

Submission on the National Framework on Suicide Prevention – NOSP.

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services is Ireland's largest, independent not-for-profit mental health service provider and accounts for circa 12% of the country's total inpatient care and treatment needs, as well as providing a significant proportion of community-based and day service care and treatment.

It is acknowledged as a leader in providing the highest quality mental health care, promoting mental health awareness and advocating for the rights of those experiencing mental health difficulties.

Over the last 7 years, the organisation has expanded and enhanced its range of services, grounding them in wellness and recovery principles, empowering service users to manage their mental health and lead fulfilling lives.

Multi-disciplinary teams of highly-qualified mental health professionals provide expert care and treatment to over 3,000 people requiring inpatient and day care services each year. The organisations community-based Dean Clinics provides over 12,000 appointment based interventions annually.

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services welcomes the opportunity to provide a submission for the new National Framework for Suicide Prevention. In providing this submission we will focus on the main risk factors to be addressed and considerations that should be addressed in the new framework.

St. Patrick's Mental Health Services, as Ireland's largest independent mental health service provider sees three main risk factors as drivers or causes for suicide in Ireland:

Mental Health Difficulties

People who experience mental health difficulties and who experience suicidal symptoms require timely access to high quality supports and services appropriate to their needs. Individuals who experience suicidal thoughts need immediate assistance and understanding of their distress and also to understand that the appropriate help and supports are available

to them, should they choose to avail of them. It is of the utmost importance that the proper multi-disciplinary services are available to people when they are at their most vulnerable. People need to have clear signposting on where how to access these services in a timely manner.

Emotional and Psychological Distress.

People who experience emotional and psychological distress and trauma often lack the necessary emotional and psychological resilience to be able to deal with issues when they arise. As a result, this group of people are at higher risk of self-harm and suicide than others. Appropriate clinical interventions based on international best practice guidelines need to be made available to support this group. St Patrick's Mental Health Services believes that the National Framework needs to address training for people so that they can build emotional resilience, thus allowing them to address their distress and trauma in a way that does not lead to self-harm and suicide.

Alcohol and Drug Addiction

People who are alcohol and substance abuse dependant or addicted are often unable to avail of appropriate and timely services and ongoing supports to allow them to live with their addiction. For many addictive behaviours and dependence are cyclical and people in this cycle often experience isolation and rejection as a result of their addiction or dependence.

Across these three areas there are two main factors which need to be addressed to ensure that people are given the right supports at the right time to minimise their risk of taking their own life by suicide.

The stigma associated with experiencing mental health difficulties, emotional or psychological distress or addiction prevents people from coming forward and seeking help. People are afraid of how they will be perceived, of negative reactions from family, friends and colleagues. As a result many difficulties remain undiagnosed for years and it is only when a crisis point is reached that assistance for the mental health difficulty/ psychological trauma / addiction is sought. The new Suicide Prevention Framework must address the issue of stigma in a meaningful way to ensure that people experiencing mental health difficulties, emotional or psychological distress, or addiction are not viewed negatively and come forward and seek intervention and assistance at the earliest opportunity.

Secondly, the “glamorisation” of suicide or taking one’s own life as a “way out” needs to be addressed through education and early intervention. There is an urgent need for a co-ordinated national approach to ensure that young people understand mental health and wellness and in the event of mental health difficulties, psychological or emotional trauma or addiction know and understand that care and treatment is available and accessible to them. The realities of the impact of suicide on family, friends and colleagues needs to be widely publicised and all members of society need to have an understanding of the impact of suicide at family, community and national level.

St Patrick’s Mental Health Services would welcome the opportunity to engage in further dialogue and discussion in the development of the National Framework for Suicide Prevention.

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