

In 2015, the NSRF co-ordinated 22 research projects in the areas of suicide, self-harm and related mental health issues including the evaluation of intervention and prevention programmes for suicide and self-harm. In addition, the NSRF met requests for information from a wide range of stakeholders in policy, health and social services on a weekly basis as well as an increasing number of requests for information and advice from the general population. Most of the NSRF's research projects, publications and evidence briefs contribute to the strategic goals and actions of *Connecting for Life*, 2015-2020 as outlined below.



Connecting For Life

GOAL 1: TO IMPROVE THE NATION'S UNDERSTANDING OF, AND ATTITUDES TO, SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR, MENTAL HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Engage and work collaboratively with the media in relation to media guidelines, tools and training programmes to improve the reporting of, and attitudes to, suicidal behaviour within broadcast, print and online media.

- a. NSRF prepared an evidence brief on murder-suicide and the risk associated with non-adherence to the media guidelines on suicide reporting.
- b. NSRF prepared evidence briefs for Headline, NOSP and other stakeholders on the impact of inappropriate media reporting of suicide.
- c. NSRF conducted analyses of media reporting of four incidents of murder-suicide involving the same method (on-going).

Target groups

The different research projects under Goal 1 addressed both the whole population and specific priority groups, including young people, the traveller community, mental health service users, people who are homeless, victims of domestic violence, the LGBT community and health professionals.

GOAL 2: TO SUPPORT LOCAL COMMUNITIES' CAPACITY TO PREVENT AND RESPOND TO SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

- a. The NSRF provided an evidence-informed Train-The-Trainer programme to 34 Self-Harm Nurses with the overall aim of rolling out Suicide and Self-Harm Awareness Training among Emergency Health Care Staff in general hospitals across Ireland.
- b. The NSRF also provided evidence-informed training programmes on awareness of depression and suicidal behaviour among trainee GPs, trainee Psychiatrists and trainee Guidance Counsellors as part of their curriculum.
- b. The NSRF contributed to a systematic review which addressed the effectiveness of implementing media guidelines for the reporting of suicide:
 - Zalsman G, Hawton K, Wasserman D, van Heeringen K, Arensman E, Sarchiapone M, Carli V, Hoschl C, Barzilay R, Balazs J, Purebl G, Kahn JP, Sáiz PA, Bursztein Lipsicas C, Bobes J, Cozman D, Hegerl U, Zohar J. Suicide prevention strategies revisited: 10-year systematic review. *The Lancet Psychiatry*. Volume 3, Issue 7, 646-659. 2015

Improve the continuation of community level responses to suicide through planned, multi-agency approaches.

- a. The NSRF played a prominent role in the development, implementation, and evaluation of the iFightDepression tool, an internet-based self-management tool. This is a cost-free, multilingual, guided, self-management programme for people with mild to moderate depression.
 - Arensman E, Koburger N, Larkin C, Karwig G, Coffey C, Maxwell M, Harris F, Rummel-Kluge C, van Audenhove C, Sisask M, Alexandrova-Karamanova A, Perez V, Purebl G, Cebria A, Palao D, Costa S, Mark L, Tóth MD, Gecheva M, Ibelshäuser A, Gusmão R, Hegerl U. Depression awareness and self-management through the internet: An internationally standardised approach. *JMIR Research Protocols*. 4 (3):e99. 2015

Ensure the provision and delivery of training and education programmes on suicide prevention to community-based organisations.

- a. The NSRF provided guidance and advice on the evaluation of training programmes to community-based services (e.g. An Garda Síochána).
- b. The NSRF completed an independent evaluation of a Social Prescribing Intervention in Erris, County Mayo: Arensman E, O'Connell G (2015). Evaluation of the HOPE Social Prescribing Project. National Suicide Research Foundation.

Target groups

The different research projects under Goal 2 addressed both the whole population and specific priority groups, including young people, mental health service users, people who are homeless, victims of domestic violence, and health professionals.

GOAL 3: TO TARGET APPROACHES TO REDUCE SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR AND IMPROVE MENTAL HEALTH AMONG PRIORITY GROUPS

Improve the implementation of effective approaches to reducing suicidal behaviour among priority groups.

- a. The NSRF completed an evidence brief on suicide and self-harm among the traveller population.
- b. The NSRF prepared a research proposal on the long-term impact of clerical child sexual abuse on mental and physical health and social functioning of survivors.
- c. The NSRF was involved in a systematic review of treatments for self-harm among children and adolescents.
 - Hawton K, Witt KG, Taylor Salisbury TL, Arensman E, Gunnell D, Townsend E, van Heeringen K, Hazell P. Interventions for self-harm in children and adolescents (Review). The Cochrane Library 2015, Issue 12
- d. The NSRF was involved in a systematic review of treatments for self-harm among adults.
 - Hawton K, Witt KG, Taylor Salisbury TL, Arensman E, Gunnell D, Hazell P, Townsend E, van Heeringen K. Psychosocial interventions for self-harm in adults. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Issue 7. 2015
- e. The NSRF is working on a study on repetition of self-harm and associated factors among homeless people, together with Dr

Peter Barrett. The study is based on data from the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland.

Support in relation to suicide prevention, the substance misuse strategy to address the high rate of alcohol and drug misuse.

- a. The NSRF provided an evidence brief on self-harm, public holidays and the association with alcohol misuse and abuse.
- b. The NSRF completed a study on the association between parental and adolescent substance misuse.
 - Keeley H, Mongwa T, Corcoran P. The association between parental and adolescent substance misuse: findings from the Irish CASE study. Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine. 32(1) 107-116. 2015

Enhance the supports for young people with mental health problems or vulnerable to suicide.

- a. The NSRF contributed to the final outcome publication of the Saving and Empowering Young Lives in Europe study (SEYLE):
 - Wasserman D, Hoven CW, Wasserman C, Wall M, Eisenberg R, Hadlaczky G, Kelleher I, Sarchiapone M, Apter A, Balazs J, Bobes J, Brunner R, Corcoran P, Cosman D, Guillemin F, Haring C, Josue M, Kaess M, Kahn JP, Keeley H, Musa GJ, Nemes B, Postuvan V,

- Saiz P, Reiter-Theil S, Varnik A, Varnik P, Carli V. School-based suicide prevention programmes: The SEYLE cluster-randomised, controlled trial. January 2015. *The Lancet* 385(9977):1536-44. 2015
- b. The NSRF contributed to a major publication on help-seeking behaviour among young people following screening for suicidal behaviour:
- Cotter P, Kaess M, Corcoran P, Parzer P, Brunner R, Keeley H, Carli V, Wasserman C, Hoven CW, Sarchiapone M, Apter A, Balazs J, Bobes J, Cosman D, Haring C, Kahn JP, Resch F, Postuvan V, Varnik A, Wasserman D. Help-seeking behaviour following school-based screening for current suicidality among European adolescents. February 2015. *Social Psychiatry and Psychiatric Epidemiology*.
- c. The NSRF completed a publication based on data of the Suicide Support and Information System on risk factors associated with suicide among young people:
- Arensman E, Bennardi M, Larkin C, Wall A, McAuliffe C, McCarthy J, Williamson E, Perry JJ. (PLOS ONE – accepted pending revisions). Suicide among young people and adults in Ireland: Method characteristics, toxicological analysis and substance abuse histories compared.
- d. The NSRF contributed to a publication on protective factors against suicidal ideation;
- Mami Kasahara-Kiritani, Gergö Hadlaczky, Michael Westerlund, Vladimir Carli, Camilla Wasserman, Alan Apter, Judit Balazs, Julio Bobes, Romuald Brunner, Elaine M. McMahon, Doina Cosman, Luca Farkas, Christian Haring, Michael Kaess, Jean-Pierre Kahn, Helen Keeley, Bogdan Nemes, Urša Mars Bitenc, Vita Postuvan, Pilar Saiz, Merike Sisas, Airi Värnik, Marco Sarchiapone, Christina W. Hoven and Danuta Wasserman. Reading Books and Watching Films as a Protective Factor against Suicidal Ideation. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health* 2015, 12(12), 15937-15942.

Target groups

The different research projects under Goal 3 addressed both the whole population and specific priority groups, including young people, mental health service users, the traveller community, LGBT community and health professionals.

GOAL 4: TO ENHANCE ACCESSIBILITY, CONSISTENCY AND CARE PATHWAYS OF SERVICES FOR PEOPLE VULNERABLE TO SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

In 2015, the NSRF was successful in a funding round of the Health Research Board to conduct a five year research programme to examine predictive factors associated with repeated self-harm and suicide among high risk groups, develop a self-harm assessment guide for nurses and enhance CBT based intervention programme for self-harm patients. The application was led by Prof Ella Arensman.

Improve psychosocial and psychiatric assessment and care pathways for people vulnerable to suicidal behaviour.

Five year research programme supported by the HRB.

- Examination of predictive factors associated with repeated self-harm and suicide among high risk groups: A prospective in-depth interview study (on-going).
- Development of a Self-Harm Assessment Guide for nurses and enhancing a CBT based intervention programme for self-harm patients to be implemented by mental health professionals in a hospital setting (on-going)

Improve access to effective therapeutic interventions (e.g. counselling, DBT, CBT) for people vulnerable to suicide.

- a. In 2015, the NSRF (Eileen Williamson) provided support to the National DBT project by involvement in the recruitment of staff to work on the project, the employment of the staff and all human resource related aspects including the issuing of contracts and involvement in performance reviews. In addition, the NSRF had responsibility for the payment of salaries, monthly payments to the Revenue Commissioners as well as the yearly

returns. The NSRF also made payments to the DBT staff members in respect of travel and subsistence and made payments on behalf of DBT staff members' fees for attendance at conferences at home and abroad.

In 2015, Ella Arensman provided research support to the National DBT project on an ongoing basis, in particular with the regard to methodological and recruitment aspects, and monitoring, evaluation and dissemination.

- b. The NSRF (Ella Arensman) contributed to Cochrane Systematic Reviews on the efficacy of psychosocial and pharmacological treatments in preventing repetition and on Interventions for self-harm in children and adolescents.
 - Hawton K, Witt KG, Taylor Salisbury TL, Arensman E, Gunnell D, Hazell P, Townsend E, van Heeringen K. Psychosocial interventions for self-harm in adults. Cochrane Database of Systematic Reviews, Issue 5. 2016
 - Hawton K, Witt KG, Taylor Salisbury TL, Arensman E, Gunnell D, Townsend E, van Heeringen K, Hazell P. Interventions for self-harm in children and adolescents (Review). The Cochrane Library. Issue 12. 2016

Improve the uniformity, effectiveness and timeliness of support services to families and communities bereaved by suicide.

- a. Pro-active facilitation of support for people bereaved by suicide provided by the Suicide Support and Information System in Cork City and County and County Donegal.

- b. Impact of suicide on the mental and physical health of bereaved family members. PhD research NSRF: Ailbhe Spillane, Ella Arensman, Paul Corcoran (on-going).
- c. The NSRF prepared a proposal on the Implementation of the Suicide Bereavement Liaison Service: Monitoring and Evaluating Effectiveness.

Target groups

The different research projects under Goal 4 addressed both the whole population and specific priority groups, including young people, mental health service users, people who are homeless, victims of domestic violence, and health professionals.

GOAL 5: TO ENSURE SAFE AND HIGH-QUALITY SERVICES FOR PEOPLE VULNERABLE TO SUICIDE

Improve the response to suicidal behaviour within health and social care services, with an initial focus on incidents within mental health services.

In 2015, the NSRF expanded the innovative Suicide Support and Information System to Donegal. The SSIS objectives are in line with key strategic goals and actions of *Connecting for Life*.

- Developing a uniform procedure to respond to suicidal behaviour across mental health services
- Implementing a system of services review-based on incidents of suicide and suicidal behaviour within HSE mental health services and developing a responsive practice model
- Improving the uniformity and effectiveness of support services for families bereaved by suicide

- Corry C, Arensman E, Williamson E. "A study of untimely sudden deaths and people who took their lives while in the care of the Donegal Mental Health Service". National Suicide Research Foundation, April 2016.

The Suicide Support and Information System Psychological Autopsy Model and implementation of evidence-informed actions will be maintained in Donegal and expanded to Sligo, Leitrim, Monaghan and Cavan.

Target groups

The different research projects under Goal 5 addressed both the whole population and specific priority groups, including young people, mental health service users, people who are homeless, victims of domestic violence, and health professionals.

GOAL 6: TO REDUCE AND RESTRICT ACCESS TO MEANS OF SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

During the course of 2015, NSRF researchers have been involved in a number of projects with the primary objective of reducing and restricting access to means of suicide and self-harm.

Reduce access to frequently used drugs in intentional drug overdose.

- a. The NSRF conducted research into frequently used drugs in intentional drug overdose – PhD research based on the Self-Harm Registry data by Caroline Daly, NSRF. Other contributors: Prof Ella Arensman, Dr Eve Griffin, Prof Ivan Perry, Prof Darren Ashcroft, Dr Roger Webb (University of Manchester, School of Pharmacy).
- b. Proposal for a Task Force on restricting access to frequently used drugs in intentional drug overdose, fatal and non-fatal (in particular benzodiazepines, analgesics and SSRIs). In addition to NOSP and NSRF, other suggested partners: DoH, ICGP, College of Psychiatrists, An Garda Síochána and the Irish Pharmacy Union.

Reduce access to highly lethal methods used in suicidal behaviour.

- a. Update of international evidence. The NSRF contributed to two international peer-review papers, one published in July 2015 and one published in 2016:

- Mergl R, Koburger N, Heinrichs K, Székely A, Tóth MD, Coyne J, Quintão S, Arensman E, Coffey C, Maxwell M, Várnik A, van Audenhove C, McDaid D, Sarchiapone M, Schmidtke A, Genz A, Gusmão R, Hegerl U. (2015). What Are Reasons for the Large Gender Differences in the Lethality of Suicidal Acts? An Epidemiological Analysis in Four European Countries. *PLoS One*. 10(7):e0129062. 2015

- Zalsman G, Hawton K, Wasserman D, van Heeringen K, Arensman E, Sarchiapone M, Carli V, Hoschl C, Barzilay R, Balazs J, Purebl G, Kahn JP, Sáiz PA, Bursztein Lipsicas C, Bobes J, Cozman D, Hegerl U, Zohar J. Suicide prevention strategies revisited: 10-year systematic review. *The Lancet Psychiatry*. Volume 3, Issue 7, 646-659. 2016

- b. Psychological, psychiatric and work-related factors related to self-harm involving highly lethal methods (SSIS-ACE), HRB: Jacklyn McCarthy, Sara Leitao, Celine Larkin, Ella Arensman, Eugene Cassidy.
- c. Trend analysis of self-harm involving highly lethal methods, 2004-2015 (ongoing): Eve Griffin, Christina Dillon, Ella Arensman.

Target groups

The different research projects under Goal 6 addressed both the whole population and specific priority groups, including young people, mental health service users, people who are homeless, victims of domestic violence, and health professionals

GOAL 7: TO IMPROVE SURVEILLANCE, EVALUATION AND HIGH QUALITY RESEARCH RELATING TO SUICIDAL BEHAVIOUR

Evaluate the effectiveness and cost-effectiveness of *Connecting for Life*.

National baseline measures for the principle outcomes in *Connecting for Life*.

NSRF (Ella Arensman) worked with NOSP staff members and Steve Platt on the Outcomes Framework of the *Connecting for Life* strategy report with a focus on primary, secondary and intermediate outcomes. In addition, updates were provided to the Cross-Sectoral Steering and Implementation Group.

Improve access to timely and high-quality data on suicide and self-harm.

- a. NSRF prepared updated reports of self-harm and suicide mortality data at regional level for Suicide Resource Officers.
- b. NSRF prepared the periodic report of the National Self-Harm Registry for the first 6 months of 2014.
 - Griffin E, Arensman E, Corcoran P, Dillon CB, Williamson E, Perry IJ; National Self-Harm Registry Ireland Annual Report 2014. 2015, National Suicide Research Foundation
- c. Launch seminar for the purpose of the 2014 NSHRI Report in conjunction with the NOSP 2014 Annual Report by Minister Kathleen Lynch in University College Cork, 16th October 2015. The seminar was attended by approximately 80 professionals from research, health and community-based services.

Review (and, if necessary, revise) current recording procedures for death by suicide.

- a. The NSRF was involved in on-going research conducted by the Suicide Support and Information System in collaboration with Coroners and Health Professionals in Cork City and County into confirmed suicide and open verdict cases (Ella Arensman, Celine Larkin, Jacklyn McCarthy)
- b. The NSRF was involved in on-going research into suicide verdict cases and other external causes of death in collaboration with the Dublin Coroner and two Cork Coroners (Eileen Williamson).
- c. In 2015, the CSO Suicide Mortality Statistics Liaison Group was established, the broad aim of which is the improvement of the quality of suicide statistics and their dissemination.

The CSO and NSRF are jointly responsible for organising meetings of the Group and rotate the chairing of meetings (Eileen Williamson, Ella Arensman).

In addition to representatives of the CSO and the NSRF, the membership of the group includes representatives of the General Register's Office, the Gardaí, the Department of Justice, the Prison Service, the Department of Health, the National Office for Suicide Prevention, the Health Research Board and Coroners.

Develop a national research and evaluation plan that supports innovation aimed at early identification of suicide risk, assessment, intervention and prevention

a. The NSRF (Ella Arensman) was one of the four recipients of the HRB Research Leader Awards. This involves conducting a five-year research programme, which will contribute to strategic objectives of *Connecting for Life* and a national research and evaluation plan: Individual and Area Level Determinants of Self-Harm and Suicide in Ireland: Enhancing Prediction, Risk Assessment and Management of Self-Harm by Health Services (Ella Arensman, Eileen Williamson, Grace O'Regan, Dorothy Leahy, Eugene Cassidy, Paul Corcoran, John Browne, Jan Rigby)

- Examination of predictive factors associated with short-term and long-term risk of repetition of nonfatal self-harm and suicide among high risk groups as identified by the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland

- Examination of predictive factors associated with repeated self-harm and suicide among high risk groups: A prospective in-depth interview study

- Development of a Self-Harm Assessment Guide for nurses and enhancing a CBT-based intervention programme for self-harm patients to be implemented by mental health professionals in a hospital setting

- Implementation and evaluation of enhanced assessment and management of self-harm by nurses and mental health professionals in a hospital setting: a cluster randomised controlled trial

- Socio-ecological and geo-spatial analysis of suicide and self-harm clustering.

b. The NSRF prepared an outline proposal for a national research agenda in relation to priorities in *Connecting for Life*.

Target groups

The different research projects under Goal 7 addressed both the whole population and specific priority groups, including young people, the traveller community, mental health service users, people who are homeless, victims of domestic violence, the LGBT community and health professionals.