Overview of the National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework for Ireland
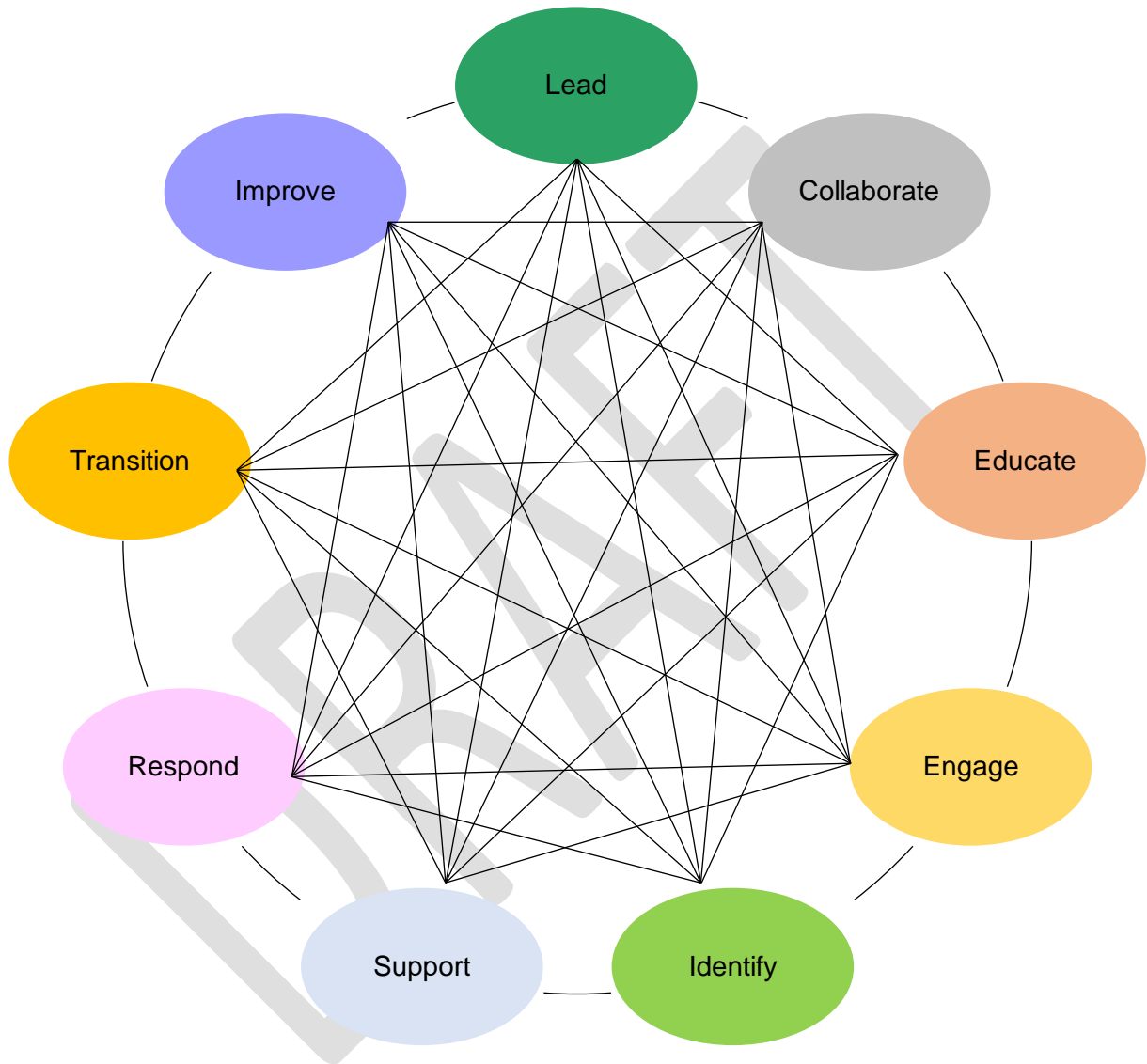

Figure 1: Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework for Ireland

PLEASE NOTE: This overview of the Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework has been made available for further consultation. This is a draft document and the final framework, structure and content, may be revised. This draft will be subject to professional editing and design.

Why?

Student mental health has become a major global concern. Students are identified as a high risk group for mental health difficulties and young adults have been identified as a group who are at greater risk of suicide. The vast majority (92%) of full time undergraduate new entrants in Irish Higher Education Institutions fall within that age group[1].

Concern for the increased levels of student mental illness, mental distress and low wellbeing has been recognised by the recent My World-2: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland[2] and the Union of Students in Ireland National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education[3].
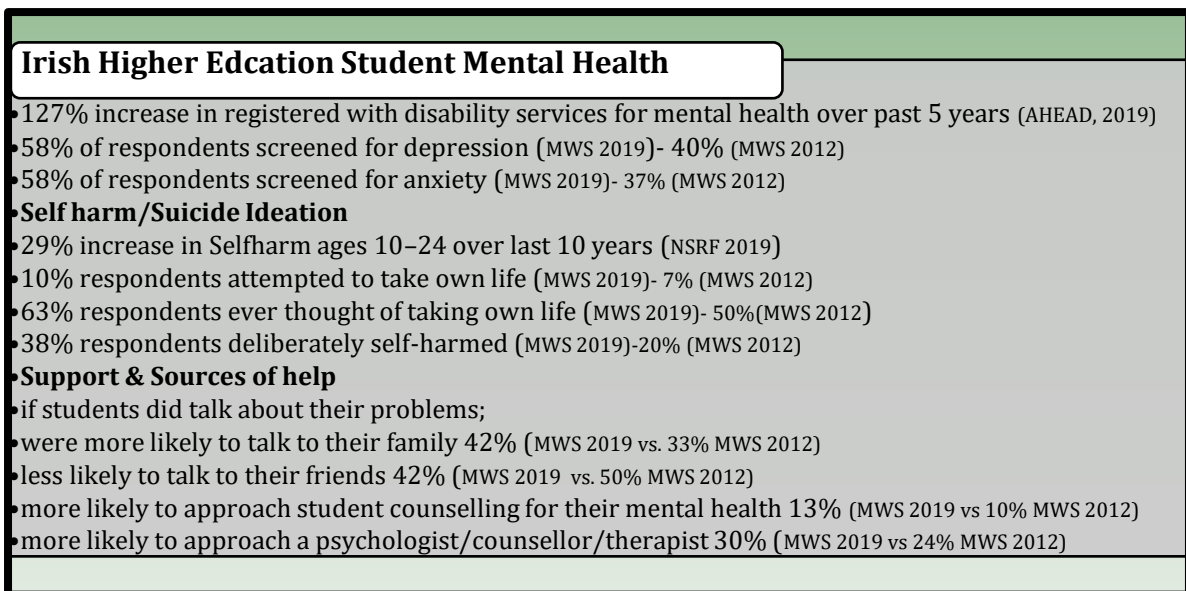
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Irish Higher Edcation Student Mental Health

- 127% increase in registered with disability services for mental health over past 5 years (AHEAD, 2019)
- 58% of respondents screened for depression (MWS 2019)- 40% (MWS 2012)
- 58% of respondents screened for anxiety (MWS 2019)- 37% (MWS 2012)
- **Self harm/Suicide Ideation**
- 29% increase in Selfharm ages 10–24 over last 10 years (NSRF 2019)
- 10% respondents attempted to take own life (MWS 2019)- 7% (MWS 2012)
- 63% respondents ever thought of taking own life (MWS 2019)- 50%(MWS 2012)
- 38% respondents deliberately self-harmed (MWS 2019)-20% (MWS 2012)
- **Support & Sources of help**
- if students did talk about their problems;
- were more likely to talk to their family 42% (MWS 2019 vs. 33% MWS 2012)
- less likely to talk to their friends 42% (MWS 2019 vs. 50% MWS 2012)
- more likely to approach student counselling for their mental health 13% (MWS 2019 vs 10% MWS 2012)
- more likely to approach a psychologist/counsellor/therapist 30% (MWS 2019 vs 24% MWS 2012)

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Figure 2: Numbers at a glance: Irish Higher Education [4] [5] [6]

What?

This framework is informed by international evidence that calls for an embedded whole system approach to student metal health and well-being. The framework details nine interconnected themes- blended recommendations drawing from: Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015-2020[7], the World Health Organisation[8], the Jed Foundation[9], the Suicide Prevention Resource Center[10], Zero Suicide[11], Suicide Safer Universities[12], Step Change[13] and international higher education polices[14] [15].

How?

There is a wide range of mental health initiatives and services provided by Higher Education Institutions in Ireland. The needs, barriers, resources, and strategies of each institution and campus will vary. This framework is adaptable and can be tailored to fit the needs of each institution across Ireland. This framework provides practical guidance and resources to support student mental health and actions for suicide prevention.

Lead

Improvements in student mental health and suicide prevention will only be effective if prioritised at a national, whole sectoral level - through policy, strategy and championed by strong leadership.

Recommendations
- Student wellbeing and mental health needs to permeate all aspects of decision-making at governmental level, to ensure that HEIs can affect the changes necessary in their institutions
- Dedicated leadership - championing student success wellbeing and mental health
- Form a Mental Health Committee with engagement from all staff, including senior management, heads of departments and faculties, provosts, deans, counselling, students, academic staff, tutors, students' unions, security, accommodation
- Build and strengthen strategic partners nationally and in the community
- Strengthen infrastructure by dedicating funding and resources, i.e. staff and technology
- Stimulate campus-wide cultural change that de-stigmatizes mental health, promotes wellbeing and encourages help-seeking behaviour
- Develop and/or revise comprehensive institutional policies on student mental health
- Restrict access to lethal means

LEAD RESOURCES
- JED/SPRC Comprehensive Approach to Mental Health Promotion & Suicide Prevention for Universities
- University Mental Health Charter by Student Minds
- UUK Stepchange strategy and implementation whole university mental health
- Policy for Student Mental Health Canada/UK
- Online calculator for economic returns on improve student mental health
- Investing in Student Mental Health for College Leadership
- SPRC Restricting Access to Lethal Means at Universities

Collaborate

HEIs need to support an inclusive, co-creative approach where students and staff are involved at every stage of the journey to improve mental health outcomes. Universities UK stressed that a partnership approach between educational settings and mental health services is needed at the local level not just to assess needs but to design and deliver services for students.

Recommendations:
- Establish strong and regular links with local mental health services
- Establish formal connections between local authorities and government departments
- Establish formal connections between HEI and non-statutory community agencies
- Build staff & student capacity to effectively work collaboratively with external agencies

COLLABORATE RESOURCES
Minding Our Future UUK - minding-our-future
Self Harm CNS at ED HSE CNS   SCAN at GP HSE SCAN   Domestic Violence Womens Aid
Suicide prevention, intervention and postvention NOSP Samaritans Pieta House crisistextline
Mental health promotion and support Mental Health Ireland Aware Jigsaw
Eating disorders Bodywhys   Sexual orientation and gender diversity GOSHH
Victims of crime Garda Liaison Service   Sexual Violence Rape Crisis Network

Educate

Education and training are key to change culture and reduce stigma through improved understanding of and attitudes to, mental health and suicide prevention. HEIs need to ensure that all community members are trained in mental health literacy and suicide awareness so they are equipped to identify signs of psychological distress and direct vulnerable students to appropriate resources.

Recommendations:
- Establish training for mental health literacy and suicide awareness for all students and staff
- Ensure that the whole community are aware of the steps to get help and support
- Allocate time and resources to staff so that they can support student mental health
- Embed mental health awareness in the curriculum

> **EDUCATE RESOURCES**
> Gatekeeper training ⌁ASIST Leaflet ⌁SafeTalk Leaflet ⌁esuicideTALK
> ⌁ Mental Health First Aid training - mhfaireland
> ⌁ Charlie Waller Memorial trust - e-learning for colleges and universities
> ⌁ Free online suicide prevention training - zerosuicidealliance

Engage

Institutions must foster the development of student wellbeing through community connectedness, purpose, engagement and belonging. Emotionally supportive relationships thrive in campus cultures that reflect the diversity, inclusivity, and compassion for the individual.

Recommendations
- Curricular Infusion of mental health across academic disciplines- Life Skills, Resilience, Manage Challenges/Adversity and Adapt
- Reduce student isolation by promoting belonging
- Incorporate Peer mentoring programmes
- Zero-tolerance to bullying and harassment
- Encourage social environments & smaller groups within the larger campus community

> **ENGAGE RESOURCES**
> ⌁Work & Wellbeing Required undergraduate business module at Trinity
> ⌁National Forum for the Enhancement of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education Curriculum Resources-The First Six Weeks of College support for new students and Peer assisted student support
> ⌁Well-being statement in a place students frequent like Moodle or module syllabi- requiring professors address mental health and normalising help-seeking behaviour
> ⌁Canadian Association of College & University Student Services Supportive, Inclusive Campus Climate & Environment Inventory
> ⌁Harvard University Resilience Consortium

Identify

HEIs need to identify students who are at risk of mental health problems and establish a campus culture with an increased understanding of mental health, especially for all 'front facing' staff, by promoting mental health awareness, literacy and compassion.

Recommendations:
- Establish regular and highly visible mental health awareness raising interventions
- Establish a culture that encourages disclosure
- Establish a culture that supports students who may be experiencing poor mental health and helps them identify appropriate services
- Make non-academic help such as social interpersonal skills an integral or mandated part of every students HEI experience to move seeking support away from the deficit model

IDENTIFY RESOURCES
- HSE/NOSP help identify someone thinking of suicide - hse about suicide
- Screening toolkit Ask Suicide Questions - aSQ
- JED Foundation self-evaluation screening toolkit for students - ULifeLine
- Green Ribbon and work in partnership with nationally and in the community - seechange
- Community support to maintain and promote positive mental health - recoverycollege

Support

A key component of student mental health improvement is ensuring access to and delivering effective, high-quality evidence-based treatment, evaluation, interventions and therapies, by trained providers.

Recommendations:
- High quality, effective treatment for Student Mental Health
- Integrated interdisciplinary services on campus
- Improved 2-way communication with campus and community services
- Intrusive/proactive (programs, treatment) for identified at risk students
- Emergency/Suicide Risk Management, assessment & emergency appointments
- Client Data Management System with screenings
- Outreach Education for all students and staff on campus, ongoing CPD for mental health staff

SUPPORT RESOURCES
- JED Framework for developing institutional protocols for distressed or suicidal students
- Joint Commission Mental Health and Suicide Risk Screenings & Management
- International Association of Counselling Services Standards
- Clinical Load Index is a tool to help on staffing for mental health services in higher education

Respond

In addition to the provision of treatment, HEIs need to have a crisis response or critical incident plan that is accessible to the institution as a whole. The plan should include clear responding protocols for varying levels of crisis and effectively communicated to all members of staff.

Recommendations:
- Have a plan in place. Well, coordinated postvention has a critical role to play in the prevention of further suicidal actions in the community affected by the suicide
- Establish a 'team' to execute the plan with clearly defined roles.
- Suicide postvention should include: psychological support, crisis intervention and other forms of assistance to those affected.

RESPOND RESOURCES
- Suicide Safer Universities - Postvention Strategy - preventing-student-suicides
- Suicide cluster response plans - Suicide_Cluster_Guide
- JED provide a range of resources - JED Postvention resources
- Critical response teams - Campus teams
- A guide for response to suicide on campus - hemha-postvention-guide
- NOSP suicide bereavement community training programme - Suicide Bereavement Training

Transition

Higher education represents a major milestone and time of transition for students, therefore it is vital that institutions establish transition supports throughout the higher education journey: pre-entry, induction, re-orientation and outduction. Supports and interventions need to be in place for students who are more vulnerable to mental health problems during transitions.

Recommendations:
- Establish transition supports for students throughout the higher education journey: pre-entry, induction, re-orientation and outduction.
- Champion the introduction of 'Student health passports' so that information on the health, plans and notes travel with them
- Identify at risk groups who should be targeted with intrusive student support, appropriate initiatives and outreach programmes especially at key transition points.

TRANSITION RESOURCES
- Pre-entry preparation for Irish students transitioning to higher education - Transition MOOC
- Student minds transition preparation package - Know before you go
- Student Minds advice for exam stress - examstress
- Student Experience Transition model - SET

Improve

A whole system response requires starting with a baseline needs assessment and evaluation of current practices. The frequent collection, evaluation and strategic auditing of data is vital to ensure policies and interventions remain effective and allow prompt action be taken to improve student mental health outcomes.

Recommendations:
- Complete an Institutional baseline assessment
- Track and analyse student risk/protective factors, and safety/health indicators -MY World, Irish Survey of Student Engagement, Graduate Outcomes Survey, Counselling outcomes, wait time, violent/criminal behaviour, sexual assault & substance abuse
- Repeat assessment annually and track progress to improvement goals set in each area.

IMPROVE RESOURCES
- ⟡ Student Mental Health & Suicide Prevention Institution Assessment Tool
- ⟡ The Irish Survey of Student Engagement surveys students' self- reported experience of their engagement and perceptions of how much the institution supports that engagement
- ⟡ The NCAA Institution Mental Health Planning & Implementation kit provides an institutional self-assessment and a campus collaboration action plan
- ⟡ Canadian Association of College & University Student Services Guide to Implementing and Assessing a Systemic Approach for student mental health

1 HEA, (2018). Key Facts and Figures Higher Education Authority 2017/18. Available from: https://hea.ie/assets/uploads/2019/01/Higher-Education-Authority-Key-Facts-Figures-2017-18.pdf

2 Dooley, B., O'Connor, C., Fitzgerald, A., and O'Reilly, A., (2019). *My World Survey 2: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland*. UCD and Jigsaw: Dublin.

3 Union of Students Ireland, (2019). *The Union of Students in Ireland National Report on Student Mental Health in Third Level Education*. Union of Students in Ireland: Dublin.

4 AHEAD (2019). Numbers of Students with Disabilities Studying in Higher Education in Ireland 2017/18. Association of Higher Education Access and Disability: Dublin.

5 Dooley, B., and Fitzgerald, A., (2012). *My World Survey: National Study of Youth Mental Health in Ireland*. Headstrong: Dublin.

6 Griffin, E, McTernan N, Wrigley, C, Nicholson, S, Arensman, E, Williamson, E, Corcoran, P., (2019). National Self-Harm Registry Ireland Annual Report 2018. National Suicide Research Foundation: Cork.

7 Department of Health and Children (2015). Connecting for Life: Ireland's National Strategy to Reduce Suicide 2015 – 2020. Department of Health: Dublin.

8 Auerbach, R., Mortier, P., Bruffaerts, R., Alonso, J., Benjet, C., Cuijpers, P., and Murray, E. (2018). WHO World Mental Health Surveys International College Student Project: prevalence and distribution of mental disorders. *Journal of abnormal psychology*, 127(7), 623.

9 JED, (2019). Comprehensive approach, what we do. The Jed Foundation. Available from: https://www.jedfoundation.org/what-we-do/

10 SPRC and JED, (2011). Guide to Campus Mental Health Action Planning. Available from: http://www.sprc.org/sites/default/files/resource-program/CampusMHAP_Web%20final.pdf

11 Zerosuicide.sprc.org., (2015-2019). Zero Suicide in Health and Behaviour Health Care. Zero Suicide Institute, Suicide Prevention Resource Centre. Available from: https://zerosuicide.sprc.org

12 Universities, U. K., (2018). *Suicide-safer universities*. Universities UK, London. Available from: https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/reports/Documents/2018/guidance-for-universities-on-preventing-student-suicides.pdf

13 Universities U.K., (2017). Stepchange: Mental health in Higher Education Framework. Available from: https://www.universitiesuk.ac.uk/policy-and-analysis/stepchange/Pages/framework.aspx

14 Mental Health Commission of Canada, (2019). Post-Secondary Student Standard. Available from: https://www.mentalhealthcommission.ca/English/studentstandard

15 Orygen, (2017). *Under the radar: The mental health of Australian university students*. Orygen, The National Centre of Excellence in Youth Mental Health: Melbourne.

National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework Consultation Feedback

Please share your views on the Framework

Does the overview adequately inform as to WHY a National Student Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework is required in Ireland. If not, what is missing?

Could this framework work across Ireland and at your college?

Do the nine areas include all key points? If not, what is missing?

Lead-

Collaborate-

Educate-

Engage-

Identify-

Support-

Respond-

Transition-

Improve-

Are the resources to for implementation of the Mental Health and Suicide Prevention Framework useful/helpful? If not what links should be added?

General comments: Please provide any general feedback you wish to give

Thank you for taking the time to give us your views.