenge mental health stigma through creative arts, interactive events and the provision of creative therapies to marginalised groups. HSE NOSP funding supports First Fortnights advocacy and therapeutic work – namely the annual First Fortnight Mental Health Art and Culture Festival (which is held every January) and the provision of Art, Music and Group Creative therapies for people who are experiencing homelessness.

### In 2023

- HSE NOSP-funded activity included the provision of 535 hours (to 34 Clients) in the First Fortnight Centre for Creative Arts Therapies – of art, music and group therapy – for the homeless community (in Dublin and Meath) who are a key priority group within Connecting for Life.
- An accompanying evaluation tool for these creative therapies was introduced into the services CRM during 2023.
- There was continued service development of CACTus (Child and Adolescent Creative Therapy Service) which launched in 2021. First Fortnight and the HSE agreed an implementation plan

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(June to December) for scale out of CACTus services in four additional regions (Kerry, Kildare, Limerick and Donegal).

- Successfully ran another iteration of the First Fortnight Mental Health Art and Culture Festival. Throughout the festival, First Fortnight worked with 69 artists and 27 creative technical staff to deliver 57 events to a diverse audience of over 3600. In 2023, First Fortnight presented 35 in person, 8 online and 1 hybrid events, working with 49 volunteers, 68 artists, and 27 technical staff over 14 days.
- Media reach for the festival was 53.6 million, totalling 38.9k interactions.

# GAA

www.gaa.ie/my-gaa/community-and-health/healthy-club/



The HSE NOSP is a supporting partner in the GAA Healthy Clubs initiative, which aims to help GAA clubs explore how they support the holistic health of their members and communities. Funding from the Office specifically supports the provision of a National Health and Wellbeing Coordinator for GAA Healthy Clubs, and the promotion of ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training) and safeTALK suicide prevention training programmes across the GAA. Additional strands of work include general mental health promotion, suicide prevention and critical incident response initiatives.

### In 2023

- The GAA Community and Health Department supported a large number of clubs/communities in the aftermath of critical incidents, many of which involved suspected suicide. The review of the GAA's Critical Incident Response Plan was finalised in 2023, and all assets provided to County HWC's. The Review Committee featured representation from the HSE NOSP, HSE Psychological Services, HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention. Updated Critical Incidents Response Plan Training was delivered nationally.
- Marking the 10th anniversary of the Healthy Clubs initiative, the Irish Life GAA Healthy Club Conference was held in in Croke Park in November, with over 400 attendees. Mental fitness remained one of the core messages.
- The promotion of suicide prevention training programmes, and signposting to HSE mental health information and support, remain key components of Healthy Clubs initiatives.
- Phase 5 of the Healthy Clubs initiative was completed and an expression of interest for phase 6 was opened.
- A range of opportunities for connected mental health promotion activity, were progressed, including with ALONE, 'Ireland Lights Up' (with Get Ireland Walking and Operation Transformation), and the Movember 'Ahead of the Game' initiative.

# **HUGG, Healing Untold Grief Groups**

www.hugg.ie



HUGG is a national suicide bereavement charity, with its main aim to provide reactive grief support and advice to suicide-bereaved adults, raise public awareness of both the impact of suicide on the bereaved and the service provided by HUGG, and encourage and participate in suicide postvention research. Funding from the HSE NOSP supports the delivery of HUGG Peer Support Groups, and building their capacity to evaluate approaches of work.

### In 2023

- Support was provided on the telephone to bereaved adults over 750 enquiries were for information and general support, 450 were about joining a HUGG group, and 296 people were directed to a local HUGG group.
- The year ended with 16 HUGG groups, an increase from 14 HUGG groups in 2022.
- 337 HUGG group meetings were held there were 1,288 in-person attendances, 438 virtual attendances, and 226 new attendances.
- The total number of training weekends for Volunteer Facilitators was 4. The total number of new volunteers trained, was 26. Ongoing challenges to continue to attract and grow the volunteer base remain.
- HUGG extended reach to the wider public through the publication of our research, webinars and public events, including participation in 12 community events nationwide (in person and virtually).
- The 1st in-person Remembrance Service was held in the Unitarian Church, St Stephens Green a hybrid service to remember those lost to suicide, which was attended by 270 people in total.
- Work continued on the development of content, traffic to, and search engine optimisation for hugg.ie the total number of unique visitors to hugg.ie in 2023 was 22,129.

# **ISPCC (Childline)**

www.childline.ie



Childline provides a range of active listening services for children and young people up to and including age 18, across phone, text and online chat, with additional information and resources online. Funding from the HSE NOSP supports the provision of these services for young people, 24 hours every day, 365 days every year - in particular, the ongoing recruitment, selection, training, development, support and supervision of Childline Volunteers.

The HSE NOSP also provided pilot funding in previous years for the delivery of Childline's Digital Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes (Silvercloud). These comprise mainly 'Space from Anxiety' (for those between the ages of 14 and 18), 'Supporting an Anxious Child' (for parents/carers of those between the ages of 5 and 11) and 'Supporting an Anxious Teen' (for parents/carers of those between the ages of 12 and 18).

### In 2023

- There were over 86,300 Childline calls and over 805 'Ask Alex' emails received.
- There were 34,792 webchat conversations held.
- There were 142,149 users on childline.ie.
- From July, 26% of all contacts to Childline involved a mental health component, such as anxiety, low mood, depression and panic attacks.
- There were 677 referrals to Childline's Digital Mental Health and Wellbeing Programmes (Silvercloud) – 281 parents of teens, 122 parents of children, and 274 teens. Referrals came from a variety of sources, including self-referral, CAMHS and GPs.



Funding from the HSE NOSP specifically supports the training function of LGBT Ireland and the organisation's efforts to provide support and information to LGBTI+ people and their family members. This includes the development of a network of peer support groups across the country, the delivery or mental health and suicide prevention initiatives for the LGBTI+ community, and the provision of a support helpline.

### In 2023

LGBT Ireland

www.lgbt.ie

- There were 875 helpline calls and 581 chats received.
- 342 people were supported across 4 types of peer support groups than ran during the year the First Out LGBT Group, Married Women's Group, Rainbow Refugee Group, and Straight Spouses Group.
- A wide range of workshops and awareness sessions were delivered, including 21 General LGBTQI+ Awareness Training sessions to community sector services, 2 LGBTI+ Traveller Awareness Training sessions, and 12 LGBT Champions Training sessions. Additional sessions were also delivered across Mental Health Service, Health Services, and other Public Sector Services.

# Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)



www.mhfi.org

HSE NOSP funding to the Men's Health Forum in Ireland, is to support the three year initiative -CAIRDE (Construction Alliance to Reduce SuiciDE). This project seeks to use the construction industry in Ireland as a setting to create and embed a whole organisation mental fitness culture, which can actively promote and support men's mental health and resilience, and reduce the risk of suicide.

### In 2023

- The CAIRDE project progressed, finalising the results and reports of on-site surveys, and scoping options for submitting the survey findings for journal publication.
- A systematic review on mental health stigma reduction in men was also completed, and the content for a further journal article on the outcomes of the systematic review was progressed.
- Agreement was secured for the final structure and content of the training programme, based upon the learning to date. Drafts of facilitator packs for both the 'General Awarenesss Training' (with construction workers) and 'Connector' workshops (with people responsible for health and safety on sites) progressed. An accompanying series of videos to support the CAIRDE on-site training programme, were developed.
- Work in 2024 will include supporting workplaces to embed and implement all elements of the CAIRDE package, evaluating the impact of (and response to) the programme, and launching the findings to as wide an audience as possible. Realistic means for sustaining the CAIRDE model in the longer-term, will be considered.

# **My Mind**

### www.mymind.org



My Mind provides a range of counselling and psychotherapy services online and face-to-face across the country. Services are available for children, adolescents, adults, couples and families in a wide variety of different languages. In 2023 HSE NOSP funding to MyMind allowed for the provision of subsidised/ low-cost counselling sessions for students, people who are unemployed/part-time employed and retired people.

### In 2023

• My Mind delivered 16,257 low-cost counselling appointments, with NOSP-funding.

# The National Family Resource Centre (FRC) Mental Health Promotion Project



www.familyresourcementalhealth.ie

Funding from the HSE NOSP supports the delivery of the Family Resource Centres (FRCs) Mental Health Promotion Project across the network of FRCs nationwide. This project includes the promotion of suicide and self-harm awareness training programmes, and the Suicide Prevention Code of Practice training, across the network of 121 FRCs across the country.

### In 2023

- 58 Participants completed 6 Suicide Prevention Code of Practice Training events in FRCs nationwide.
- 49 Participants attended 3 WRAP programme (2 days) training events.
- 125 Participants attended 7 Self-care/Staff Wellbeing training events.
- Additional work progressed on the development of an e-version of the Suicide Prevention Code of Practice Training for FRCs, and accompanying video assets, for finalisation and launch in 2024.

# The National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF)



### www.nsrf.ie

The NSRF is an independent, multi-disciplinary research unit that delivers research projects in suicide, self-harm and mental health. Funding from the HSE NOSP ensures these projects can contribute to the surveillance, research, implementation, evaluation and the evidence base for strategic goals and actions of CfL. The HSE NOSP also funds the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland (NSHRI), which is operated by the NSRF. It is the world's first national registry of cases of intentional self-harm presenting to hospital emergency departments.

### In 2023

The NSRF continued delivery of a range of outputs, across core research projects in accordance with the actions of Connecting for Life:

- Operation of the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland.
- Deaths in Mental Health Services: Research Project with Mental Health Commission and HSE.
- Development of a mental health and wellbeing module for veterinary professional students.
- Monitoring of Self-Harm in Irish Prisons (SADA Project).
- Preventing paracetamol-related intentional drug overdose Working Group.
- Evaluation of the CAMS (The Collaborative Assessment and Management of Suicidality) in CHO7.
- Bereavement supports provided through the coronial system scoping study.
- Social Determinants of Suicide Umbrella Review.

- Development, implementation and evaluation of a university module in suicide prevention for health and social care students.
- Impact of patient suicide on psychiatrists in Ireland.
- Delivery of Online Suicide Prevention Gatekeeper training.
- Identification of the needs of young people and their families bereaved by suicide.
- Support the co-ordination and streamlining of research completed by third-level institutions Higher Education Authority/NOSP.

### Pieta

www.pieta.ie



Funding from the HSE NOSP supports the provision of free one-to-one therapeutic services and the 24/7 Pieta helpline to people who are in suicidal distress, who engage in self-harm, or who are bereaved by suicide. The Office also specifically funds the provision of the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service (SBLS) by Pieta nationally. This service delivers proactive and practical support to individuals, families and communities who have experienced a loss through suicide.

### In 2023

- There were 40,471 helpline calls, and 75,439 text messages received to the helpline service.
- There were 42,366 intervention (suicide, self-harm) counselling appointments provided, to between 2,300 and 2,500 unique clients each quarter.
- There were 8,574 bereavement counselling appointments provided, to between 330 and 380 unique clients each quarter.
- These services supported a total of 6,865 people across the year (846 availed of bereavement therapy and 6,019 for suicidal ideation and/or self-harm).
- Across all counselling clients, approximately 60% each quarter were deemed to be at 'high risk'.
- The SBLS delivered 4,594 client-facing hours, to between 200 and 300 households each quarter.

# **Samaritans**

www.samaritans.ie



Samaritans Ireland is a national organisation which supports the work of 21 Samaritans branches (13 in ROI, 8 in NI) and over 2,000 active volunteers all across Ireland. Samaritans provides a longestablished free 24-hour telephone listening service in Ireland, every day of the year. HSE NOSP funding to Samaritans Ireland supports the delivery of the freephone telephone service. It also contributes to Samaritans' core costs for the delivery of a wider programme of works, including research and outreach projects.

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### In 2023

- Over 437,000 calls and emails to the helpline service were answered.
- Samaritans volunteers provided 64,743 'listening hours'.
- An Open Secret: Self-Harm and Stigma in Ireland and Northern Ireland was finalised and published in March highlighting the stigma towards people who self-harm and how it can impact on their lives.
- Engaged with, supported and collaborated with a wide variety of organisations and services on specific community outreach projects, signposting, educational or promotional activities.

# Shine (See Change, Headline)

www.seechange.ie www.headline.ie



Shine delivers two national projects with funding support from the HSE NOSP:

- See Change is Ireland's national stigma reduction programme, working to change minds about mental health problems and end stigma. The funding supports the See Change Ambassador and Workplace Programmes, and the national, annual Green Ribbon Campaign.
- Headline is Ireland's national programme for responsible reporting of suicide, and representation of mental ill health. The funding supports Headline's digital reach, Media Trust Initiative, education programmes, media monitoring and the annual Mental Health Media Awards.

### In 2023

- Over 580,000 ribbons and additional promotional items were distributed nationwide as part of the See Change Green Ribbon Campaign, which this year included significant activity at the Electric Picnic Festival and National Ploughing Championships.
- See Change facilitated over 80 Ambassador events, engagements and presentations nationally.
- See Change delivered 42 See Change in the Workplace Programmes, to approximately 530 attendees.
- Headline progressed a pilot of new more in-depth and targeted media monitoring model. This model incorporates print, online and broadcast sampled from each quarter. 13,231 articles related to suicide-self-harm (14% increase on 2022) were monitored across the year.
- Headline delivered 24 student workshops, 9 professional drop-in sessions, 3 lived-experience workshops, 1 bespoke media organisation workshop, and 2 mental health in the newsroom workshops.
- The Headline Mental Health Media Awards were coordinated and delivered in Q4, attracting significant attention, and with a 9% increase in voting for the public choice category.

# Suicide or Survive (SOS)

www.suicideorsurvive.ie



Suicide or Survive (SOS) is focused on breaking down the stigma associated with mental health issues and ensuring that those affected have access to quality recovery services that are right for the individual. With the support of the HSE NOSP, SOS delivers a variety of suicide and self-harm prevention initiatives. These include Wellness Workshops and Supporters Programmes (delivered online and in person), the Eden Programme and WRAP (Wellness Recovery Action Plan) programme.

### In 2023

- One 26-week Eden programme was completed in Dublin, and another commenced.
- 25 Wellness Webinars were delivered (241 participants).
- 31 Wellness Workshops were delivered (1,032 participants).
- 17 WRAP programmes were delivered (234 participants).
- 356 people availed of the online version of the You Matter Wellness Workshop aimed specifically at younger people.
- 938 people availed of the online version of the Wellness Workshop which allows people who cannot attend a face-to-face Workshop to benefit from the Workshop.

# **Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)**



The vision of TENI is to advance the rights and equality and improve the lives of trans people and their families in Ireland. Funding support from the HSE NOSP supports TENI's training, awareness and mental health promotion activities nationwide. For example, workshops that are targeted at health professionals working in public and voluntary and community services, and TENI's peer support groups for trans people and their families.

### In 2023

www.teni.ie

- Responded to and triaged 1,858 support queries across email and phone calls, including support for civil society organisations helping improve access for trans people and directly offering signposting for trans community members seeking support.
- Delivered 40 training sessions and workshops to civil society and community members.
- 144 community support meetings enabled or supported.
- Over 600 people engaged through the HSE NOSP training and workshops.
- Had a 89% response rate for within 10 working days for all queries received. Exceeding service target by 9% and an increase on an initial 35% response rate at the start of Q2.
- 100 families and young people engaged as part of their annual family residential weekend.
   Meaning they had contact with a range of provider services that supported their wellbeing and access to expert clinical speakers to improve their access to services.

# Turn2Me

www.turn2me.ie



Turn2Me provides a wide range of innovative mental health peer support, group support and counselling services, all easily accessible online. Funding from the HSE NOSP specifically supports the delivery of online counselling, peer to peer and self-help services.

### In 2023

- Turn2Me offered 8,489 counselling sessions and delivered 7,233 sessions an increase of over 2,700 than in 2022.
- The top presenting issues in the counselling service were anxiety (40%), relationship issues, depression, family conflict, stress, work issues, trauma and bereavement.
- 242 online support groups were delivered with 2,335 users reserving places.
- The most attended support groups were 'Tips on how to manage your anxiety' (654 registered users) and 'Tips on how to manage your low mood' (614 registered users).
- A new specialised support group in partnership with ADHD Ireland commenced at the end of the year, and a private group in partnership with Chronic Pain Ireland also commenced.
- A new series of weekly guided meditations was introduced available online.

# **Union of Students in Ireland (USI)**

www.mentalhealth.usi.ie

Framework (2020).



The USI is the national representative body for students in 3rd level education. Funding from the HSE NOSP contributes to the provision of a dedicated USI Mental Health Programme Manager who leads on a range of mental health promotion and awareness activities. Of note is the USI's central role in

### In 2023

Campus visits were delivered by the Mental Health Programme Manager, across the academic semesters, promoting the 'Open Up' Mental Health Campaign, signposting and supporting information. The campaign was amplified in line with national awareness days including World Mental Health Day, World Suicide Prevention Day and Eating Disorders Awareness Week.
 Additional mental health website content and podcast production continued throughout the year and for 600+ student subscribers.

the development and implementation of the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention

• The Mental Health Programme Manager provided an ad hoc support to Students Unions Officers, including for example, the delivery of training sessions to support their own mental health, assisting policy development to support student mental health.

# Safe sales of paracetamol

A new educational campaign targeted at staff in pharmacy and retail settings was launched in October 2023 by Minister Butler at the Department of Health. The campaign was developed to promote the safe sales of paracetamol, and to reinforce the restrictions on the sales of paracetamol-containing medications.

As part of this campaign, new information packs are now available to order or download for pharmacy, and non-pharmacy retail settings. They contain informative posters and postcards suitable for display in staff areas or noticeboards. They also contain shelf-riders/stickers that might be suitable for public-facing or staff-facing display units where paracetamol-containing products are displayed. This campaign is the work of the Preventing Paracetamol-Related Drug Overdose Working Group (WG), led by the Department of Health and established in 2021 to decipher next steps to prevent intentional paracetamol overdose in Ireland.

This works supports the implementation of Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015–2024), and specifically action 6.1.2, 'continue improvements in adherence to the legislation limiting access to paracetamol through raising awareness amongst retailers and the public and the use of point of-sale systems.'



### **Background to this campaign**

Paracetamol is the drug most frequently used in intentional drug overdose (IDO) in many countries. Its use in IDO is highest among young people (<25 years) and there is evidence of its incidence increasing in countries including Ireland.

In response to this, a paracetamol Working Group led by the Department of Health was established in 2021 to decipher next steps to prevent intentional paracetamol overdose in Ireland. This works supports the implementation Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide (2015-2024), and specifically action 6.1.2, 'continue improvements in adherence to the legislation limiting access to paracetamol through raising awareness amongst retailers and the public and the use of point of-sale systems.'

This Working Group is led by the Department of Health (Chair), the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), and National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) – with membership including the Irish Pharmacy Union (IPU), Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland (PSI) and the Health Products Regulatory Authority (HPRA). The Group aims to enhance information and support training development for pharmacy and non-pharmacy retail sector staff, collaborate on preventative interventions, and support actions required following market surveillance work.

For more information, please visit https://www.hse.ie/eng/services/list/4/ mental-health-services/connecting-for-life/ publications/safe-sales-of-paracetamol.html

Launch photo - Prof Philip Dodd, HSE NOSP; Dr Eve Griffin National Suicide Research Foundation; Minister Mary Butler TD, Minister for Mental Health and Older People; Ciarán Austin, HSE NOSP; Anne Marie Seymour, Department of Health; and Dr Susan O'Dwyer, Irish Pharmacy Union.

# Safe Harbour

In 2023, work continued to develop Safe Harbour – a new illustrated storybook for children who have been bereaved by suicide in Ireland. This first-of-its-kind book is written by current Laureate na nÓg, Patricia Forde and illustrated by Bronagh Lee, a visual artist working in illustration, book design, drawing and painting. This lovingly crafted storybook will offer some small measure of help and hope to children and families navigating the trauma of bereavement by suicide.

Accompanying the book will be Safe Harbour: A Helpful Guide for Parents and Carers, outlining how parents or carers can use the book with their child and how they can navigate difficult conversations about death by suicide. The use of storybooks with accompanying guidance is proven to be helpful to supporting parents or carers have hard conversations with children. The mix of words and pictures in storybooks offers a supportive and powerful way to talk about this hard subject by giving the parent or carer the opportunity to open a space for children to express their emotions.

Improving awareness of, and access to suicide bereavement supports and services in Ireland, is an important objective for NOSP, particularly in the context of Connecting for Life, and this storybook and guidance will fulfil this objective.

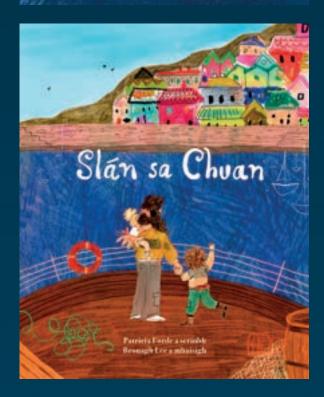
The collaborative process of developing Safe Harbour involved a Working Group led by HSE Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention in HSE Dublin South, Kildare, West Wicklow, with members external to the HSE including HUGG (Healing Untold Grief Groups), Pieta, the Irish Childhood Bereavement Network, Irish Hospice Foundation and Barnardos. Parents or carers of bereaved children worked closely with this Group in 2023, the author and the illustrator, to ensure the most meaningful, respectful and responsible approaches throughout.

More information on Safe Harbour can be found on www.childhoodbereavement.ie/safeharbour/



A Helpful Guide for Parents and Carers

This guide is to accompany Safe Harbour, an illustrated storybook for children who have been bereaved by suicide.



Section 4

Information on deaths by suicide in Ireland

# 4.0. Information on deaths by suicide in Ireland

# 4.1. Suicide data in Ireland

In Ireland, the decision as to whether someone has died by suicide is a legal determination made by Coroners, not a medical decision by doctors or the HSE and there is a time delay in the availability of data.

Following the Coronial investigation, inquest and registration processes, the Central Statistics Office (CSO) publishes national mortality data, including data on deaths by suicide. All CSO data on suicide deaths is publicly available on their website **www.cso.ie**.

Annual data from the CSO is provided in three stages – firstly by year of registration ('provisional'), revised later by year of occurrence ('official'), and revised later again to include late registered deaths.

	All deaths by suicide	Male deaths by suicide	Female deaths by suicide	CSO source
2023	302	232	70	CSO <b>PxStat Table VSD30</b> Suicides (updated 24th May 2024). These figures exclude late registered deaths.
2022	412	331	81	
2021	449	359	90	
2020	504	366	138	CSO <b>Statistical bulletin on suicide 2020</b> (published 14th November 2023). These figures have been revised from the time of each year's Vital Statistics Annual Report, to include late registered deaths.
2019	538	419	119	
2018	548	407	141	
2017	512	400	112	
2016	531	429	102	
2015	500	393	107	
2014	578	472	106	
2013	549	441	108	
2012	585	475	110	

### Number of deaths by suicide, 2012-2023

There are three main areas of the CSO website that provide information on suicide.

### Vital Statistics releases

These provide early provisional information on deaths (by year of registration) and are published in Vital Statistics reports quarterly and annually.

### PxStat Data Dissemination Service

There are 6 suicide-specific tables in the PxStat Data Dissemination Service, each providing different types of information. They are updated at different intervals each year.

- + VSD30 Suicides (Area of residence, Sex, Year)
- + VSD31 Suicides (Sex, Year)
- + VSD32 Suicide death rates (Sex, Year)
- + VSD33 Published Suicide deaths and Late Registered Suicide deaths (Sex, Year)
- + VSD34 Late registered suicide deaths (Sex, Year of occurrence, Year)
- + VSD35 Deaths Occurring (Sex, Cause of Death, Age at Death, Year)

### Statistical bulletin on suicide

An annual statistical bulletin and summary of suicide data, which recommenced publication in September 2022.

### 4.2. Self-harm data in Ireland

### Why record self-harm data?

Non-fatal self-harm is a far more common form of suicidal behaviour than suicide and it is one of the strongest risk factors for suicide. Hospital-presenting self-harm is the most severe type of non-fatal self-harm. As a result, reducing the rate of hospital-presenting self-harm is one of the two defined outcomes of Connecting for Life.

### What is the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland?

The National Self-Harm Registry Ireland records and reports information about self-harm presentations to hospital emergency departments across the country. The Registry is operated by the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) and is funded by the HSE NOSP.

### What does the Registry do?

The Registry tells us how many self-harm presentations there are each year. It tells us which groups in the country make the most presentations, when the presentations happen, what type of self-harm is involved, and which areas have the highest rates. By providing this information, the Registry helps to inform the improvement of services for individuals who self-harm and prevention efforts.

- Read more about how the Registry records and processes data
- Access Registry reports and publications

# Let's Talk About Suicide

The Education and Training (E&T) function of the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), has strategic responsibility for suicide prevention education and training actions under Connecting for Life, Ireland's National Suicide Prevention Strategy, 2015–2024. E&T oversees the development, coordination, quality assurance, monitoring and evaluation of a suite of education and training programmes. Under CfL Action 1.4 the following milestone was identified – develop and launch an online suicide prevention training programme.

In 2023, work continued to develop and introduce 'Let's Talk About Suicide', to provide people with the knowledge and confidence to have a conversation if they are concerned that someone may be thinking about suicide. It aims to provide people who access it with a sense of hope and reassurance that suicide prevention is possible.

'Let's Talk About Suicide' is a 60 minute, selfdirected, online suicide prevention training programme. It is suitable for anyone who wants to learn basic suicide prevention skills, fostering a cultural awareness that everyone has a role to play in suicide prevention. The training is for anyone over 18 years of age.

### About the programme:

- On average, it will take 60 minutes to complete, but participants can work at their own pace.
- It is an introductory programme that is suitable for anyone over the age of 18.
- It is recommended that anyone recently bereaved wait 12 months before engaging in this type of suicide prevention training.
- Participants do not need to complete any training before 'Let's Talk About Suicide' in fact, it is a helpful introduction to the topic for anyone considering attending more comprehensive training programmes in the future. These might include more advanced face-to-face programmes (such as safeTALK or ASIST) available from the HSE.

To find out more about Let's Talk About Suicide visit: https://traininghub.nosp.ie/

Launch photo - Damien McCallion, HSE Chief Operations Officer, Mary Butler TD, Minister of State for Mental Health & Older People and John Meehan, HSE Assistant National Director and Head of the NOSP



Section 5

# Financial summary

# 5.0. Financial summary

In 2023, the HSE NOSP's budget was €14,149,037 and expenditure was €14,107,923.

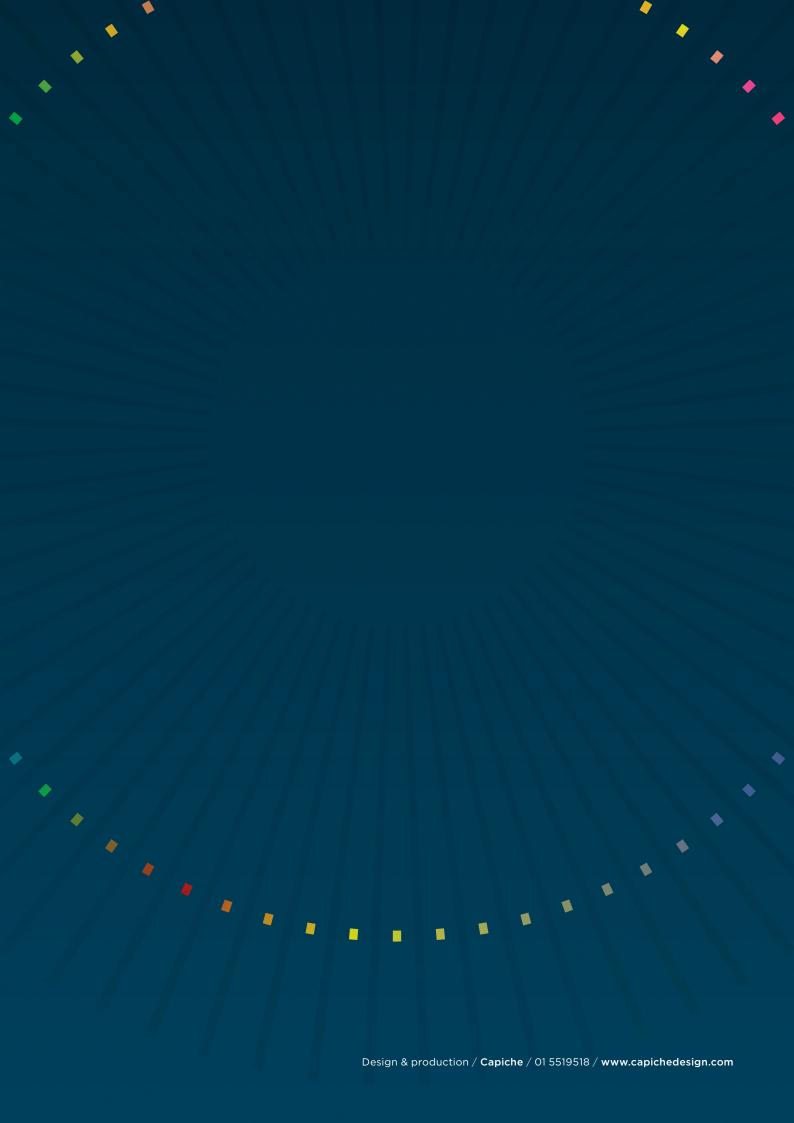
The budget and expenditure of the NOSP has increased significantly in the last eleven years, from €5.19m in 2012. In 2023, almost 57% of expenditure was for grants to national organisations and frontline services working in the area of suicide prevention and mental health promotion. Additional grants are allocated to more local agencies, via healthcare areas nationwide.

### HSE NOSP expenditure in 2023

	2022	2023
Main grants to agencies Breakdown next page	7,065,772	7,352,620
Communications projects	1,157,226	977,219
Research Includes Grant to agency	505,258	295,908
Non-grant expenditure Includes Office expenses, Salaries, Overheads, misc	1,333,995	1,679,930
Training programmes Includes Non-clinical training, Clinical training, Grants to agencies	1,582,627	1,358,514
Regional liaison and suicide prevention services Capacity building	1,307,240	1,307,240
Cfl Strategy Implementation Includes Resource Officers for Suicide Prevention, Local CfL Implementation Plans, Grants to agencies via CHOs	1,050,286	1,136,492
Total	14,002,404	14,107,923

### HSE NOSP grants to national agencies in 2023

Aware	380,140
Belong To Youth Services	243,320
Breaking Through	4,200
Community Creations (spunout)	196,901
Dublin Simon Community	209,305
First Fortnight Limited	273,113
GAA	51,750
Healing Untold Grief Groups (HUGG)	123,397
Irish College of General Practitioners (ICGP)	137,108
LGBT Ireland	84,200
My Mind	197,168
National Forum of Family Resources Centres	103,500
Pieta	2,138,893
Samaritans Ireland	600,300
Shine (Headline, See Change)	525,975
Suicide or Survive (SOS)	265,254
National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF)	1,327,977
The ISPCC (Childline)	234,291
The Men's Health Forum in Ireland (MHFI)	52,414
The Union of Students in Ireland (USI)	71,312
Transgender Equality Network Ireland (TENI)	81,765
Exchange House	336,375
Turn2Me	348,187
Once off 3.5% in 2023	-265,191
Total	7,721,654





**HSE Oifig Náisiúnta um Fhéinmharú a Chosc** Ospidéal Stewart, Baile Phámar, Baile Átha Cliath 20

**HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention** Stewarts Hospital, Palmerstown, Dublin 20

Tel: 01 7785112 Email: info@nosp.ie Twitter: @NOSPIreland LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/company/hse-nosp

www.nosp.ie