

News Release-Dept. Social & Family Affairs
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Cullen launches Action Plan for Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm in Waterford City

Waterford's Minister Martin Cullen TD, this afternoon (Friday 4 April 2008) launched Waterford Area Partnership's Strategy Reflecting the Challenge: An Integrated Action Plan for the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm in Waterford City.

The Plan is the result of a collaboration between Waterford Area Partnership, who together with the Regional Suicide Resource Office of the Health Service Executive established a Suicide Prevention Task Group in November 2005 to raise awareness about suicide and suicide prevention in Waterford City.

The Plan identifies Action Areas which are designed to:

- build resilience or protection at a community level;
- develop crisis intervention services;
- enhance services and supports for survivors; and
- enhance supports for families, individuals and communities affected by suicide and deliberate self-harm.

Acknowledging those involved in the preparation of the Action Plan, Minister Martin Cullen TD, Minister for Social and Family Affairs said: "As I am sure you will agree, suicide affects all age groups and communities. In fact, few people escape being touched by the devastating effects of suicidal behaviour in their lifetime and the emotional, social and practical repercussions of suicide are felt by family members, friends, neighbours and colleagues. The Minister added: "Reducing suicide rates requires a collective, concerted effort from all groups in society: - health and social services, other professionals, communities and community leaders, voluntary and statutory agencies and organisations, parents, friends and neighbours.

Martin Cullen TD continued: "Reducing suicide rates also requires fostering the development of a culture in which people in psychological distress do not hesitate to seek help - and a culture that recognises the signs and signals of distress and is willing to help. In working towards that goal, the role of organisations like the Waterford Area Partnership and the Suicide Prevention Task Group cannot be underestimated. By working with community groups and organisations to alleviate social disadvantage and supporting those in crisis, you are helping to reduce the isolation and despair which can occur when people are faced with difficult circumstances.

The Minister made reference to progress made to date in the area of suicide prevention, in particular the launch of two strategy documents; "Reach Out A National Strategy for Action on Suicide Prevention and "A Vision for Change the Report of the Expert Group on Mental Health Policy in January 2006. The establishment of the HSE's National Office for Suicide Prevention, which is responsible for the implementation of "Reach Out , also plays a vital part in developing and progressing suicide prevention initiatives.

Minister Martin Cullen TD said: "This Government and in particular my colleague, Dr Jimmy Devins TD (Minister of State at the Department of Health and Children with responsibility for Disability and Mental Health), shares the public concern about the levels of suicide in this country and is committed to the continued development of our mental health services in

order to prevent the further tragic loss of life.

The Minister concluded: "I would like to thank everyone involved with this Integrated Action Plan for the Prevention of Suicide and Self-Harm in Waterford City . The hard work, effort and dedication of all those involved is to be commended. Initiatives such as these are testament to your commitment to creating awareness of suicide and suicide prevention in this country and I am confident that you will provide a most worthwhile service to people in Waterford City.

Editor s note:

Others attending the launch of the Action Plan included the Mayor of Waterford, Cllr Mary O Halloran; Chairperson of the Suicide Prevention Task Group, Mr Joseph Mooney; Director of the National Office for Suicide Prevention Mr Geoff Day and Waterford Area Partnership Co-Ordinator, Ms Maria Lindell.