

# Leading Research, Shaping Change

**National Suicide Research Foundation  
Strategic Plan 2025-2030**



**NSRF**

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## Foreword

We are delighted to present the National Suicide Research Foundation's new Strategic Plan – *Leading Research, Shaping Change, 2025-2030*. The plan outlines key priority areas and research topics to guide the organisation over the coming six years. The publication of this plan sets out our revised vision, mission and values, building on the consistent and high-impact work by the NSRF over the past 30 years.

Established in 1994 by the late Dr Michael J Kelleher, today the NSRF is a centre for excellence nationally and internationally in the field of suicide and self-harm prevention. Suicide remains a major public health priority today. Every year, more than 550 people die by suicide in Ireland. Each death by suicide is a tragedy, impacting family members, friends and communities. This strategic plan positions the NSRF as a leading organisation in providing evidence-based research and guidance to a wide range of stakeholders and organisations, and ultimately contributing to reduce suicide and self-harm in Ireland and globally.

This strategic plan reflects the commitment of the NSRF to deliver high quality and innovative research and to uphold our organisational values, which include compassion, excellence and inclusion. We are committed to building on our research excellence and surveillance of self-harm and suicide, including further developing our data systems and real-time suicide monitoring. The plan also focuses on the impact and communication of our work,

to ensure that our research can continue to inform policy and practice in the area of suicide and self-harm prevention, in particular informing Ireland's next suicide prevention strategy. This plan will facilitate further collaboration with a range of sectors and partners in working together to reduce suicide and self-harm. This will involve continued partnership with colleagues in policy, service development, clinical practice and third-level education, as well as with organisations from the community and voluntary sector. This priority also reflects a commitment to continue to involve people with lived/ living experience of suicide and self-harm in our work going forward. The plan also recognises the ongoing partnerships and collaborations with key agencies such as the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention, HSE Mental Health, the World Health Organisation and University College Cork and will enable further achievements in policy development and implementation, global efforts in suicide prevention as well as the embedding of public mental health and suicide prevention in both research and education.

This strategy has been developed through detailed consultations, with staff, members of the NSRF Lived Experience Panel, key suicide prevention policy and academic partners, all relevant stakeholders, collaborators and members of the public. The strategic plan has been approved by the NSRF Board of Directors, who will oversee its implementation.

We wish to thank each and every person who contributed to this strategy and supports our work.



**Dr Eve Griffin,**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Professor Ella Arensman,**  
Chief Scientist



**Dr Paul Corcoran,**  
Head of Research

## Developing our new strategy

To provide for the most impactful strategic plan that would identify tangible outputs driving real world benefits, the development of our Strategic Plan included multiple perspectives across the spectrum of support and lived experience. We undertook four core activities to underpin the development of the Strategic Plan:

- (1) staff engagement;
- (2) governance and lived experience workshops;
- (3) stakeholder consultation; and
- (4) alignment with relevant policy and strategic documents.

## Methodology

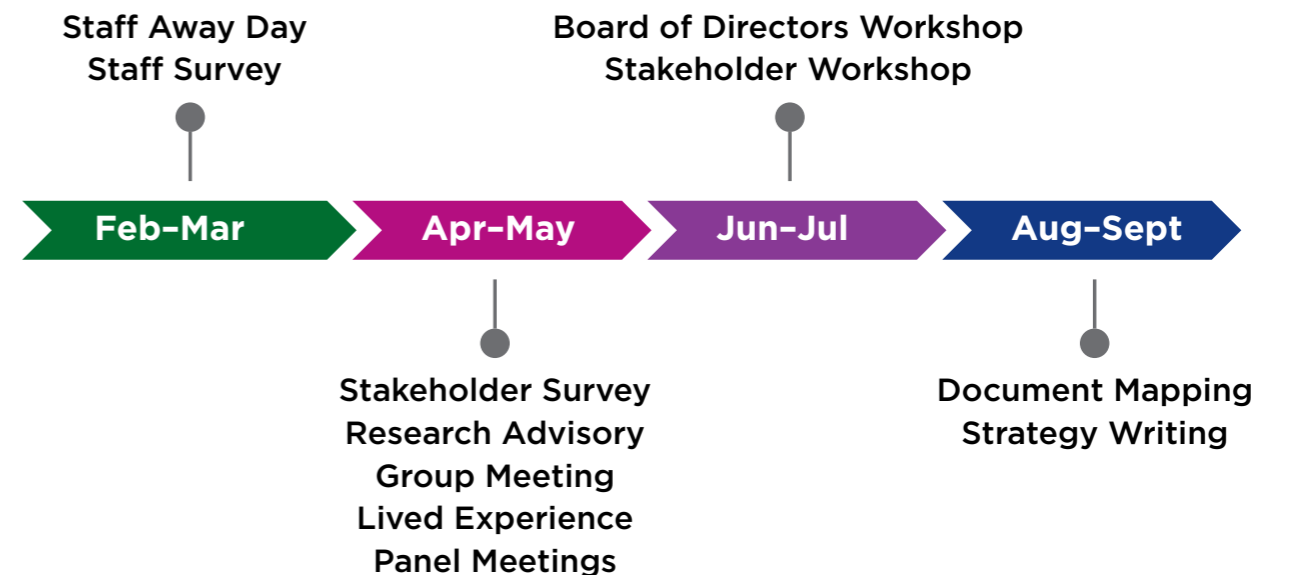
Between January and July 2024, consultations were conducted to explore the NSRF's research and organisational priorities.

These included:

- **An external stakeholder survey**
- **An away day workshop and survey of NSRF staff**
- **Workshops with the NSRF's Research Advisory Group, Board of Directors, Senior Management Team and Lived Experience Panel**
- **Consultations with key partners and stakeholders**
- **Mapping of relevant strategies and policies**

“NSRF is a fantastic organisation doing important work. It's really helped us in our lobbying efforts as an organisation.”

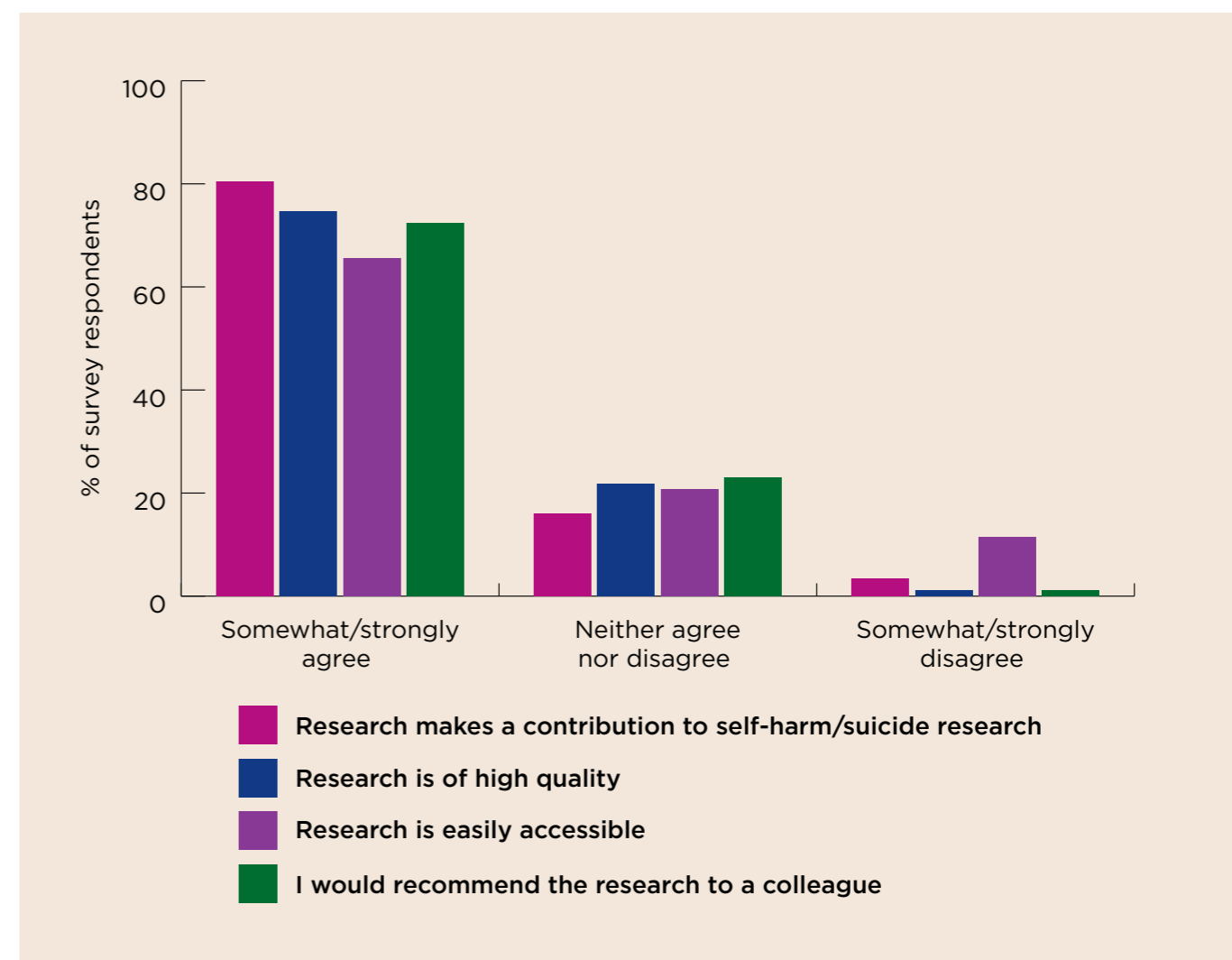
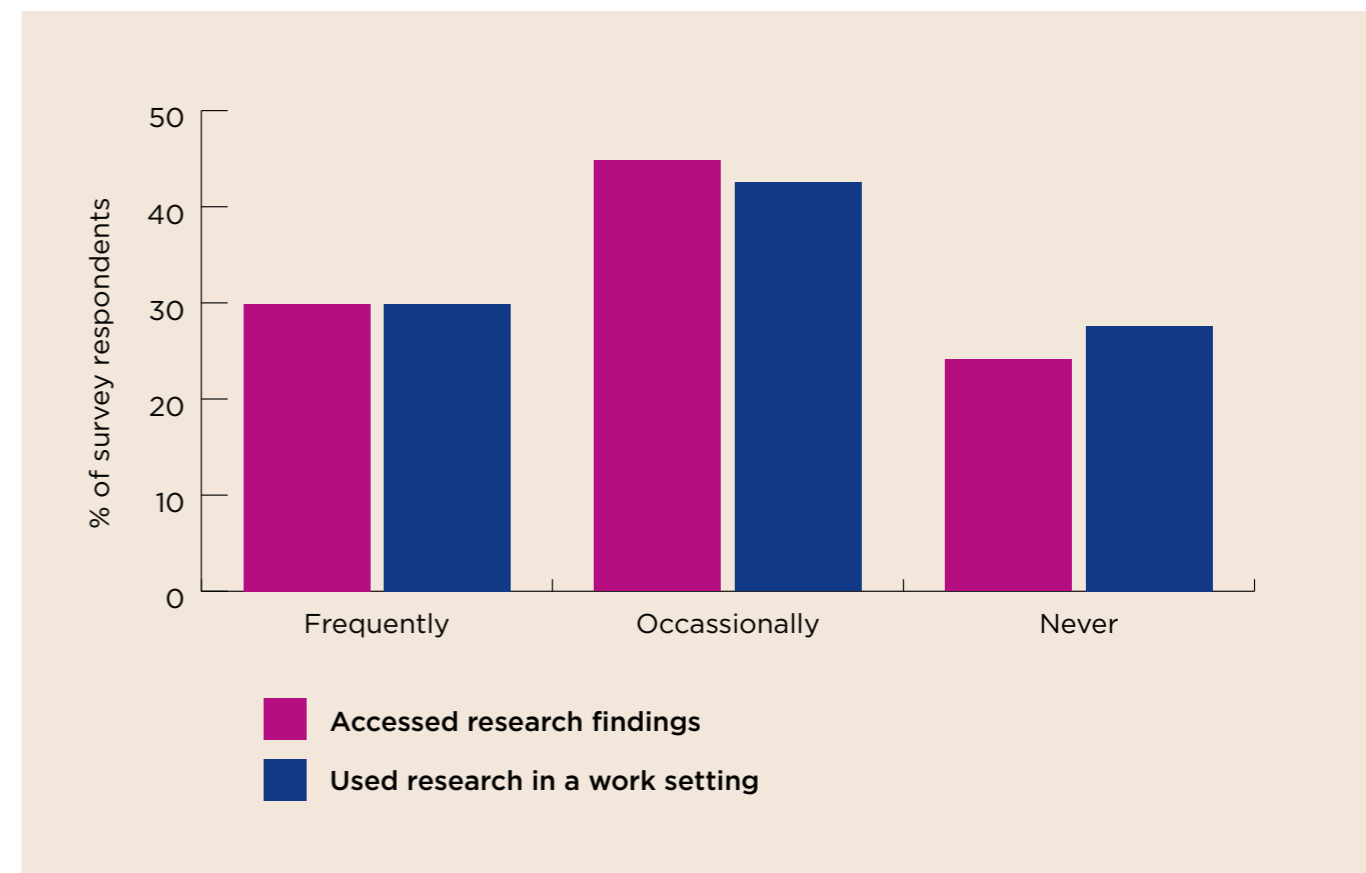
Stakeholder Survey







Above: NSRF team members at our Strategic Away Day



“As a partner with the NSRF for a number of years now I have always found the NSRF invaluable in each step of the research process.”

Stakeholder Survey

## Key findings from our stakeholder survey

- A total of 87 individuals/ organisations responded to our stakeholder survey.
- Many responses were from organisations working in the area of suicide prevention and mental health, including state and governmental bodies and non-governmental organisations and charities (31%).
- Just over one-quarter (27%) were clinicians, 17% were researchers, and 25% were members of the public.
- Stakeholders valued the quality and relevance of research undertaken by the NSRF, often using it as part of their work.
- Strengths of the NSRF identified by our stakeholders included: quality of our research, surveillance data, collaboration and co-design, research dissemination and translation, and importance of research topics.
- The majority of survey respondents use our research findings, many for their own work. In addition, the vast majority of respondents agreed that the research conducted by the NSRF is of high quality and makes a contribution to self-harm/ suicide research more broadly.

## Our Vision, Mission and Values

### Our Vision

Our vision is to support the reduction of suicide and self-harm in Ireland and globally, through impactful research

### Our Mission

Our mission is to ensure that suicide and self-harm prevention activities, in Ireland and globally, are informed by high-quality research and data

### Our Values

The work of the NSRF is underpinned by the following values

#### Compassion

We approach our work with empathy and understanding, recognising the deep pain and complexity of suicide, and offering signposting to care for those affected. We place a strong emphasis on creating a positive working culture and promoting cohesion in the organisation including staff wellbeing and supporting the team via mentoring and supervision.

#### Integrity

We are committed to the highest standards of transparency, openness and ethical conduct in all our research.

#### Collaboration

We believe in working together across disciplines, sectors, and communities to create meaningful change in suicide prevention.

#### Excellence

Excellence of research ensures that our work is scientifically rigorous and impactful, and that we contribute to building capacity and developing the next generation of researchers in Ireland and internationally.

#### Inclusivity

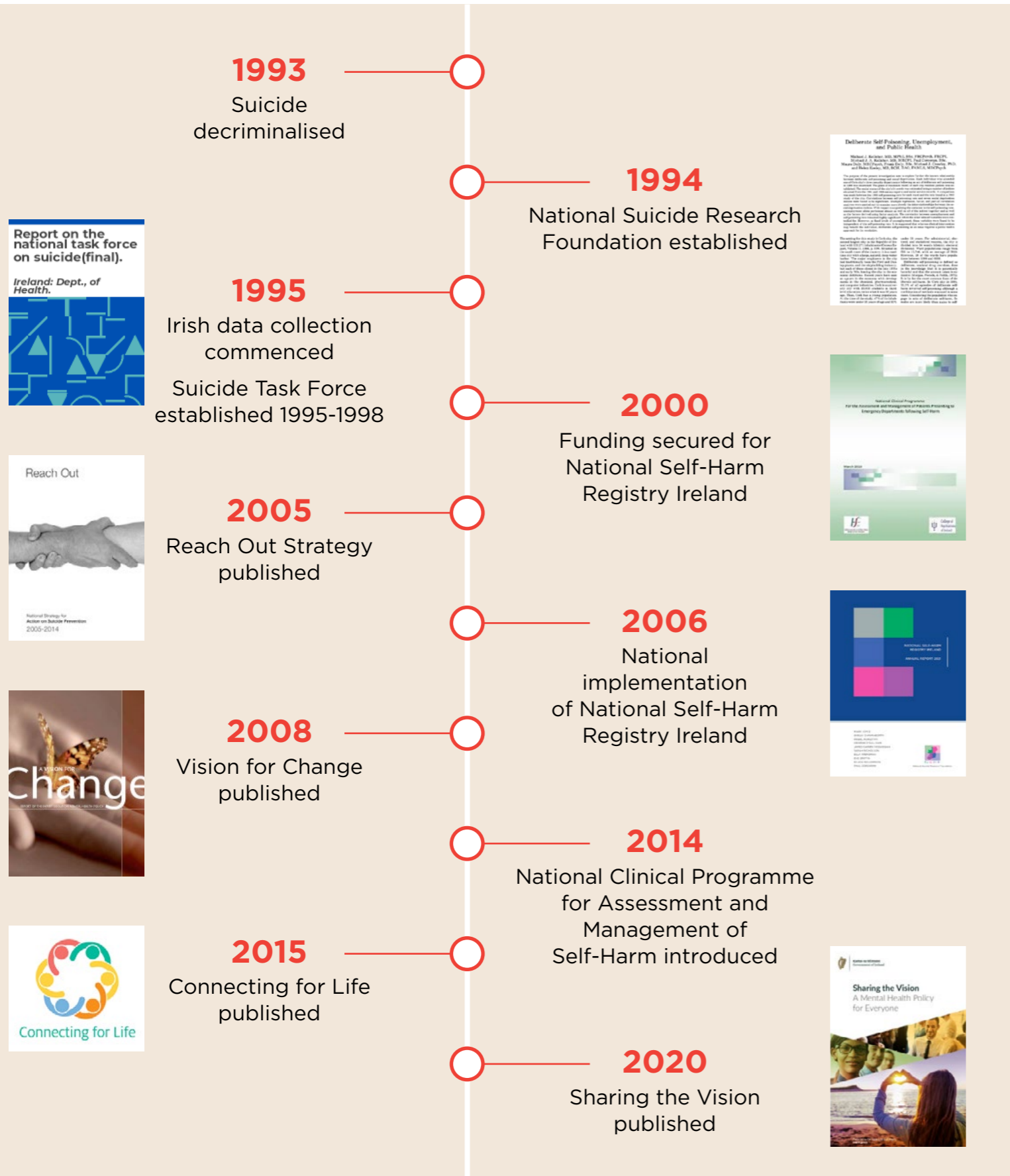
We are dedicated to ensuring that all of our research is informed by people with lived/living experience and relevant stakeholders. All individuals, regardless of background, are valued and their needs should be reflected in our work.

#### Resilience

We are committed to fostering resilience, both in the individuals and communities we serve and within our organisation, as we navigate the challenges of suicide prevention.

These values reflect a comprehensive commitment to the mission of preventing suicide and self-harm through research and action.

# Irish Suicide Prevention and National Self-Harm Registry Ireland timeline



## NSRF: 30 years of suicide prevention



Left: Delegates including Dr Michael J Kelleher at the European Symposium on Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour (ESSSB) in Cork in 1994.

### 1980s-1990s

In 1994, one year after suicide was decriminalised in Ireland, seed funding from the Department of Health was provided to Dr Michael J Kelleher and his colleagues to establish the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF). A pioneering figure in Irish psychiatry and in suicide prevention, the establishment of the NSRF along with Dr Maura Daly and Dr Margaret Kelleher, was a testament to Dr Kelleher's commitment and initiative in the area of suicidal behaviour since the 1980s.

In 1995, the Minister for Health and Children established a National Task Force on Suicide. The published report highlighted the need for adequate assessment of hospital-presenting self-harm and led to deployment of crisis or self-harm

nurses, in addition to existing liaison psychiatry teams. It also led to the establishment of a network of resource officers for suicide prevention. Very sadly, Dr Kelleher died on 9th August 1998 after a long illness. His legacy and dedication to the area of suicide research remains central to the work of the NSRF.

In 1994, The National Suicide Research Foundation joined the WHO/Euro Multicentre Study on Parasuicide, involving 28 partner regions in Europe.

The catchment areas for the purpose of monitoring hospital presentations due to self-harm were counties Cork and Limerick. The self-harm monitoring study in these counties provided the basis for the development of the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland in 2002-2003.





Left: Professor Rory O'Connor, Dr Margaret Kelleher, Ms Eileen Williamson, Dr Paul Corcoran, Professor Ella Arensman, and Dr Eve Griffin at the World Mental Health Day Seminar in 2023.

## 2000-2014

In 2000, The National Self-Harm Registry Ireland was established by the NSRF, working in collaboration with the School of Public Health, University College Cork. The Registry continues to be funded by the Health Service Executive's National Office for Suicide Prevention. In 2006, the Registry obtained full coverage of all Irish hospital emergency departments. It is the world's first national registry of cases of intentional self-harm presenting to hospital emergency departments.

Using the template of the Registry the Northern Ireland Registry of Self-Harm (NIRSH) was first piloted in the Western Health and Social Care Trust area in 2007. Building upon the success of this pilot project, the NIRSH was implemented across all five Health and Social Care Trusts in Northern Ireland by 2012.

In 2005, Ireland's first national suicide prevention strategy – Reach Out (2005-2014) – was published, which set out a vision and guiding principles for suicide prevention in Ireland.

In the preparation for Reach Out, the need for leadership in the development of suicide prevention and research was highlighted. In order to develop leadership and to promote coordination, it was recommended that the HSE establish a National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) to be the main driver of strategy implementation.

The NOSP became responsible for providing funding to the NSRF for the operation of the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland and subsequently provided additional funding to the NSRF for core research activities. These funding streams have continued as part of a service level agreement between the NOSP and NSRF that is reviewed and renewed annually.

## 2015-present

In 2015, the NSRF was designated as a World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre (WHOCC) for surveillance and research in suicide prevention, **one of only five such centres worldwide**. The NSRF has recently been redesignated until 2027. As part of this work, the NSRF provides technical advice and support to inform WHO's work in establishing surveillance systems of self-harm and suicide, as well as in implementing and evaluating national suicide prevention programmes. To date, we have worked with more than 20 countries worldwide. In particular, the template of the Registry has been central in informing surveillance of self-harm internationally and has been endorsed by the WHO as best practice.

Ireland's second suicide prevention strategy, Connecting for Life, was launched in 2015, with input from the NSRF into its development, implementation and evaluation. As part of that strategy, a reduction in hospital-presenting self-harm is a primary outcome, monitored by data collected by the Registry.

The NSRF continues to receive annual funding from the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) and collaborates on several projects to inform national and international suicide prevention activities.

Sharing the Vision – A Mental Health Policy for Everyone was published in June 2020. It sets out a framework for the continued development and enhancement of mental health services in Ireland from 2020-2030. The NSRF works closely with Department of Health aligned to specific actions and goals.

## 2025-2030

At the time of publication Connecting for Life is currently being evaluated. It is hoped that the findings of this evaluation will inform and guide the development of Ireland's next suicide reduction strategy, the successor to Connecting for Life. The NSRF currently co-ordinates over 30 projects at local, national and international level and is recognised as a Health Research Board Host Institution. 36 years later, the European Symposium on Suicide and Suicidal Behaviour (ESSSB) will be held in Cork again in 2030, hosted by the NSRF.



Above: NSRF/HSE NOSP/Department of Health personnel at the Global Leadership Exchange Comprehensive Community Suicide Prevention Match in 2024.



## Recent successes



Left: NSRF team members at a meeting of WHO Collaborating Centres in Copenhagen in 2022.

## World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre

The NSRF's work as a World Health Organisation Collaborating Centre for Surveillance and Research in Suicide Prevention has spanned across more than 20 countries, including Namibia, Iran, Ecuador, Guyana, and Trinidad and Tobago. In particular, the template of the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland has been central in informing surveillance of self-harm internationally.

From 2023-2027 the NSRF and WHO, with support from the Department of Health in Ireland, will continue to build on this collaboration, by providing technical support informing the establishment of surveillance systems of self-harm and suicide and improving suicide monitoring in specific countries; and guiding and supporting countries in establishing national suicide prevention strategies and implementation, including evaluation plans and measurable indicators.

## NSRF-UCC Memorandum

In 2023, the NSRF and University College Cork entered into a formal Memorandum of Collaboration. This Memorandum of Collaboration supports a vision of enhancing and sustaining capacity, knowledge and quality in research and policy development into suicide, self-harm and related mental health and social factors. It will improve cohesion and integration between the different research and work streams in both organisations, reducing fragmentation and improving the potential for greater research innovation and joint positions. The goal is to develop

a leadership role in interdisciplinary collaboration in mental health and suicide prevention research at national and international level.



Above: Data Registration Officers from the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland.

## Lived Experience Panel

In 2023, the NSRF established its first panel of Lived Experience Representatives who contribute to all aspects of our research and activities as an organisation. Our Representatives come from varying backgrounds from across the country.

The Representatives provide input into the design, development, and implementation of our research projects, as well as the dissemination of our findings. Guided by principles of mutual respect, empowerment, flexibility and inclusive research structures, Lived Experience Representatives are involved in the co-production of research proposals, the interpretation of findings, and co-designing outputs and dissemination plans.

We look forward to the continued growth and development of the NSRF's Lived Experience Panel over the coming years.



Above: NSRF team members at the 2024 World Mental Health Day Seminar.

## World Mental Health Day seminar/research workshops

Since 2019, the NSRF hosted an annual World Mental Health Day research seminar, supported by the Higher Education Authority and the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention. With a core objective of building capacity in mental health and suicide research and culminating in the Dr Michael J Kelleher memorial lecture, the event is now an annual fixture in the research calendar.

Similarly, the Annual Suicide and Self-Harm Research Workshop is now in its fourth year. Focusing on early and mid-career researchers the event continues to attract attendees from a range of backgrounds including researchers, clinicians and policy makers.



# Strategic Priority Areas

This Strategic Plan will guide the direction and progression of the NSRF over the coming six years. Through our consultations, we have developed five strategic priority areas: Research Excellence, Surveillance, Impact, Communication, and Organisational Strength. These priority areas will ensure the ongoing delivery of high-quality and impactful research and to deliver on the NSRF's overall vision. These priority areas will facilitate innovation and flexibility to ensure that the research

undertaken by the NSRF continues to inform policy and practice.

The implementation of the priority area objectives and actions will be facilitated by a number of enablers. These include the ongoing alignment of research priorities with national and international policy, collaboration with research partners and stakeholders, and integrating the perspective of Lived Experience across all research projects via the NSRF's Lived Experience Panel.

## Priority Area 1

### Research Excellence

Build, strengthen and lead excellent research with integrity, involving innovative, impactful, open and engaged research.

## Priority Area 2

### Surveillance

Further develop data systems and champion the role of monitoring of self-harm and suicide.

## Priority Area 3

### Impact

Inform policy, practice and perspectives on suicide prevention by strengthening and expanding the impact of our work.

## Priority Area 4

### Communication

Increase the impact of our research through dissemination and communication.

## Priority Area 5

### Organisational Strength

Ensure that our organisation is well-resourced, flexible and strategically positioned.

# Research Excellence

We will generate rigorous, evidence-based outputs by continuing to build, strengthen and lead high-quality research with integrity, involving innovative, impactful, open and engaged research.

1

OBJECTIVE

**Continue to deliver on relevant and impactful research in the area of suicide and self-harm prevention**

ACTIONS

- Work with the NSRF's Research Advisory Panel on developing new research projects by identifying needs and under-utilised data

2

OBJECTIVE

**Ensure research is aligned with local, national and international policies**

ACTIONS

- Initiate and map research priorities to national and international strategies and frameworks

3

OBJECTIVE

**Support the retention of research skills and knowledge among key staff**

ACTIONS

- Review core staff functions and roles
- Develop training plans for core research skills among staff and increase capacity building

4

OBJECTIVE

**Further develop the organisation's reputation as a national and world lead in suicide prevention**

ACTIONS

- Foster multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary and multi-agency approaches to our research
- Review membership of national bodies (e.g. the community and voluntary sector) and international networks
- As a WHO Collaborating Centre, continue to work with countries to develop surveillance systems and national suicide prevention strategies

5

OBJECTIVE

**Uphold ethical standards and the principles of research integrity and responsible conduct of research**

ACTIONS

- Review and update relevant policies and frameworks
- Develop internal and external research review processes
- Commit to activities to promote independence of the NSRF's research

6

OBJECTIVE

**Ensure that our research is informed by lived/ living experience**

ACTIONS

- Invest in the further development and integration of the NSRF's Lived Experience Panel
- Provide research training opportunities for members of the NSRF's Lived Experience Panel
- Develop and implement best practice guidelines for working with people with lived/ living experience



# Surveillance

We will further champion the monitoring of self-harm and suicide to inform suicide prevention activities.

1

OBJECTIVE

## Continue to collect high-quality national and local data on self-harm and suicide

ACTIONS

- Ensure that surveillance data captured by the NSRF addresses key policy and research questions in relation to suicide prevention
- Continually review current security and data protection protocols to ensure alignment with best practice and data protection standards
- Ensure continued involvement of lived/living experience and clinical expertise into the National Self-harm Registry Ireland and other surveillance systems
- Develop a long-term sustainable model for the National Self-Harm Registry Ireland

2

OBJECTIVE

## Further develop expertise in surveillance of suicide and self-harm

ACTIONS

- Further expand real-time suicide surveillance nationally and internationally, through the WHO Collaborating Centre activities
- Further develop expertise in data linkage of national data systems in collaboration with key partners and agencies, with a focus on suicide and self-harm
- Invest in infrastructure to streamline and enhance data collection systems

3

OBJECTIVE

## Ensure that surveillance data is used for research, monitoring and evaluation, along with service and policy development

ACTIONS

- Actively develop and disseminate reports on regional and service-level data
- Increase visibility of the National Self-harm Registry Ireland and other surveillance systems among stakeholders
- Undertake a consultation process to understand the information needs of key stakeholders

# Impact

We commit to being the voice of authority and expertise on policy and service development, through the expanded impacts of our work.

1

OBJECTIVE

**Be the 'go-to' experts through research to inform policy in the area of suicide and self-harm prevention**

ACTIONS

- Expand participation on committees, working groups and other policy bodies to further develop capacity to influence and contribute to national and international policy development
- Develop collaborations with policymakers and statutory and non-statutory organisations in research projects
- Encourage exchanges and presentation of research findings at national and international policy fora

2

OBJECTIVE

**Ensure our research continues to inform initiatives to reduce suicide and self-harm**

ACTIONS

- Ensure research is aligned with, and informs, local, national and international policies
- Continue to evaluate and report on the quality and impact of publications and outputs

3

OBJECTIVE

**Prioritise multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary approaches to research in suicide and self-harm**

ACTIONS

- Engage like-minded and relevant organisations in co-producing and disseminating research and evaluation projects
- Partner with services and organisations to support the implementation of research findings
- Continue to promote and develop an all-island approach to suicide prevention



# Communication

We will continue to increase the impact of our research through dissemination and communication, by building on and diversifying how we engage with stakeholders.

1

OBJECTIVE

**Strengthen the processes of internal and external communications to build further awareness of the work of the NSRF**

ACTIONS

- Develop a communications and social media plan
- Increase capacity and expertise in communication and dissemination, utilising existing resources in UCC to maximise reach and impact
- Undertake a review and update our website on a regular basis
- Support continuous professional development of staff with respect to communication, dissemination and marketing skills
- Develop an organisational multimedia code and best practice guidelines

2

OBJECTIVE

**Ensure our outputs are accessible and inclusive**

ACTIONS

- Uphold the principles of open research in our outputs
- Co-produce Accessibility and Inclusion guidelines
- Review all communication tools both digital and print for accessibility

3

OBJECTIVE

**Support research partners and non-governmental agencies with translating research evidence into policy and practice**

ACTIONS

- Integrate dissemination and impact plans for each project, to maximise cross-cutting impact
- Continue to utilise community networks to disseminate research findings
- Develop new means of communication including infographics, podcasts and videos
- Use workshops and seminars to translate research findings to non-academic audiences
- Adopt a proactive approach to using research evidence in responding to misinformation

4

OBJECTIVE

**Build, develop and maintain a clear and consistent brand identity for the NSRF**

ACTIONS

- Develop brand guideline outputs, including updating the NSRF logo
- Deliver consistent branding across outputs

# Organisational Strength

We will lead out on our mission effectively and sustainably by building a well-resourced, flexible and strategically-positioned organisation.

1

OBJECTIVE

**Ensure our governance, risk and compliance activities align with best practice**

ACTIONS

- Conduct a comprehensive review and update of existing policies, implementing risk management tools and relevant training for our Board and staff in governance, and risk and compliance
- Undertake a Board review and discipline gap analysis
- Co-produce a succession plan for organisation sustainability and growth

2

OBJECTIVE

**Ensure the organisation's positioning in third-level education**

ACTIONS

- Further develop and implement the NSRF-UCC Memorandum of Collaboration to embed reciprocity of engagement and maximum benefit for both organisations

3

OBJECTIVE

**Foster an environment that supports staff wellbeing and professional development**

ACTIONS

- Co-produce and implement comprehensive employee well-being and professional development programmes to support all staff
- Co-produce an Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy for the organisation

4

OBJECTIVE

**Ensure multiple funding streams for sustainability**

ACTIONS

- Co-produce a research funding strategy, with involvement from UCC's Research Office
- Identify funding to support broader dissemination and translation of our research findings
- Identify funding to support the lived experience participation in our research

5

OBJECTIVE

**Commit to a career focused and environmentally responsible workplace**

ACTIONS

- Embed ethos of sustainability in all aspects of our work and research
- Continue to develop pathways for undergraduate and postgraduate students to develop research skills and contribute to research projects
- Continue to develop and deliver suicide prevention and awareness training in higher education curricula
- Sustained support for early and mid-career researchers



# Priority Research Topics

Through our various streams of consultation, we have identified a number of key research priority topics for the NSRF over the coming years

## Leading Research, Shaping Change

NSRF Strategic Plan 2025-2030

### ASSESSMENT and MANAGEMENT of SELF-HARM

Improving the assessment, management and evidence-based interventions for self-harm patients.

### POSTVENTION and SUICIDE BEREAVEMENT

Identifying the needs of the family members, friends, communities and professionals impacted by suicide.

### PRIORITY GROUPS

Supporting groups with increased vulnerability to suicide and self-harm.

### LIFECOURSE EPIDEMIOLOGY

Researching suicide, self-harm and associated mental and physical health co-morbidities across the lifespan.

### WORKPLACE MENTAL HEALTH

Focusing on mental health promotion, suicide prevention and postvention in the workplace.

### SOCIAL DETERMINANTS of SUICIDE and SELF-HARM

Highlighting the social, environmental and economic context of suicide and self-harm.

### SURVEILLANCE and REAL-TIME DATA

Improving access to data and the development of methodological expertise to maximise the routine use of data systems.

### SERVICE IMPROVEMENT and EVALUATION

Ensuring the strategic development of high-quality support and response services and continuity of care to meet the needs of individuals.

### UPSTREAM APPROACHES to SUICIDE PREVENTION

Focusing on prevention and early intervention, modifiable risk factors, and improving access to services.

### EDUCATION and TRAINING

Evidence-based training and education programmes for healthcare professionals, researchers, young people, families, and the general public.



## Acknowledgments

We would like to thank everyone who contributed to the development of this Strategic Plan, including staff members of the NSRF and external collaborators, research partners and stakeholders. In particular, we would like to thank Catherine Brogan (Catherine Brogan Consultancy) for facilitating a number of consultation activities in the development of this plan.

We would like to acknowledge the involvement of the NSRF Board of Directors who have approved this Strategic Plan - Mr James McCarthy (Chairperson), Dr Margaret Kelleher, Dr Daniel Flynn, Dr Karen Galway, Dr Eric Kelleher, Mr Barry McGale, Mr John O'Brien and Mr Mark O'Callaghan.

We would also like to thank the following groups and individuals for their input and support: members of the NSRF Lived Experience Panel and Research Advisory Group; Dr Siobhan Cusack (Director of Research Strategy and Projects, University College Cork) and Dr David O'Connell (Director of Research Support and Policy, University College Cork); HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention.

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**Front cover and infographic illustration:** Ruth Graham





**NSRF**