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WEDNESDAY
 04/07/2007
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Research links deprivation and violence to suicide

Rising numbers of suicides may be linked to Northern Ireland's troubled past, fresh research published today has found.

The Department of Health dossier also found those living in violence-racked areas were more prone to depression and said the conflict limited public recognition of suicide.

There were 291 deaths last year, almost double the average of earlier years.

This has been blamed on deprivation, lack of opportunity and copying friends and relatives who took their own lives.

Health Minister Michael McGimpsey said: "Suicide is an increasing problem in Northern Ireland, especially amongst our young people.

"Understanding the underlying causes of why someone takes their own life is of paramount importance.

"I believe this report will be extremely useful in helping us to begin to unravel the effects of the troubles on the mental health of people in Northern Ireland."

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Areas like north Belfast and Laurelvale in Co Armagh have encountered abnormally high levels.

Last month three 15-year-olds from the Laurelvale/Tandragee area killed themselves. They were all pupils at Craigavon Senior High School.

UUP Minister Mr McGimpsey recently announced a Mental Health and Learning Disability Board of experts to address the situation. He issued the latest paper- `The Trouble with Suicide` - to the Suicide Strategy Implementation Board, which is considering practical measures.

Findings included:

:: Conflict-related trauma can have long term physical and mental consequences and suicide rates have been associated with immediate and longer-term consequences of conflict.

:: Local people enjoy greater happiness than many others in Europe despite high levels of psychological distress.

:: The troubles affected the way suicide was reported and recorded, and limited public recognition of suicide and self-harming as serious public issues.

:: During the transition to peace people are more likely to report depression.

A total of £3m has been allocated for implementing the Suicide Prevention Strategy this year.

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FILM: DANS PARIS

DIRECTOR: Christophe Honore.

STARRING: Romain Duris, Louis Garrel, Joanna Preiss, Guy Marchand.

DETAILS: France / 93mins (15)

RATING: ★★☆☆☆

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