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Suicide-prevention programme to be set up

Ralph Riegel

A NEW suicide prevention programme, credited with significantly reducing suicide in parts of Germany, is to be launched here tomorrow on a pilot basis.

A seminar in Cork tomorrow will outline details of the programme which will be aimed at tackling the shocking spiral in Ireland's suicide and self-harm rate.

The community-based intervention programme

will be launched here by the National Suicide Research Foundation in conjunction with University College Cork, the Health Service Executive's southern, mid-western and south eastern areas, and the European Alliance Against Depression.

Cork and Kerry will host the pilot trials – the Cork town of Midleton is thought to have, per capita, one of the highest suicide rates in the world. One section of

Midleton's town cemetery is known as "suicide row".

The programme comprises a four-tier intervention structure which involves GPs, acute patient groups, community facilitators and the general public/families.

Over the next two years in Cork and Kerry, the programme will involve:

- GPs being invited to take part in specialist workshops, focusing on working with suicidal patients.

- Increased support for particular groups, such as people who deliberately harm themselves.

- Community facilitators, such as social workers, priests, police, teachers and journalists, being informed about depression and suicidal behaviour, and offered educational workshops.

- The public being addressed through an awareness campaign, using posters, cinema adverts and public lectures.

A national programme will be implemented, depending on the experience of the Cork Kerry pilot programme over the next two years.

The German trials of the integrated multi-disciplinary approach to suicide indicated that incidents of attempted self-harm were almost halved over the programme's lifetime. It was so successful that it is now being developed as a Federal response to suicide.