

# FLOURISH!



Summary Report  
Flourish!  
Inter-Churches Suicide Prevention  
Initiative  
April 2013- March 2016

For more information:  
[www.wewillflourish.com](http://www.wewillflourish.com)

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1 Strategic context

A new Suicide Prevention Strategy is being developed by Department of Health (DOH) to define the aims, objectives and priority actions for the promotion of mental and emotional health and wellbeing and suicide prevention in Northern Ireland. Protect Life 2: A draft strategy for suicide prevention in the North of Ireland was released for consultation by Department of Health September 2016 (*These documents are available on the Department of Health website at: <https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/consultations>*).

It will focus on building the mental and emotional resilience of the whole population and of specific “raised risk” groups so that people can improve their ability to adapt and recover from adverse circumstances or events.

According to the WHO (2014) report Preventing suicide: a global imperative:

- Suicides are preventable. For national responses to be effective, a comprehensive multi-sectorial suicide prevention strategy is needed.
- Restricting access to the means for suicide is an effective prevention strategy. An effective strategy for preventing suicides and suicide attempts is to restrict access to the most common means, including pesticides, firearms and certain medications.
- Healthcare services need to incorporate suicide prevention as a core component.
- Mental disorders and harmful use of alcohol contributes to many suicides around the world.
- Early identification and effective management are key to ensuring that people receive the care they need.
- **Communities play a critical role in suicide prevention.** They can provide social support to vulnerable individuals and engage in follow-up care, fight stigma and support those bereaved by suicide.

The former Protect Life: Northern Ireland Suicide Prevention Strategy 2012-March 2014 (June 2012) highlighted the important role of community-led suicide prevention and bereavement support services. The refreshed strategy highlighted the main findings and recommendations of a study ‘Dealing with Suicide - the needs of clergy in providing pastoral care’ March 2009. This study was funded by the former Southern Health and Social Services Board through the Protect Life Strategy, using survey and qualitative methods to examine the needs of clergy as they attempt to deal with the deeply sensitive issue of providing pastoral care to families, friends and the community. How do they cope? Should they receive training in mental health care? How should they collaborate with statutory services? (*by Prof Gerard Leavey, Peter McBride, Janet Rondon, Katy Radford & Margaret Fawcett*). (*The final report, Dealing with Suicide; the needs of Clergy in providing pastoral care is available through <http://www.compasswellbeing.org/Completed-Projects-8431.html>*)

The main findings of this research were as follows:

- Clergy feel that tackling suicide is a major issue and that faith-based organisations should be involved in tackling it.
- Clergy generally lack any training as part of ministry for dealing with mental illness and suicide and have little awareness of advice and support services for mental health problems experienced by congregation members and others. They indicated that they would benefit by attending training on mental illness and suicide, but are concerned about peer perceptions of inadequacy, perceived hostility from secular organisations and lack of time for these activities.

- Theological perspectives on suicide and the sanctity of life, while still crucially important to clergy, are not a deterrent to offering compassionate pastoral care.
- Clergy are often unsure about how to approach a family following suicide. The importance of careful and sensitive choice of language was stressed and the fear of upsetting or offending families through a misjudged remark is particularly worrying.
- Most clergy feel that the best response they can offer to families is 'to be there' and offer a 'passive' response. Although religion and spirituality can be comforting, a religion-couched message to families bereaved through suicide was regarded as sometimes unwanted and unhelpful.
- An inter-faith dialogue and response to dialogue is both desirable and possible. Much inter-faith connection currently exists and was thought useful, but for some clergy there must be recognition that the beliefs and value systems within different faith groups preclude a straightforward, homogenous response to suicide.

It is this context that has focussed attention on the need to provide support to enable such early intervention by religious / faith leaders.

## 1.2 Setting the scene

Every day, clergy, church youth workers, church lay leaders, lay pastoral workers and other church staff provide pastoral support to people facing life's greatest challenges, such as illness, death, job loss and family breakdown. This unique role offers an opportunity to help people at risk of suicide who may not initially seek support from mental health professionals or even from family members. Churches have an opportunity to prevent suicide by taking threats seriously, recognising the warning signs of suicidal behaviour and ensuring people at risk of suicide access the most appropriate care and support.

*Flourish* Inter-Churches Suicide Prevention initiative formally started in 2013. *Flourish* aims to support churches to develop a focused and shared approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable people and people affected by suicide and to develop and provide appropriate training and good practice guidelines for clergy, church leaders and pastoral teams. *Flourish* is a partnership between Lighthouse Ireland and clergy from across churches in Northern Ireland. This initiative has been developed in partnership with and supported by the Public Health Agency.

This report sets out the background to the development and achievements of *Flourish* during the period **April 2013-March 2016**.

When the leaders of the four largest churches in Northern Ireland met with the Assembly Health Committee in 2008 to discuss suicide, they said: "*Churches have a clear role in the managing of this major social problem. We are still dealing with the 'aftermath' long after the statutory services are gone. Likewise, we are committed to reducing the risks by offering a listening ear and a safe place to discuss problems.*"

## 1.3 Development of the *Flourish* initiative

Lighthouse Ireland, had already begun to develop a partnership with several church leaders, approached the Public Health Agency early in 2013 to ask for support, both in manpower and resources. The PHA offered the support of both a PHA officer to work in partnership with Lighthouse and funding support (which has since been renewed on a year to year basis from 2013/14–2016/17 financial years).

Initial meetings took place between Lighthouse and the PHA from February-March 2013 to agree short to medium term actions and to secure PHA funding. A small cross-sector working group was established to take these actions forward. In summary *Flourish*:

- is a partnership co-ordinated by Lighthouse Ireland (on behalf of clergy/churches in Northern Ireland) and in partnership with clergy from across Northern Ireland. This initiative has been developed in partnership with and supported by the Public Health Agency;
- demonstrates a joined-up/inter-agency approach to offering both pastoral care and support to families directly and indirectly affected by suicide and comprehensive training to those who provide the pastoral care and support through church-based settings;
- aims to support churches to develop a focused and shared approach to addressing the needs of vulnerable people and people affected by suicide and to develop and provide appropriate training and good practice guidelines for clergy, church leaders and pastoral teams; and
- works to raise awareness of suicide prevention and support services through churches. Churches will work together and with other agencies to increase access to support services for individuals and families.

*Flourish* guidelines have been developed to help churches respond to those affected by suicide and a recommended training directory and website have been developed for clergy. An Advisory Group is responsible for undertaking the following role(s):

- oversee the effective implementation of the *Flourish* Inter-Churches Suicide Prevention initiative in Northern Ireland;
- agree in-year action plans for progressing priority areas and achieving key targets identified in the short, medium and longer term Strategy for Churches support;
- develop measurable performance indicators and monitoring tools to assess progress in delivering on agreed targets/goals (evaluating impact);
- produce summary reports to be presented to and shared with church leaders;
- ensure that learning and expertise is shared across the churches partnership;
- lobby on behalf of the local population to ensure sufficient resources are made available to deliver on the priorities agreed annually;
- assess best practice and innovation and ensure that this is shared; and
- promote a co-ordinated approach and ensure that resources available are being used to greatest effect.

#### Flourish Initiative Timeline:

##### 2013:

- Support of Four Church Leaders
- Support of Public Health Agency
- Development of Resources (Guidelines, Training Pathway, Website)
- Testing and Piloting Resources/Training
- Focus Groups
- Faith Based Training Module Pilots

##### 2014-15:

- Launch at Stormont

- Updated Resources (Guidelines & Training Directory, Website)
- Piloting Faith Based Training Modules
- Development of Flourish! Sunday Resources
- Piloted the faith based modules in each Health Trust area (x 5)
- Developed Training for Trainers for the faith-based modules
- Initiated relationship with principals of the theological colleges
- Develop and promote the Flourish! Sunday materials (workshop with Clergy)
- Publicise and promote the initiative e.g. through church newsletter articles
- Explored how to support the self-care needs of clergy

#### 2015-16:

- Self-Care: Self-Care for Clergy - Taking Care of Self workshops
- Development of the Flourish Self-Care Toolkit for Clergy
- Training: Theological College Principles meeting held re: streamlining theological pastoral care modules into colleges
- NEW Flourish Sunday Resource launched and cascaded to Clergy across NI

#### All Island / Ireland:

- PHA, Lighthouse, NI DOH and ROI Health Service / National Office for Suicide Prevention (NSOP) - meeting October 2014 Parliament Buildings / Stormont
- September 2015 meeting in Rosstrevor Monastery to discuss / agree testing Flourish in South of Ireland
- Focus group set up here in Dublin for 2<sup>nd</sup> December 2015 Marino College of Further Education on Griffith Avenue, Dublin with Inter-Church Clergy.
- March 2016 – Pilot Training being implemented with South of Ireland Clergy

## **2. Testing the Flourish Concept with Churches**

### **2.1 Focus groups**

Lighthouse and the Public Health Agency worked with the five Health and Social Care Trusts and local inter-church networks to organise and promote a series of focus groups to test the materials developed in 2013. These materials included guidelines, website and training directory developed by the *Flourish* working group.

Clergy, church youth workers, church lay leaders, lay pastoral workers and other church staff from all churches were invited to attend the focus group discussions which were advertised through CCWA, NICVA, Health and Social Care Trusts, churches inter-denominational bodies, working group members' networks and through direct telephone and email invitations to local churches.

The five focus groups took place in a range of denominational venues across the five Health and Social Care Trust areas between November and December 2013.

Some 118 people registered to attend the focus groups, with an attendance of approximately 100. The denominational breakdown of registered participants was: Church of Ireland (21), Catholic (10), Methodist (28), Presbyterian (23), Elim (6), Baptist (2), Community Churches/Fellowship (13), and Inter-church Groups (8), Church of God (1), Church of the Nazarene (1), Quaker (1) and Other (4).

The initiative was also presented at a Suicide Prevention Seminar organised by ICPP on 9 October 2013 in Derry/Londonderry.

## **2.2 Feedback – general initiative**

The *Flourish* initiative was warmly welcomed by all of the focus group participants, receiving an almost entirely positive response. A frequent comment was that an initiative of this kind was 'long overdue'. Through discussions, several participants described a sense of helplessness and inadequacy among clergy in how to respond to suicide due to the stigma around mental illness and saw the initiative as a positive step in addressing this problem.

The importance of greater mental health support for clergy themselves was emphasised in all the focus groups.

The partnership between churches, the community/voluntary sector and the Public Health Agency was welcomed and participants were positive regarding reducing the gap between churches and mental health support services. Participants valued the sense of being part of a wider network. The shared approach among churches was broadly welcomed.

Another common thread was a need for the churches as institutions to fully embed the learning and practice and to provide leadership on the issue. The aspiration was for the initiative to become mainstreamed into church processes and procedures, although it was recognised that this would take time.

The idea of a 'Mental Health Sunday' was broadly welcomed as a way of embedding the issue / agenda within churches.

## **2.3 Clergy guidelines feedback**

Many focus group participants made positive comments regarding the style and quality of the resources and described the guidelines as user friendly, practical and full of helpful information. The telephone numbers/information for local support and signposting were welcomed and the worship resources were appreciated.

The following suggestions were made for improving the guidelines:

- less of an emphasis on the '4 church leaders' in the text as this can exclude other denominations;
- need more worship resources/materials as quite limited within guidelines document;
- change the wording, which refers to 'temporary problem', as a person might have a lifelong problem;
- the title 'clergy' guidelines is too narrow. It needs to be clearer that the handbook is aimed wider than clergy and that more people in churches can offer support directly within a church setting;
- ensure the wording is sensitive to the possibility that some clergy may feel increased pressure and less confidence if the advice provided appears to be judging their previous efforts as incorrect;
- add in more information on bereaved by suicide support – one or two key contacts in each HSC area under Services section; and
- change language to include 'emotional health/emotional wellbeing' for wider understanding.

## **2.4 Website development**

Focus group participants made positive comments regarding the style and quality of the resources available on the website and described it as user friendly and accessible. Any suggestions which were made for improving the website were subsequently implemented (which were minor).

## **2.5 Training directory**

The importance of training becoming embedded in theological colleges was emphasised in all of the focus group discussions.

There was general agreement that pastoral care/theological modules should provide a 'framework' that is flexible.

The following suggestions were made for the training directory:

- need for faith-based training and trainers;
- training sessions aimed at clergy only;
- need for localised training, particularly in rural areas;
- need to know the dates of training well in advance;
- need for in-service training for clergy;
- youth ministry training; and
- include confidentiality issue following any disclosures.

## **2.6 Suggestions**

The following suggestions were put forward more during the focus groups:

- The initiative should be an all island programme of support with links to government and community initiatives and churches in the Republic of Ireland;
- Churches need to have more confidence in changing use of language in their services e.g. the use of the word 'commit';
- Need for Flourish youth work materials for church based settings;
- Need more links with Education e.g. to the independent counselling service in schools.

## **3. Pilot of Faith Based Training Modules**

In 2013/14, the *Flourish* working group agreed that a focused training programme was needed to support the implementation of the *Flourish* guidelines on suicide prevention. As a result, the Public Health Agency and Lighthouse approached Conor McCafferty from Zest, Healing the Hurt Ltd (self-harm support organisation in Northern Ireland) for support with the development and subsequent implementation of this training, given his personal and professional background.

### **3.1 Training programme**

*Flourish* Training: Theological - Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care Modules: 'Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide'. The aim of the faith-based programme is to explore the relationship between theological understandings of suicide and mental health and how this translates into pastoral action. The training programme in summary:



## Part 1: Faith and Suicide

Participants will:

- identify and consider their church's theological understanding and approach to suicide, mental health and pastoral support;
- consider and discuss the Biblical accounts of suicide in the Old and New Testaments;
- examine and discuss the Christian Church's historical response to suicide;
- identify and examine the effect of suicide and mental health issues on bereaved families and friends;
- identify and discuss "What would Jesus say and do?";
- examine and discuss the importance of compassion in working with mental health issues; and
- examine and discuss how this translates into the role of the churches.

## Part 2: Pastoral Care

Participants will:

- review and summarise the learning from Module 1;
- have a greater confidence and understanding of the sensitive and appropriate approaches to providing pastoral support;
- apply this understanding in considering and discussing the pastoral needs of the bereaved;
- examine and discuss the importance of compassion in working with mental health issues;
- examine and discuss the importance of self-compassion through self-care in working with mental health issues; and
- examine and discuss the importance of emotional health for all of us.

## Part 3: Understanding into Action: A Practical Workshop

Participants will:

- review the learning of Parts 1 and 2;
- identify and discuss risk management, including the existing appropriate specialist services (Z-cards) and how to signpost to these services. This will include a presentation by the Lifeline Helpline service;
- apply this knowledge and understanding to developing practical action plans for:
  - meeting the immediate needs of the bereaved family
  - conducting the funeral service
  - meeting the longer-term needs of the bereaved
  - promoting emotional/mental wellbeing: e.g. Flourish Sunday
  - appropriate and achievable self-care activities
- return to their relevant churches with appropriate and concrete plans of action for addressing relevant/emotional mental health issues.

Training Methodology:

- The training comprises of powerpoint presentations, small and large group discussion and feedback, hand-outs and notes (Parts 1 and 2), small group planning (Module 3) and question and answer sessions. The facilitators are available for any future consultation that the individual participants might need as they implement their plans.

### 3.2 Pilot delivery of three training sessions

The faith-based modules developed as part of the training directory were piloted in three sessions during January/February 2014.

The pilot sessions were developed collaboratively by Conor McCafferty and the Reverend Mervyn Ewing (Methodist), who also facilitated the pilot training sessions. A total of 42 representatives from a good range of different churches attended the pilot training sessions and 39 participants completed pre and post course evaluations.

- Feedback from the training participants was very positive.
- Before the training, the majority of participants rated their current level of confidence, knowledge and skills in relation to mental health awareness, responding to suicide and pastoral care in bereavement by suicide as moderate.
- After the training the majority of participants rated their current level of confidence, knowledge and skills in relation to mental health awareness, responding to suicide and pastoral care in bereavement by suicide as high. The majority of participants felt that the course had fully met its aims and objectives.
- The majority of participants felt that the course had fully met their expectations.
- The majority of participants felt that with regards to their learning, the course had been fully effective.
- The majority of participants said that they would fully recommend the course to a colleague.
- After the training the majority said that they were either likely or very likely to offer support to someone who is suicidal.

In response to the question, 'What message are you most likely to take away from the course?' answers included:

- *'Excellent programme for all faith organisations to take on board and roll out.'*
- *'Be present with people and signpost them when the time is right.'*
- *'The importance of non-judgemental kindness and compassion.'*
- *'Compassionate care and promoting better emotional intelligence. Need for self-care. Would have liked more info on promoting good mental health.'*
- *'Excellent Day. Excellent Facilitator(s). "Self-care" in order to care effectively.'*

**In relation to other relevant training under Mental & Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention**, training statistics held through PHA funded training providers in summary include a total of **527** Clergy/Church worker participants across a range of programmes (2014-2016):

- Mental Health First Aid
- ASIST (Applied Suicide Intervention Skills training)
- Suicide Awareness
- Child Bereavement awareness
- Mindfulness
- Resilience

#### 4. March 2014 – Launch of Flourish in Stormont

The *Flourish* launch, held in the Long Gallery, Parliament Buildings, was formally hosted by Committee for Health, Social Services and Public Safety, Belfast on 3 March 2014. The purpose of the launch was to provide an overview on steps and developments so far and provide recommendations on the way forward. Key representatives were invited from the PHA; Community Faith Forum; Ministers and Committees from DARD; DSD; DOH; church leaders; Family Voices Forum and 5 PHA/HSC locality based cross-sector Implementation Groups under Mental and Emotional Wellbeing and Protect Life.

The audience was made up of church leaders, cross-departmental leads and committee members, theological college principles, members of the *Flourish* Working Group (including Lighthouse and Churches Community Working Alliance), clergy from across the Christian churches in Northern Ireland, the Public Health Agency and HSC Trust representatives.

There was great coverage by the media (See press release **Appendix 1**)



Jo Murphy / Lighthouse; Mervyn Ewing / Methodist Church; Eddie McDowell (CCWA); Tony Macauley (Independent facilitator); John McClure (Church of Ireland); Gabrielle Rawashdeh (PHA); Conor McCafferty (Zest & Chair of SSIB)



Jo Murphy/Lighthouse; Mervyn Ewing/ Methodist Church; Gabrielle Rawashdeh & Helen Gibson (PHA)

**5. Roll out of Flourish Training: Theological Modules - Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care: 'Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide' (5 x HSC areas)**

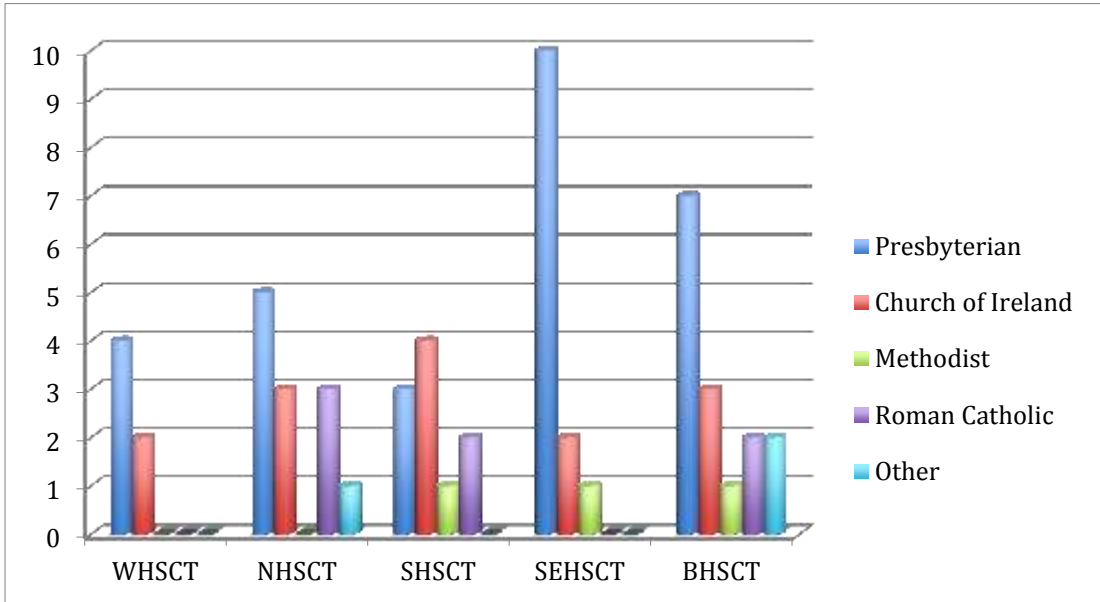
In 2014-15, one of the key priorities agreed was to implement the Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care training modules: 'Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide'. Training needed to be offered for churches based across the five Health and Social Care areas in Northern Ireland following the positive evaluation of the three pilot one day training sessions in 2013/14 as mentioned previously.

However, instead of the training being offered in one day, the 3 modules, 'Faith and Suicide', 'Pastoral Care' and 'Learning into Action', were offered over two days (1 day per week) due to recommendations made by participants at the one day pilot training events, *the course has since been reduced back to 1 day following clergy feedback on their availability to attend.*

The workshops were delivered locally in the five Trust areas in Omagh (WHSCT), Ballymena (NHSCT), Lurgan (SHSCT), Newtownards (SEHSCT) and Belfast (BHSCT).

Breakdown of HSCT Training by Denomination	
Locality	Total
WHSCT	6
NHSCT	12
SHSCT	10
SEHSCT	13
BHSCT	15
<b>Total</b>	<b>56</b>

**Comparison of Attendance by Denomination in HSCT Training**



**5.1 Evaluation feedback from the courses**

What message are you most likely to take away from the course?

- The importance of **compassion** and listening to people rather than trying to 'fix' problems.
- **Compassion** and hope are vital.
- **Talking and listening**, compassion and kindness.

- **Offer support** and hope.
- **My own emotional wellbeing.**
- Every action must begin from a place of compassion.
- Biblical perspective.
- **Understanding** suicide.
- That there is a lot of support for people in all sorts of situations out there. The 'Z' card is immensely valuable. The importance of kindness and compassion to someone threatening suicide and to the bereaved families.
- Need for compassion – show it – give it – need it for myself.
- **Don't judge** others for what they did if it is suicide.
- Develop a self-care plan.
- It cleared up a lot of what I mistakenly thought about mental health.
- **We are not alone.** There are other agencies available to help assist in these situations.

What was least enjoyable/ informative?

- It was a heavy session but very informative.
- Everything was very helpful.
- Perhaps the self-care session could have been tagged on to day one instead of second day but acknowledge this would make day one very long.

Any other comments?

- Excellent, relevant training.
- I honestly thought it was all informative.
- Brilliant, very informative, interesting and helpful.
- By far the best training days I have ever attended.
- A very informative course.
- Just a big thank you.
- The training was very relevant and I would like some way to bring this information to my congregation.
- Very well designed and presented.
- This was an eye-opener in so many aspects of suicide and self-harm that I never knew existed.
- Well done, an excellent course.
- Felt the trainer really knew the subject and had excellent experience. He communicated very well.
- A lot of useful practical information.
- Found it all extremely helpful looking forward to taking this back to my ministry.

## 5.2 Youthlink

- A meeting was then held between Lighthouse and PHA, with Youthlink staff (Youth & Community Work & Practical Theology, BA Hons, course directors), to discuss the need for training with church-based youth work trainees/students and it was agreed to pilot the training with their students.
- Youth Link's Centre for Youth Ministry Ireland (CYMI) offers individuals the opportunity to study for an Honours Degree in Youth & Community Work and Practical Theology, rooted within a Christian framework, and with JNC recognition (professionally endorsed) awarded by the University of Gloucestershire.

Examples of Evaluation comments from the training with Years 2 & 3 (*10 attended Year 2 training and 11 attended Year 3 training*):

What message are you most likely to take away from the course?

- The importance of compassion and listening to people rather than trying to 'fix' problems.
- Not to make comments that aren't useful to others.
- Spiritual aspect and depth of understanding.
- More aware of what to do and what not to do, what to say.
- Support the person's feelings rather than challenge them to 'fix' themselves.
- To listen and acknowledge feelings whether they are positive or negative.

Conclusion / Recommendation:

- It was agreed between the course facilitator, PHA staff and Youthlink staff that the training was not deemed appropriate for the students and that courses such as Safetalk, Mental Health First Aid and Applied Suicide Intervention Skills Training were much more appropriate.
- Students found the course seemed quite heavy in parts, as much of the content was more appropriate to clergy themselves.
- In light of this feedback, the PHA has since worked with course directors on offering some key training and awareness programmes within the college.

## 6. Workshop and Development of 'Flourish Sunday' Resources

Another key action that was agreed as a priority within 2014-15 was to hold a separate workshop (held in Belfast on 14 October 2014) to reflect on and develop a set of worship resources/materials for church services.

The workshop was facilitated and co-ordinated by the Reverend David Campton (Methodist Minister) and Tony Macaulay (independent facilitator for Lighthouse/*Flourish*) and personal invitations were issued to all those who attended and completed the *Flourish* Pilot training days in January-February 2014. The workshop was attended by 15 clergy from across the larger churches.

The draft '*Flourish* Sunday' resource was produced in November 2014 and over a period of 6 months this was reviewed and updated by the *Flourish* Working group before the final version went to print in August 2015.

Copies of the resource pack were issued across Northern Ireland to more than 1,400 individual clergy during the week of 10 September 2015, which marked International Suicide Awareness Day.

### Launch of '*Flourish* Sunday' September 2015:



*Photo caption: A new handbook which gives advice on speaking about the issues of mental health and suicide during a religious service is being sent to clergy throughout Northern Ireland. The new booklet has been developed by partnership group 'Flourish'. The group includes Lighthouse Ireland, clergy from across the Christian churches in Northern Ireland, the Churches Community Work Alliance NI and the Public Health Agency (PHA). Pictured are l-r Reverend Mervyn Ewing (Methodist Church in Ireland) Father Brendan McManus (Jesuit community) and Jo Murphy (Manager of Lighthouse Ireland)*

See: **Appendix 2** Press Release: *New suicide prevention resource for clergy*

## **7. Piloting: Training for Trainer (T4T) Event for Clergy to become Flourish Theological Module Trainers 2014-15**

Within 2013-14, it became clear that to sustain the training element of *Flourish* with regard to the modules centred on Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care, more people needed to be trained as trainers, rather than relying solely on one trainer for Northern Ireland. Therefore, the working group agreed that Training for Trainers (T4T) needed to be developed, delivered and tested as an action within 2014-15.

### **‘Feasibility T4T’ (Training for Trainer): Aims and Objectives**

The aim of the T4T is to determine the feasibility of training to enable clergy to be able to deliver the bespoke *Flourish* Theological Modules - Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care: ‘Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide’ to other church workers, clergy and laity.

### **Workshop to Test the Feasibility of Training for Trainers**

#### **7.1 Background to Training**

Based on these recommendations, ‘Faith and Mental Health’ modules were developed by Mr C McCafferty(Zest), Reverend M Ewing (Methodist Church) and Reverend J McClure (Church of Ireland). These modules were tested throughout Northern Ireland and then delivered in each of the 5 HSCT areas. The evaluation of the pilots proved significantly positive in helping church workers, clergy and laity in understanding, confidence and knowledge regarding the theology of suicide and the necessary pastoral responses.

One of the recommendations from the pilot evaluation was to examine the feasibility of training clergy from each of the four main churches to deliver these modules to other clergy.

#### **7.2 The objectives for the T4T workshop were that participants would:**

- Be able to deliver the training effectively and confidently to other trainees;
- identify and consider and discuss their church’s theological understanding and approach to suicide, mental health and pastoral support;
- examine and consider the importance of compassion in all mental health issues;
- identify the particular role of clergy after a suicide;
- identify the appropriate pastoral response to a suicide death;
- have greater confidence, knowledge and awareness of the most appropriate approaches to the family of a person who has died by suicide;
- identify and consider the importance of self-compassion and the need for a self-care strategy; and
- identify and discuss the existing services and how to signpost to them.

#### **7.3 Post T4T delivery expectation**

As part of the T4T process, participants are expected to deliver the modules workshop to those clergy and church workers from the various churches who, like themselves, are in regular contact with service users and their families where self-harm and/or suicide is an issue, while being assessed/mentored by T4T facilitator. The expectation is that through the workshop, they will pass on the relevant knowledge and understanding of the issue and how the person/family can be more supportively involved in helping themselves and the family member to deal with this behaviour.



## 7.4 Criteria for T4T participants

In addition, it was important that the selection process for applicants included the following criteria:

- have a knowledge and understanding of suicide and emotional/mental health, as evidenced by previous training on this issue;
- have at least 5 years' experience of working with individuals and/or families;
- have experience of facilitating groups in a learning environment;
- have competent inter-personal and communication skills;
- have proven ability to work as part of a team;
- meet, or be in the process of meeting, the standards set out in the PHA Standards for Quality Training (<http://www.publichealth.hscni.net/publications/quality-standards-services-promoting-mental-and-emotional-wellbeing-and-suicide-prevent>);
- practice a healthy self-care programme in their own lives;
- have a working knowledge of risk management; and
- have a willingness to participate in self-reflection as part of the personal development aspect of the training.

Participants are expected to agree to give a :

- commitment to delivering 1 x 1 day courses as part of the T4T assessment process prior to receiving T4T qualification; and a
- commitment to delivering 2 x 1 day courses (post qualification) each year on behalf of *Flourish*.

## 7.5 Outcomes

- Two trainers from Roman Catholic and Presbyterian clergy completed the course successfully (*further training gaps to be addressed in 2016-17*).
- One of the most interesting and beneficial aspects of the T4T proved to be the discussions that were held over the three days. Some were planned, others were quite spontaneous, however they all showed very high levels of openness, sharing, questions about different denominational beliefs and understanding towards each other. This is reflected very much in the qualitative feedback received.

Following assessment and evaluation, the following recommendations have been used to inform future T4T(s):

- Participants need to have completed self-harm and/or suicide training in advance of attendance, as well as the original *Flourish* Faith and Mental Health modules;
- the current format is relevant and should be maintained for future training; and
- a maximum of 8 participants should be invited to attend to ensure sufficient discussion without impacting the timeframe/duration of the training.

Quality Assurance: The Content

- Zest has been delivering self-harm and suicide training for the past 15 years. The content has been created and developed based on current research, publications, including Health Intelligence reports, and specifically on the 'consent-given' service-user/family material and life histories that underpins the realistic understanding of the self-harming person and the

bereaved family. The theological content is taken from a range of official Biblical commentaries and current theological publications, as well as historical accounts of the development of the theology of suicide.

- The training does not promote any one denominational theology of suicide and it was developed in partnership with clergy from Methodist and Church of Ireland.
- The training content has already been delivered in 5 pilot workshops and rolled out in the 5 Health and Social Care Trusts. It has been evaluated pre and post each workshop and these highlight not only the quality of the content but also the efficacy of the training in terms of understanding, confidence and competence.

Quality Assurance: Training for Trainers:

- Quality assurance of training is an essential feature. In order to ensure highest quality, the T4T course will always include a pre and post evaluation to determine and measure the levels of understanding, confidence and competence and how these have changed as a result of the training for participants in the future delivery of the one-day workshop. This is essential in determining the quality and potential of specifically trained clergy for any future roll-out of the training to their relevant clergy and church workers.

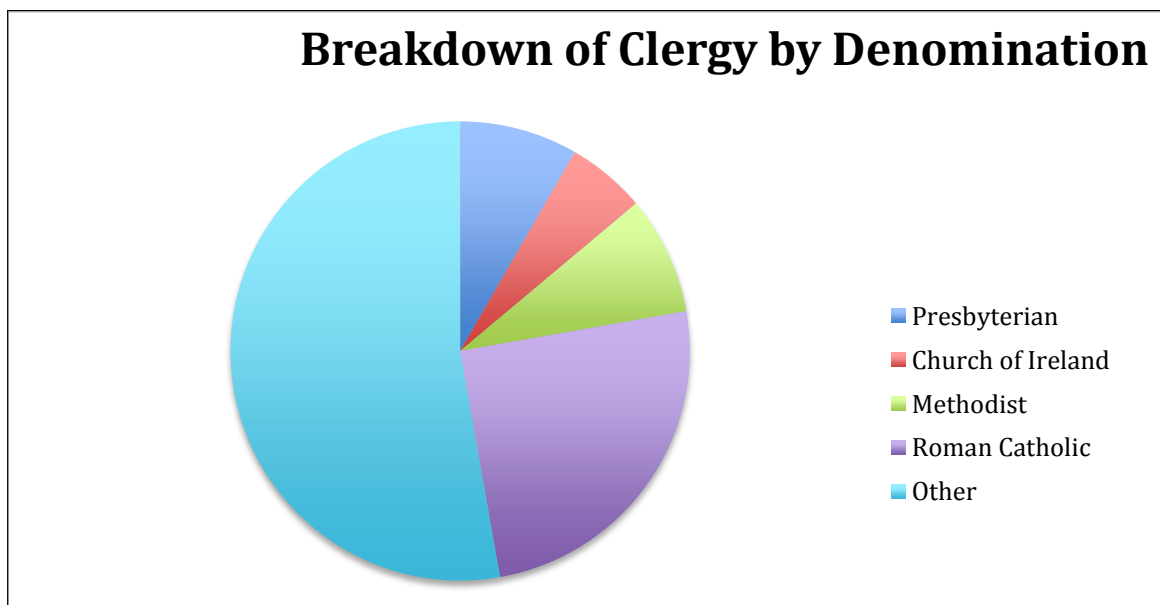
**7.6 Mentored trainer programmes evaluation/outputs (2015-16)**

*(See Appendix 3: Press Release: Mental health training opportunities for churches October 2015).*

Following the first T4T workshop in April 2015 for Theological Modules - Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care: 'Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide', the two successful trainers were in a position to follow up the training by delivering a workshop each through the mentoring support of the T4T facilitator.

A total of 18 participants attended each workshop (December 2015 and January 2016) = 36 attendees.

Overall Attendance Breakdown of Denominations



*For evaluation comments see Appendix 3.1*

Outcome: 2 clergy trainers deemed successful to continue on as trainers under the *Flourish* initiative (2015/16); Further two T4T programmes to be delivered in 2016-17 to continue to build clergy trainer capacity in Northern Ireland.

## 8. Self-Care Assessment; Pilots and Toolkit

Churches provide crucial support for members of their community in times of suffering and distress. In parts of Northern Ireland, this need is particularly acute as a consequence of the legacy of decades of violent conflict. Too often insufficient attention is given to self-care, but this aspect is important in order to be able to support others.

*Flourish* working group agreed to carry out a self-care assessment within 2014-15 which formed the backdrop to self-care pilots carried out in 2015/16 resulting in the development of a self-care toolkit resource.

### 8.1 Assessment survey on self-care

A survey on self-care for clergy was opened on Survey Monkey on 18 December 2014. The survey remained open for several weeks and was completed by 29 individual clergy members. Questions included those listed below:

- Q1 Please indicate the extent to which you take care of yourself physically.
- Q2 Please indicate the extent to which you take care of yourself psychologically.
- Q3 Please indicate the extent to which you take care of yourself spiritually.
- Q4 Please indicate the extent to which you take care of yourself emotionally.
- Q5 Please indicate the extent to which you take care of yourself professionally.
- Q6 Please indicate the extent to which you take care of your relationships.
- Q7 Please indicate the extent to which you achieve an overall balance in your life.
- Q8 Where do you get support for your own self-care and emotional wellbeing?
- Q9 What sort of support for self-care and emotional wellbeing would be most helpful for clergy?
- Q10 Would you be interested in participating in a self-care pilot supported by the **Flourish** initiative?

Examples of answers summarised:

- Only 20% of respondents felt that they frequently strived to achieve a work/life balance.
- Family and friends was the most prevalent response.
- Amongst the answers there were numerous requests for regular supervision or support and sharing of time with others in a similar role.
- 13 of the 29 participants expressed an interest in attending a self-care pilot (*developed/implemented 2015-16*).

### 8.2 Self-care pilots 2015-16

Following the feedback from the self-care survey, Lighthouse and the PHA approached an independent training provider (Dare to Stretch), who has developed and implemented a wide range of training, awareness and programmes to cross-sector groups, and has also been contracted through PHA to deliver Safetalk and Suicide Awareness within Northern Ireland, to support *Flourish* to implement self-care programmes for clergy/church based staff and to subsequently develop a self-care toolkit resource.

The programme was piloted in one day within October 2014 and one day within February 2015 in Holy Cross Monastery; Kilbroney Road, Rostrevor, Newry, County Down.

The aim was to facilitate a programme to enable clergy at each event to learn about and experience self-care for themselves. This programme offered clergy a safe space for growth in wellbeing and the session included time to be thoughtful, time to rest, time to revive and refuel oneself. The programme was presented through a range of facilitative methodologies including presentations, personal and group reflection and experiential learning. The programme aimed to be engaging, interesting, accommodating of a range of learning styles and accessible for a range of different personalities, genders, ages and backgrounds.

The 3 key themes explored throughout the one day programmes were:

1. The effects of working with compassion for caregivers.

This element enables learners to explore the impact of care giving on caregiver health. Participants learn about the biochemical and physical responses that our bodies experience when working with emotion and distress. The session highlights the potential range of health impacts for those regularly working with distress and emotion and highlights the importance of working consciously on health and wellbeing. Concepts such as compassion fatigue, secondary trauma and 'burn out' will be explored. Participants will be navigated through identifying the differences between the need for self-care, supervision and therapeutic intervention.

2. From Human Doing to Human Being: Review and assess personal wellbeing.

This element encourages learners to become mindful and aware of their personal strengths and existing strategies for self-care and also enables learners to identify areas of their life that may require some attention and support in order to personally *Flourish*.

3. Techniques for self-care, self-regulation and nervous system relaxation.

This element of the programme is experiential and is inter-woven throughout the day. It involves inspiring the senses through audio-visual material, music and sound, breathing exercises, physical interventions, mindfulness techniques and personal reflection activities. This part of the programme involves personal work as well as group interaction and sharing.

#### Evaluation and Reflection (Self-care Pilot)

It is significant that all clergy participants came for a retreat experience and that the facilitators had anticipated and prepared for such an event. As a result there was a sense of synchronicity around expectations for the day and little or no resistance experienced during any aspect of the retreat.

Some important elements included the scriptural contributions which each member brought to the session. This enabled each participant to really speak about what self-care really means for them and it was completely supported within scripture.

These objectives remain important for any future self-care events/retreats:

- Clergy have an opportunity to relax and reflect on their right to and responsibility to self-care.
- Clergy have an opportunity to value themselves and their sense of self-worth.
- Clergy benefit from making connections and sharing learning spaces with other clergy from mixed denominations.

## Participant feedback

- Overall, the participants agree that the objectives of the training were met and that the day was beneficial on multiple levels for them.
- Nothing was highlighted that would require change.
- A number of issues were identified that require some attention in developing future events for participants and include:

### Strengths

- Incorporating a faith based dimension, e.g. permission to self-care.
- Practical exercises - individual and group exercises.
- Enriching music and singing.
- Relaxation.
- Atmosphere for reflection.
- Morning movement.
- Afternoon reflection.
- Gentle facilitation.
- Comforting presence of facilitators.
- Fellowship.

### Participant Questionnaire Results

100% of participants answered 'Yes' to the following questions:

- Are you more likely to take steps towards your own self-care as a result of today?
- Are you more likely to initiate self-care conversations with others as a result of today?
- Would you recommend this session to others?

When asked 'Who do you think would benefit from this type of session?' the following were the responses:

- All in ministry.
- People in caring professions.
- Those in caring for carers roles.
- All parishioners.

The following responses were collected when asked to grade the appropriateness of the following:

- Facilitators –100% excellent
- Delivery –100% excellent
- Content –20% good, 80% excellent

When asked what needs some improvement-these were the responses:

- None - it was all excellent.
- There was a lot packed in.

When asked what were the highlights, these were the responses:

- Incorporating a faith based dimension, e.g. permission to self-care.
- Practical exercises - individual and group exercises.

- Enriching music and singing.
- Relaxation.
- Atmosphere for reflection.
- Morning movement.
- Afternoon reflection.
- Gentle facilitation.
- Comforting presence of facilitators.
- Fellowship.

Participants were prompted with the statement 'I think...' - the following were the responses:

- It was an enlightening day.
- It was a truly wonderful day.
- I will try self-care.
- This will leave a lasting impression on me.

Participants were prompted with the statement "I'm not sure..." - the following were the responses:

- Others will understand the spirit of the day unless they are in tune with oneself.
- That I will put it all into practice.
- How easy it will be.

Participants were prompted with the statement "I will now try..." - the following were the responses:

- To be refreshed.
- To be more conscious of my need for self-care.
- To put into practice the teaching/sharing from today.

#### Facilitator's feedback/review

Overall, the trainers are extremely satisfied that, in the evidence of post training evaluations, it could be said that the objectives of the training were fully met and that the day was conducive to building a positive memory for those who took part.

The pace, content and spirit of the day seemed to synchronise perfectly with the needs of the clergy who attended. The venue was conducive to a retreat type session and a self-care retreat was considered to be beneficial.

Facilitators feel that this time the objectives perfectly met the needs that presented and that these objectives therefore might remain consistent for future sessions. The only additional suggestion by trainers is that organisers might consider allocating each residential with a particular theme, e.g. relaxation. It is thought that this might help focus the day further and help reduce the level of content being included in a one day retreat.

Strengths identified:

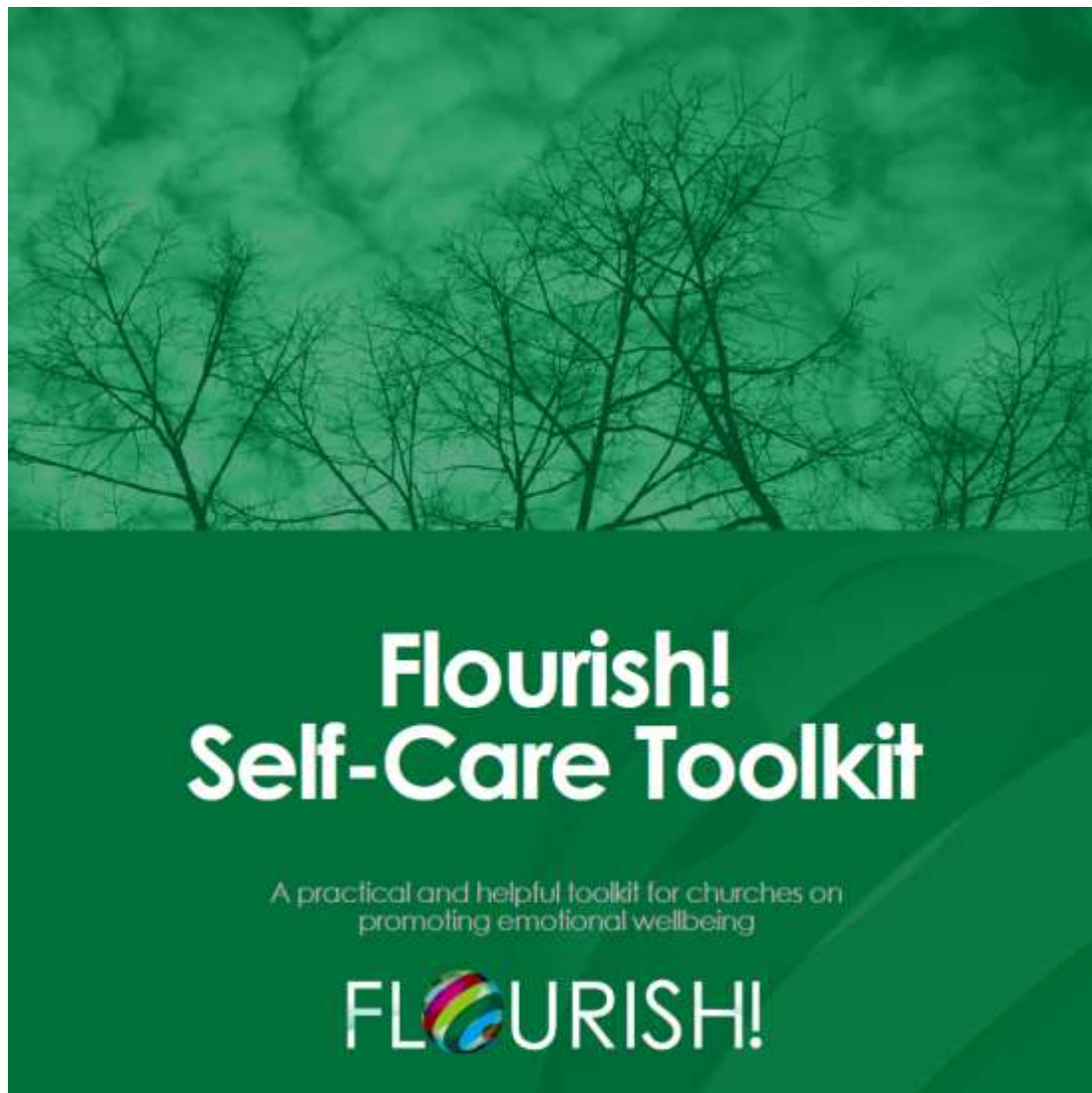
- Overall, the trainers had planned enough materials and were experienced enough to respond to the emerging needs as the day unfolded and were able to adjust the sessions.
- The use of ritual and the inclusion of prayer to open the session helped support participants to feel safe and welcomed.

- The use of guided meditation to relax mind, body and soul at the beginning of the session was welcomed by the group and of value in meeting the core objectives for the session.
- Use of art/creative exercise - this created an opportunity for personal reflection which was appreciated by many group members. Supported by some singing, the session created an environment that was conducive to relaxation.
- Song and music - use of song and music throughout helped create a nurturing environment and appealed to the majority of participants. On reflection, perhaps embracing fully music involving many cultures or focusing on secular music might be most advantageous and inclusive.
- Prayer/scripture - the participants responded really positively to prayer, psalm and scripture.

This learning and Clergy feedback from the Self-Care Pilots informed the development of the Self-Care Toolkit.

### **8.3 Self-care toolkit resource, design and production**

Following the successful implementation and positive evaluation of the self-care pilots and also the feedback from clergy which attended, a self-care toolkit was then developed under *Flourish* initiative resources/publications. Image of front cover:



This recently developed resource aimed at improving the mental health of the clergy has now been distributed throughout Northern Ireland. The practical and helpful toolkit to promote emotional wellbeing amongst clergy has been produced by the suicide prevention group *Flourish*.

Copies of the self-care toolkit were sent to 1,315 members of the clergy across all denominations.

The new booklet includes advice for clergy on taking care of their mental health and emphasises the importance of striking a balance between work, family or friends, leisure and rest.

Simple steps set out in the booklet to maintain good mental health include eating regularly, exercising, making time for self-reflection, spending time with others and taking a break during the work day.

Copies of the toolkit are available in PDF form through: [www.wewillflourish.com](http://www.wewillflourish.com)



## 9. All-Island/Ireland approach to *Flourish*

In the early days of the *Flourish* initiative (2013-14), many clergy provided discussion feedback at focus group events, stating that *Flourish* should be an all-island/Ireland initiative due to Clergy being all-Ireland and can be based on any part of the island. The Public Health Agency has been supporting Lighthouse with co-ordinating discussions with the Department of Health (DOH) and Health Service Executive (HSE), Ireland including the National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), in order to gain support of *Flourish* for all island/Ireland approach.

### 9.1 Meeting with DOH (Department of Health) and NOSP (National Office for Suicide Prevention in ROI)

The first meeting was held on 6 October 2014 within Parliament Buildings at Stormont. The following input was provided at the meeting:

- Jo Murphy (Lighthouse) provided the context of *Flourish* and how it initially started.
- Gabrielle Rawashdeh (PHA) provided an overview on how the PHA became involved and highlighted the resources developed; the focus groups and the implementation and evaluation of the pilot training.
- Sharon Quinn (Lighthouse) presented the *Flourish* website.
- Helen Gibson (PHA) provided an overview of the training directory and key outputs to date.
- Reverend Mervyn Ewing (Methodist Church) discussed the training pilots in Antrim (theological modules) and the learning from these and the three pastoral modules now being rolled out.
- This was then followed by an open discussion about interest from ROI about rolling out *Flourish* to be all-island and what this may entail, including resourcing that would be needed from ROI and what Lighthouse and PHA can offer in relation to in-kind support from Northern Ireland.
- It was agreed that Lighthouse and PHA would continue to gather further evidence of need, including feedback from ROI clergy/church-based staff until the ROI HSE had completed their current consultation on their Suicide Prevention Strategy and were in a position to discuss an all-island approach to *Flourish*.
- In 2015, the Connecting for Life Strategy was launched (the new national strategy to reduce suicide 2015-2020). Connecting for Life is founded on the suicide prevention work that has taken place in Ireland over the past ten years as part of Reach Out, the Government's previous strategy to reduce suicide.

### 9.2 Dublin focus group

A focus group was carried out with 29 inter-church clergy in Dublin on 2 December 2015 at Marino College of Further Education on Griffith Avenue, Dublin to gain feedback on the *Flourish* initiative in general and in relation to the need in Ireland. *Flourish* Dublin focus group participant feedback examples:

Please comment: Your thoughts/ feedback on main *Flourish* resources/guidelines/ training:

- *Excellent and extremely comprehensive across all departments relevant.*
- *Superb. Very well considered content, extremely relevant to my own work and experience on the ground.*
- *Thorough, professional and complete. I thought it took suicide prevention and postvention to another level.*
- *I am very impressed with the resources/guidelines and training directory. They are all very practical, insightful and relevant for me as a priest/hospital chaplain. The information provided*

*by Flourish has helped me and is encouraging me to pursue more study days in the area of suicide prevention and emotional wellbeing.*

- *The support services mentioned in your booklet are relevant for Northern Ireland and have no contacts for the Republic of Ireland. This I understand as Flourish is based in Northern Ireland.*

Please comment: Your thoughts/feedback on *Flourish* website:

- *Excellent ease of access.*
- *Very professional.*
- *It is indeed a wonderful resource which is easy to use. I have mentioned this site to others.*
- *Excellent, beautiful imagery.*
- *Very comprehensive.*

Please comment: Feedback on '*Flourish Sunday*' resource/approach:

- *One of the best I have seen.*
- *I found it interesting and I might use some of this material in a Sunday Mass dealing with suicide prevention.*
- *Again, superb. I like that there is a lot of flexibility to tailor yourself.*
- *Excellent.*
- *Very detailed, step by step from beginning to end.*
- *Really lovely creative ideas for the event.*
- *I think the idea of '*Flourish Sunday*' is wonderful as a suicide prevention event.*

Please comment on the training directory:

- *Very well done.*
- *Excellent, I was very impressed and touched by the tone and approach of the trainers who spoke at our group. I would imagine their training days would be very well received.*
- *The trainers seem very compassionate and well prepared for this work.*

Please comment: Next steps feedback e.g. training pilot in South of Ireland (*funded through PHA North before end of March 2016 if agreed by group*) – *would you be keen to attend/be involved?*

- *Majority said 'Yes'.*

Are there any improvements/changes/ideas you would like to suggest for *Flourish*?

- *Congratulations on what you have accomplished to date, well done. I will need to reflect further on this after today.*
- *Providing resources for homilies, prayers of the faithful, reflections, etc. for a funeral Mass for a person who died by suicide.*
- *Providing a resource person/s who can work with clergy, etc. in dealing with issues around suicide and suicide prevention.*
- *I was very touched listening to the elements of self-care for grass roots workers like ourselves. This is an area that requires significant attention and for which we all have a personal responsibility.*
- *No – congratulations on a wonderful initiative.*

What differences (if any) would be required for an ROI approach, versus an NI approach? Are the needs any different?

- *Diocesan boundaries.*
- *Gather information of what is already happening on the ground so as not to reinvent the wheel.*
- *For the ROI to seek more Church and state support. The needs are the same nonetheless.*
- *The needs seem to be quite similar.*
- *Could Irish speaking areas/communities be considered?*
- *No – we all experience the same issues I would imagine.*
- *We are much more splintered here in the ROI than they are in NI. This may make it difficult to get Flourish adopted.*
- *As the programme and organisation is, I think Flourish is equally relevant and possible here in ROI.*
- *To me Flourish is a fresh approach that is wholesome and holistic. There is something in its philosophy and emphasis that completes the fight against suicide and the care of the suicide bereaved. (ASIST, Safe Talk & STORM are focussed on skill, while this adds a human dimension which emphasises connection with the suicide person).*
- *Flourish moves with and way beyond ASIST training.*

Discussion points raised in Dublin focus group:

- *Gap isn't in inter-church, it works. There is a huge gap in services. The services you get depend on where you live.*
- *Friday 5pm-Monday 9am, you can't have mental health issues at these times.*
- *Working around the time of a death by suicide is often easier as there is something to do, it is the aftermath that is the struggle. In the weeks and months afterwards you ask yourself what do I do now? It can be hard to stay connected with people. Increasingly I am referring people to Samaritans.*
- *There is no real recognition of spiritual distress within the health service.*
- *Would like advice on how to conduct a Funeral Mass.*
- *Priests have died by suicide in ROI. Is there any information gathering on what is currently happening?*
- *Each diocese in Ireland is like a separate kingdom, it would be difficult to roll out something so big and bring cohesion.*
- *Many of our parishes have good bereavement teams, pastoral councils and committees, they have to be involved.*
- *If a lot of MH training is already going on what does Flourish bring?*
- *Can we get hard copies of the books?*
- *Have been in situations where the family doesn't want suicide mentioned during the service. What do we do in that situation?*
- *Reality is some of the at risk groups are largely absent from church pews. (15-24 year olds). Challenge also with LGB&T.*
- *Question that comes up. Is it right to end your life? How have you dealt with that question?*
- *What follow up will there be from today?*

### **9.3 Pilot training implemented with South of Ireland clergy**

As a follow on from feedback received at the Dublin based focus group in December 2015 (see 9.2), a training pilot was implemented in Dublin on 2 March 2016: *Theological - Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care Modules: 'Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide'* in the Marino Institute. The

rationale was to ascertain the relevance and impact of the workshop in relation to churches in the Republic of Ireland as well as a progression of the all-island approach envisaged by *Flourish*. The training involved 11 male and 8 female participants (n=19), 15 of whom were Roman Catholic, 3 were from the Church of Ireland and 1 from the Methodist denomination. Participants came from Dublin, Kildare, Navan, Waterford, Cork and Carlow/Kilkenny.

In the main, the training seems to have 'travelled' well into the all-island arena and quite significantly meets the same needs as the Northern experience to-date.

The evaluation indicated a very significant improvement in understanding, confidence, ease and likelihood in working with the issues of suicide, suicide bereavement/pastoral care, mental health in general and self-care after participating in the Dublin based *Flourish* training.

Evaluation comment examples as follows:

What message are you most likely to take away from the course?

- *Suicide is a behaviour not an illness.*
- *Absolute importance of practicing genuine, listening, caring, compassion and truthfulness.*
- *Compassion is the basis of pastoral care.*
- *Take care of myself (self-care).*
- *Valuing the changes re: church's approaches to suicide.*
- *I gained great confidence in the area of suicide and nudged towards better self-care.*
- *I feel affirmed in my work/ability, more confident. I need to take responsibility for my self-care.*
- *I don't have the answers – listen to the verbal and non-verbal communications from the bereaved and the suicidal.*
- *It's ok to look after me.*
- *Compassion comes from within first (Self-care).*
- *Sense of compassion and complexity of care.*
- *Our shared humanity in pastoral ministry.*
- *Our giftedness and forgiveness in reaching out.*
- *The importance of compassion whether through silence, spoken or expression.*
- *More confident in dealing with situations both personal and for others.*

#### **9.4 Way forward re: All-Island/Ireland *Flourish* initiative (as a result of feedback/consultation)**

It is intended that *Flourish* guidelines and training information will be utilised in the Republic of Ireland, with contact details on the resources for key HSE Ireland staff and cross-sector support services, followed by co-ordinating *Flourish* theological and pastoral care modules in the South of Ireland, i.e.:

- a Republic of Ireland (ROI) version of the current Northern Ireland *Flourish* guidelines/training resource will need Republic of Ireland key contact information updated, agreed and the resource reprinted and cascaded through appropriate networks;
- the '*Flourish* Sunday' resource will require further printed copies and cascaded to churches in the Republic of Ireland.
- the current *Flourish* website ([www.wewillflourish.com](http://www.wewillflourish.com)) will need updated and kept updated to include a section on the Republic of Ireland;

- the self-care toolkit resource will need further printed copies and cascaded to ROI churches;
- the *Flourish* Theological training modules - Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care Modules: '*Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide*' will need to be co-ordinated and delivered to clergy in the Republic of Ireland, including T4T for clergy to then deliver onwards to continue to build capacity and sustainability of the *Flourish* initiative (this would also need to include organising venues, refreshments and evaluation).

The Public Health Agency continues to support Lighthouse Ireland in co-ordinating discussions with the Department of Health and the ROI health sector to gain support of *Flourish* for an all-island approach.

As stated in previous sections, focus groups and pilot training have now been implemented and evaluated in the Republic of Ireland.

It is hoped that further discussions will occur with NOSP (National Office for Suicide Prevention, Ireland) by December 2016 in Dublin. This next meeting will be attended by Jo Murphy from Lighthouse (Chair of *Flourish* working group) and PHA Senior Officer for Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement, Gabrielle Rawashdeh.

## 10. Key Priorities for 2016-17

The Flourish Working group will continue to meet throughout the year to make sure the following actions are implemented effectively:

(See Appendix 5 current membership)

1. **Media guidance on suicide:** Session to be delivered to working group by PHA and Samaritans at April 2016 meeting.
2. **Self-care toolkit:** This new booklet includes advice for clergy on taking care of their mental health and emphasises the importance of striking a balance between work, family or friends, leisure and rest. Copies of the toolkit are available in PDF form through: **www.wewillflourish.com**. Actions to take place:
  - Distribute resource to churches across Northern Ireland and promote in local press and media providers by June 2016.
  - Additional resources to be printed for an information roadshow on *Flourish* across 5 HSC localities (October-December 2016).
3. **Training:**
  - Increase the capacity of Clergy / Churches to deliver and embed training on Theology, Suicide and Pastoral Care by recruiting participants for Training for Trainer Theological – Faith, Suicide and Pastoral Care Modules -‘Working with Suicide: A Churches Guide’. To be delivered in May 2016 and January 2017.
  - Newly trained clergy to deliver training i.e. mentored sessions, to be delivered as soon after the T4T as possible for confidence/learning to be implemented effectively. Training to be advertised to churches.
4. **Flourish Information Roadshow:**

Roadshow to be advertised to churches across Northern Ireland (October-November 2016 across 5 PHA/HSC localities)

  - Wed 26/10/16
  - Wed 09/11/16
  - Wed 16/11/16
  - Wed 23/11/16
  - Wed 30/11/16
5. **An external/self-evaluation** - Evaluation to be planned and implemented January - March 2017 to:
  - Evaluate the impact *Flourish* may be making and identifying what may need to be improved (i.e. qualitative information) e.g. within church settings to see if clergy/church staff are becoming more confident than before in:
    - supporting others on these issues (suicide; bereavement, emotional health/wellbeing);
    - the overall impact of the resources and training including post training follow up analysing longer term impact;

- co-ordination/communication/processes: evaluate how best to communicate with all churches and whether this needs improved and how;
- facilitating discussion with any clergy who has been actively involved in *Flourish*, both as participants (including recipients of resources and working group); and
- End goal: summary evaluation report/recommendations for next steps.

**6. Develop/agree ROI actions:** *\*dependent on partnership discussions and available funds:*

- Flourish resources developed to suit ROI setting
- T4T to be delivered in ROI
- Include a ROI support organisations/service directory webpage on *Flourish* website.
- Add ROI churches contacts/clergy to overall *Flourish* mailing lists.

**7. Inter-faith elements:**

- Discussions and subsequent actions to be agreed to look examine inter-faith elements needed under *Flourish* (including inter-cultural dimensions).

**8. Avail of presentation opportunities to raise profile of *Flourish*:**

- E.g. church leaders/key decision-makers; Suicide Strategy Implementation Body/Group; Bamford working group for Mental & Emotional Wellbeing and Suicide Prevention and more.

**END**

# **APPENDICES**



## **APPENDIX 1**

### **Launch Press Release March 2014: New church partnership to prevent suicide:**

Churches from across Northern Ireland came together today at Stormont to officially launch a new partnership initiative which aims to prevent suicide.

'Flourish!' is a regional inter-church suicide prevention initiative which involves the Churches' Community Work Alliance (Northern Ireland), Lighthouse Ireland and the four main churches in Northern Ireland. Flourish! has been developed in partnership with the Public Health Agency (PHA).

Flourish! aims to support churches to develop a focussed and shared approach to addressing the needs of people affected by suicide and to develop and provide appropriate training and good practice guidelines for clergy, church leaders and pastoral teams.

Flourish! will work to raise awareness of suicide prevention and support services through churches. Churches will work together and with other agencies to increase access to support services for families recently bereaved by suicide. They will also develop and offer appropriate opportunities for reflection and remembrance for people bereaved by suicide.

Guidelines have been developed to help churches respond to those affected by suicide, and a recommended training directory and website have been developed for clergy.

Health Minister said: "Frontline suicide prevention services remain vital, but to reduce suicide in the longer term it will be necessary to improve the emotional resilience of high risk people and groups before they become actively suicidal.

"This will require action on a wide range of fronts across government and across sectors including churches and faith groups. Churches are at the forefront in caring for families and communities who are affected by suicide and are committed to offering compassionate pastoral care to people who are bereaved or who are in despair.

"Guidelines have been developed by the Flourish! Working Group as a practical support to help clergy, church staff and volunteers respond confidently, sensitively and appropriately to people affected by suicide. The guidelines provide practical advice to clergy on their role in promoting positive mental health and they include a section on how clergy can look after their own mental wellbeing while providing support for others. I welcome the development of the Flourish! initiative."

Mary Black, Assistant Director of Health and Social Wellbeing Improvement at the PHA said: "Every day clergy, church youth workers, church lay leaders, lay pastoral workers and other church staff provide pastoral support to people facing life's biggest challenges such as illness, death, job loss and family breakdown. This unique role offers an opportunity to help people at risk of suicide who may not initially seek support from mental health professionals or even from family members."

Jo Murphy, Manager of Lighthouse Ireland, said: "Lighthouse is delighted to have initiated the Flourish! Project, which has facilitated the coming together of the four main churches.

"Suicide is an issue that touches all our communities regardless of religious background, culture, political affiliations or social economic factors."

Reverend Mervyn Ewing from the Methodist Church in Ireland said: “The Flourish! initiative is a really exciting and unique development demonstrating a wonderfully joined-up approach to offering both pastoral care and support to families directly and indirectly affected by suicide and comprehensive training to those who provide the pastoral care and support.”

For further information on Flourish! please visit [www.wewillFlourish.com](http://www.wewillFlourish.com)

## **APPENDIX 2**

### **Press Release: New suicide prevention resource for clergy (September 2015)**

A new handbook which gives advice on speaking about the issues of mental health and suicide during a religious service is being sent to clergy throughout Northern Ireland.

The new booklet has been developed by partnership group 'Flourish!'. The group includes Lighthouse Ireland, clergy from across the Christian churches in Northern Ireland, the Churches Community Work Alliance NI and the Public Health Agency (PHA).

Copies of the new **Flourish! Sunday Worship Resources** are being sent to over 1,400 members of the clergy across all denominations to coincide with World Suicide Prevention Day today [10 September].

The new booklet includes advice on preparing a service, suggestions on scripture and choices for music that could be used during the service.

Madeline Heaney, Regional Lead for Mental Health Promotion with the PHA, said: "Clergy have a huge role to play in offering pastoral support during some of the most testing times in our lives. It can often be difficult for clergy to know how best to address mental health issues and suicide within their congregation. We hope that this new resource will support and enable clergy to provide advice at such times".

Jo Murphy, Manager of Lighthouse Ireland, said: "Suicide is such a big concern in our communities. Churches play a pivotal role in supporting people who have been bereaved by suicide. This resource has been developed with the churches to encourage clergy to talk about mental health and encourage people to reach out and seek help".

Reverend Mervyn Ewing from the Methodist Church in Ireland said: "This is a very reassuring resource for clergy who are faced with the aftermath of suicide and offering pastoral support to families affected. Often clergy feel isolated when faced with this issue.

"This resource offers advice in relation to preparing for a funeral and guidance in relation to words that are helpful. It offers additional support by including a list of key regional support telephone numbers. For many clergy, providing pastoral support to families affected by suicide can be very disconcerting and perplexing; this resource helps reassure clergy, allay fears and provides some very useful and practical advice".

This is the second time that Flourish! has distributed guidance to churches in Northern Ireland. In October 2014 churches received **Suicide prevention and emotional wellbeing – Pastoral guidelines and training directory for churches**. This resource included guidance on suicide prevention, supporting people bereaved by suicide and promoting emotional wellbeing.

Flourish also offers a range of training courses as practical support to help churches respond to vulnerable people. Training includes newly-developed faith-based modules and other existing training such as Mood Matters, Mental Health First Aid, self-harm awareness, SafeTALK and ASIST courses across Northern Ireland.

For further information on Flourish visit: [www.wewillFlourish.com](http://www.wewillFlourish.com)

## **APPENDIX 3:**

### **Press Release: Mental health training opportunities for churches (October 2015)**

Members of the clergy and those who work in churches in Northern Ireland are being encouraged to take up training opportunities in faith and mental health and pastoral support.

The partnership group Flourish! is hosting training sessions to promote mental and emotional wellbeing which will take place in November and January.

Flourish! is a partnership between Lighthouse Ireland, the Churches' Community Work Alliance (Northern Ireland) and clergy from across the Christian churches in Northern Ireland.

The initiative has the support of the leaders of the four largest churches in Ireland and has been developed in partnership with and supported by the Public Health Agency (PHA).

"The training module 'Faith and Mental Health and Pastoral Support' is open to clergy, church youth workers, church lay readers, lay pastoral workers and other church staff representatives," said Madeline Heaney, Regional Lead for Mental Health Promotion with the PHA.

"People working in religious roles often see the impact of poor mental health first-hand, so are in an excellent position to be able to provide assistance and support. This training will help give them the skills to be able to do this more effectively, so we would encourage churches across Northern Ireland to get involved."

Jo Murphy, Manager of Lighthouse Ireland, explained what the module will include.

"The aim of the faith-based module is to explore the relationship between theological understandings of suicide and mental health and how this translates into pastoral action," said Jo.

"Topics covered include examining the effect of suicide and mental health issues on bereaved families and friends, discussing the importance of compassion in working on mental health issues and being able to signpost to services for those who need support."

Participants will also be given guidance on issues such as conducting a funeral service after a suicide and promoting emotional and mental wellbeing throughout the year during services.

Reverend Mervyn Ewing from the Methodist Church in Ireland said:

"This module will give clergy and those who work in churches a better understanding of how mental health issues and suicide can impact on their congregations. It will also give participants greater confidence and understanding of the sensitive and appropriate approach to providing pastoral support."

The sessions will be held on 27 November (2015) and 28 January (2016) from 9.30am-5pm and will be held at Clotworthy House in Antrim.

Interest can also be registered by contacting Lighthouse on (028) 9075 5070 or [reception@lighthouseireland.org](mailto:reception@lighthouseireland.org). Places are limited to 25 per workshop. A waiting list will be compiled if required and more programmes will be organised.

For further information on Flourishvisit Website: [www.wewillFlourish.com](http://www.wewillFlourish.com)

## **APPENDIX 3.1 Evaluation Comments (re: mentored training sessions)**

### **Mentored training session 1 (December 2015):**

Evaluation comments included:

- (The clergy trainer) was sharp, perceptive and remembered everyone's names.
- Really good to discuss issues in open forum with different church experiences.
- Course very well led. Discussion/sharing very useful.
- Good constructive atmosphere, fostered open dialogue.

What message are you most likely to take away from the course?

- The importance of compassion and listening to people rather than trying to 'fix' problems.
- Not to say things that aren't useful to others.
- Spiritual aspect and depth of understanding, especially around Scripture suicides.
- More aware of what to do and what not to do, what to say.
- To listen and acknowledge feelings whether they are positive or negative.
- Compassion and hope are vital.
- The importance of self-care in all its forms.

What was least enjoyable/informative?

- It was all quite heavy info but that's the nature of the subject.

Any other comments?

- Excellent, relevant training.
- A great course need more of these across all church types.
- It was a most worthwhile course. Thank you.
- I already have a good knowledge in suicide and mental health awareness having attended many other courses was really keen to get the biblical perspective which was really excellent.

### **Mentored training session 2 (January 2016):**

Evaluation comments included:

- Well presented, real and relevant.
- Thoroughly enjoyed the training, more churches/clergy should get involved and attend.
- Great mix of personal stories, facts, figures and Biblical knowledge.
- Personal illustration and other stories helped ground the teaching.

What message are you most likely to take away from the course?

- Talking and listening, compassion and kindness. Offer support and hope.
- Every action must begin from a place of compassion and kindness to give hope.
- Biblical perspective.
- Understanding suicide.
- Being there with someone and saying nothing is better than not being there at all.
- A balance between compassion, self-awareness, knowledge and trust are essential in dealing with these issues.
- The need for self-care. There is a good network of support to offer people.
- There are other agencies available to help assist in these situations.

What was least enjoyable/informative?

- Found it all very enjoyable.
- More role play would have been useful.

## **APPENDIX 4**

### **Examples of Information & Awareness Raising and Engagement meetings:**

- Jan 30 2015 Meeting between Lighthouse & Bishops in Rostrevor (Bishop John Brady)
- Feb 9 2015 Presentation to group of Catholic Priests from both North and South of Ireland - Co Monaghan
- Feb 16 2015 Presentation to Rotary Club Members - Comber
- Feb 17 2015 Meeting - Church of Ireland HQ
- Mar 11 2015 Flourish Presentation to Church of Ireland – Women’s Institute - Ballymena
- April 1 2015 Meeting to promote Flourish - Lighthouse and Rosemary Dunlop (Presbyterian))
- May 2 2015 Meeting with Bishop - Rostrevor (Lighthouse meeting with Bishop Ray Fields of Dublin and up to 6 other clergy)
- May 13 2015 Lisburn Church Group AGM Presentation - Lisburn (Lighthouse)
- Jul 20 2015 Clergy meeting - Loughbrickland (Rev Patricia McBride )
- Jul 20 2015 Clergy Meeting - Banbridge (FR Colm Wright)
- Jul 20 2015 Clergy Meeting - Kilkeel (Fr Michael)
- Jul 20 2015 Clergy Meeting - Kilkeel (Rev Stephen Johnson)
- Jul 27 2015 Clergy Meeting Belfast - Father Martin Magill - Sacred Heart
- Jul 30 2015 Contact made with Clergy Maureen Hassard (Methodist - Ballymena - Agreed to join Flourish Working Group
- Sep 14 2015 Meeting with Theological College Principals x 4 churches. Church House
- Sep 23 2015 Lough Derg Event Family Bereavement Event

## **APPENDIX 5**

### **Members on Flourish Working Group (2016-17)-Coordinating body:**

Jo Murphy	<b>Chair of Working Group</b> / Lighthouse
Conor McCafferty	<b>Vice Chair of Advisory Group</b> (Zest/SSIB Chair)
Sharon Quinn	<b>Administration of Flourish</b> (Lighthouse)
Gabrielle Rawashdeh	PHA (overall initiative support)
Helen Gibson	PHA (relevant training support)
Cathal Deery	Catholic Clergy
Lindsay Conway	Presbyterian Clergy
Mervyn Ewing	Methodist Clergy
John McClure	Church of Ireland Clergy
Philip Agnew	Methodist Clergy
Brendan McManus	Catholic Clergy
Maureen Hassard	Methodist Clergy
David Hilliard	Church of Ireland
Helen Woods	Clergy Connector
Mairisine Stanfield	Presbyterian Clergy