



**New Opportunities: Brief Report on Evaluation of the  
Transferability of the Eden Programme in two HSE National  
Counselling Services in Ireland**

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## Forward

The Eden Programme provided by Suicide or Survive (SOS) provides a psycho-educational, recovery orientated programme over 26 weeks to adults who have contemplated or attempted suicide.

The Evaluation of the Transferability of the Eden Programme in the HSE's National Counselling Service was supported by the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention and undertaken by Dr Evelyn Gordon and Dr Maeve Kenny (DCU).

This evaluation confirms the effectiveness and the acceptability of the Eden Programme. The evaluation confirms the positive outcomes for participants and the significant benefits for people's lives.

Indeed, the testimonies of participants add to the scientific evaluation of the Programme in confirming the positive impact of Eden.

As we endeavour to strengthen our knowledge and understanding about effective suicide prevention strategies the importance of rigorous independent evaluations of interventions is essential. This evaluation is a clear example, which yields important learning as envisaged under Connecting for Life.

**Gerry Raleigh**

*Director, National Office for Suicide Prevention*

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## **1. Introduction**

The Eden programme, a psychoeducational intervention for people experiencing suicidality, has been delivered by Suicide or Survive (SOS) since 2007 in community based settings in the Dublin region. This report outlines an independent mixed methods evaluation of the transferability of the SOS Eden Programme to two Health Service Executive (HSE) public mental health settings in the West of Ireland (National Counselling Services (NCS) in Galway and Mayo). It describes the scope and design of the evaluation and reports on the key findings, conclusions and recommendations. This evaluation took place between September 2015 and December 2016 and builds upon previous independent evaluations of the effectiveness and acceptability of Eden delivered by SOS (Lawlor, 2007; Webster, 2012a; 2012b; Gordon et al., 2014).

## 2. Background and rationale

The rise in suicide and self-harm rates (WHO, 2013) and increased understanding about the negative impact of these events on the emotional wellbeing and social stability of the individual, family and community (Hawton, 2005; Gordon et al., 2015), has highlighted the need for effective interventions. Hence, health policies have been developed to directly and indirectly address suicide prevention strategies, goals and targets (National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP), 2005; 2009; 2015) and have emphasised the need for evidence-based responses that can be systematically evaluated and replicated.

The Eden programme is a 26-week group psychoeducational, recovery oriented, user led response for adults who have contemplated or attempted suicide.

A previous independent evaluation of the programme (Gordon et al., 2014) demonstrated that:

- Eden is an effective and acceptable intervention for attendees who showed significant positive outcomes;
- Change was promoted by key aspects of the programme including its clear structures, relevant content and recovery ethos;
- The model is acceptable to those delivering the programme;
- The robust SOS governance structures and support mechanisms facilitated retention of the core philosophy and provided ongoing support for facilitators;
- Eden is consistent with current national mental health and suicide policies; A Vision for Change (Dept. of Health and Children, 2006) and Connecting for Life (National Office for Suicide Prevention, 2015).

The evaluation recommended:

- Roll out of Eden in other settings as it is effective and addresses a gap in service provision for people experiencing suicidality;

- Retention of the robust governance structures to maintain the core ethos of Eden;
- Incorporation of additional routine evaluation measures to enhance evaluation methods and monitor and review standards and quality.

These recommendations were subsequently adopted by SOS.

### 3. The transferability evaluation

The aim of this evaluation was to assess the transferability of Eden in terms of its training and delivery (content, structures, processes and outcomes) in HSE NCS Mayo and Galway.

Key objectives included:

1. Examining the effectiveness of the 7 day Eden training course, subsequent mentoring and support of facilitators by SOS and external supervision.
2. Investigating the usefulness and acceptability of Eden among the target group, facilitators and service providers.
3. Assessing the robustness of the governance structures developed between the partner organisations.
4. Providing recommendations regarding further roll out of Eden.

Participants comprised: Eden attendees (n=24), Eden facilitators (n=6), external supervisor (n=1), HSE / NCS Service Managers (n=2), HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention (NOSP) Suicide Resource Officer (SRO) (n=1), and Eden trainers (n=2).

This mixed methods evaluation involved: capturing the participants' views and subjective experiences of Eden; examining Eden attendee outcomes (mood, anxiety, suicidality and general psychological distress) and documentation (Internal Continuous Improvement reports, attendance records); and evaluating the new seven-day training method developed by SOS and the facilitator support, mentoring and supervision systems.

## 4. Findings

The findings indicate that Eden was viewed as a useful service by the service providers, group facilitators and group attendees and that the SOS NCS partnership was successful.

### The partnership

Selecting a suitable partner / host organisation was crucial in the success of the transfer. The NOSP SRO played a central role in facilitating the connections between the two partnership organisations by recognising the potential for a positive fit between them. The partnership faced several challenges in bringing Eden from inception to completion, for example promoting the programme locally and managing differences in ethos and practices.

**Selecting a suitable partner was crucial to the success of the transfer of the Eden Programme.**

The partnership developed robust governance structures, which clearly delineated roles and responsibilities at each level of involvement in the planning and delivery of Eden. There were agreed structures, policies and processes in place that enabled issues and challenges to be managed in a timely manner and to ensure consistency with the ethos of Eden and the statutory requirements and responsibilities of the HSE NCS.

*Was it worth it? Absolutely, it went really well. We had wonderful partners and two groups of people through the programme in the West of Ireland. (SOS Trainer 1)*

The transfer has enabled HSE NCS to offer a programme that complements and extends their service provision and builds capacity within the organisation to work with this target group. SOS has tested a new training model and support structures

for facilitators and successfully trained them to deliver a programme targeting people experiencing suicidality. Thus, SOS have enhanced accessibility to the Eden programme.

### **The facilitators**

The facilitator training adequately equipped facilitators to commence the Eden programme and increased their understanding of suicide and their competence in working with this group. Although they experienced challenges in the role of facilitator, they were helped in maintaining adherence to the programme via the support structures. These support structures were also experienced as essential in providing a sense of containment and security while working with this vulnerable population. The external supervisor felt positively and proactively guided by SOS. Therefore, he was well oriented to the role and able to deliver appropriate supports to the facilitators. Thus, the training model and support structures developed to facilitate the transfer of Eden were effective. The facilitators found Eden to be a relevant and acceptable programme to deliver and noted positive changes in attendees over the course of the programme.

### **Attendees**

The overall level of engagement and satisfaction with Eden was extremely high. Completion rates were high (79%) and attendees reported similar views and experiences to findings from previous evaluations of Eden. They found Eden acceptable, effective and relevant, noting benefits pertaining to their daily living, sense of hope, belief in themselves and the future, positive changes in their relationship with suicide and increased motivation for change. They also highlighted the positive and important impact of facilitators, guest speakers and peer support, with the latter enhancing a sense of belongingness. The outcome measures concurred with the qualitative data indicating progress in a positive direction in each of the key areas measured.

Some attendees, having had positive experiences of Eden, articulated a desire for Eden to offer more and expand its scope. Although there may be a wish to meet diverse needs, it is important that the programme retain its purpose, aims and focus.

## Key learning points

There was extensive learning for the organisations and staff involved during the pilot roll out of Eden, which will inform and enhance delivery in the future. A summary of the key learning points highlights the essential components of the successful transfer of Eden.

### *What is being transferred?*

The transfer of Eden involved conveying an experience that captured the essence and ethos of the programme and not merely the transfer of a step by step instructional manual. Recognition of this was essential for the successful transfer of an effective programme, thus, the philosophical underpinnings, values and ethos also needed to be transferred.

### *What is involved?*

The transfer required careful planning, preparation, communication, support and monitoring throughout the pilot.

### *Who can assist?*

Involvement of the NOSP SRO, who has a wealth of knowledge about local service provision and organisational resources and capacity for change, was crucial in locating a suitable partner for SOS.

### *Finding a fit*

A good fit between the vision and commitment of the host organisation and SOS was essential to ensure a good working relationship that could effectively manage and withstand the issues and challenges involved in incorporating Eden into an existing public HSE service.

### *Complementarity*

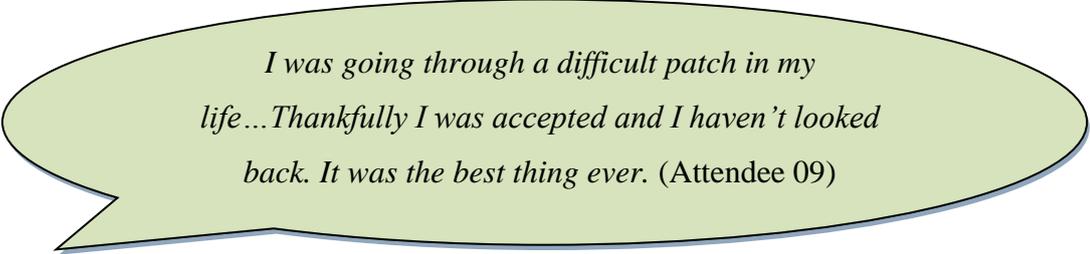
Incorporating Eden into NCS in a way that expanded and complimented existing services allowed for the provision of more holistic and comprehensive services in the region.

### *Sustainability*

The transfer of Eden into the two HSE NCS sites was the beginning of a longer-term sustainable service enhancement process that can be replicated with similar partners in other regions.

### *Cost-Benefit ratio*

The initial high resource demand and set-up costs can be off-set by careful planning of future Eden programmes to ensure sustainability and by the added value of providing a life enhancing, and potentially lifesaving, programme and increasing service capacity for working with people experiencing suicidality.



*I was going through a difficult patch in my life...Thankfully I was accepted and I haven't looked back. It was the best thing ever. (Attendee 09)*

## 5. Conclusions and recommendations

### Conclusions

#### The transfer

The transfer of Eden into the two NCS HSE sites has been successful and this evaluation indicates that there were benefits for the partner organisations, facilitators and attendees.

#### The partnership

SOS has:

- Had their Eden programme successfully delivered in a public health service;
- Enhanced the accessibility of Eden;
- Provided opportunities to fine tune the training and support aspect of the programme;
- Tested the effectiveness of their selection criteria for facilitators and partnerships;
- Opened potential avenues for further programme delivery.

The HSE NCS has:

- Successfully delivered a programme targeting people experiencing suicidality;
- Offered a programme that complements and extends existing service provision;

- Increased capacity within their own organisation for working with suicidality;
- Successfully partnered with a charitable organisation;
- Increased the accessibility of the programme through further delivery.

### **Eden participants**

- Eden attendees and facilitators found Eden acceptable, effective and relevant.
- Eden attendees reported high levels of satisfaction with the programme.
- Eden attendees identified benefits pertaining to their wellbeing, daily living and motivation for change and facilitators noted positive changes in attendees over the course of the programme.
- Eden facilitators reported high levels of satisfaction with the training and support structures.

## **Recommendations**

### **1. Roll out of Eden**

The programme has demonstrated transferability with effectiveness in key areas of personal and interpersonal functioning among attendees, and acceptability among facilitators and service providers. Thus, the roll out of the current manualised version of the programme across a range of settings is endorsed, within and outside of mental health services.

### **2. The partner organisations**

Given the importance of the partnership fit and the establishment of clear governance structures and processes, it is recommended that these be negotiated carefully in other new settings and that the roll out in the existing sites continue. The wealth of information available through the personnel involved in setting up the pilot delivery

of Eden in public health services and the information in this report should inform selection of future host organisations and the organisational requirements and commitments required for successful transfer.

### **3. The training**

The newly developed training method, mentoring and support by SOS and supervision structures have facilitated the transferability of Eden to the HSE NCS services in this pilot. Hence, it is recommended that these be replicated in new sites. Less intense SOS involvement will be sufficient to ensure that the ethos of the programme is also retained in the pilot sites.

### **4. Evaluation**

Evaluation of the programme is important for quality control and continued development and it is recommended that existing evaluation and review mechanisms be maintained.

**The roll out of the current manualised version of the programme using the methodologies developed during this pilot across a range of settings is endorsed, within and outside of mental health services.**

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