

German project to make Irish debut

Unique project

by Eoin English

A UNIQUE project in Germany that has dramatically reduced the levels of suicide, self-harm and depression will be launched in Ireland tomorrow.

The community-focused EU-funded project will be piloted in Cork and Kerry for two years, and then its rates of suicide and self-harm will be compared to rates in the mid-west and south-east where the scheme will not be in operation. If successful, it could be expanded nationwide.

Deliberate self-harm levels dropped by 26% in the Nuremberg region where the intervention project ran between 2000 and 2002, while rates of self-harm jumped 24% in the Wurzburg region, where the scheme was not used.

"There is a need for such an intensive approach to tackle the relatively-high rates of suicide here," said Dr Ella Arensman of the National Suicide Research Foundation.

The Cork and Kerry Alliance for Awareness of Depression and Suicidal Behaviour (CKADS) project will involve four key approaches at community level:

- GPs will be invited to take part in specialist workshops with depressed and suicidal patients.
- Increased support will be offered to deliberate self-harm patients. An emergency card and leaflets

Contact numbers

- Samaritans: 1850 60 90 90
- Childline: 1800 666 666
- Aware: 1890 303 302 or www.aware.ie
- Suicide Helpline HSE Southern Area (6.00-10.00 pm): 1800 742 745
- Farm & Rural Stress Help Line HSE Southern Area (6-10pm): 1800 742 645

will be produced providing information on relevant services. Support for self-help groups will be provided.

- Social workers, priests, police, teachers and journalists will be offered educational workshops on depression and suicidal behaviour.
- The public will be targeted through an awareness campaign, cinema adverts and public lectures.

It is the first time such a research project has been tried in Ireland, Dr Arensman said.

"The scheme is designed to improve the knowledge about and attitudes towards depression and suicidal behaviour."

The project will be launched in a seminar on depression and suicidal behaviour in Cork. It is organised by the National Suicide Research Foundation with UCC, the HSE Southern, Mid-Western and South Eastern Area, and the European Alliance Against Depression.