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An insight into the implementation of Connecting for Life Cork

Welcome note

This is our third Connecting for Life Cork newsletter and its purpose is to keep you updated on the implementation of Connecting for Life Cork, the suicide and self-harm reduction plan for the city and county. Workstream groups have been established to deliver on key targets over the lifetime of the plan.

Some local developments of note in recent months include:

- The National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) has recently collected data on areas of concern along the River Lee in Cork city and coastal areas of the county. This data was collected with the aim of locally implementing measures aimed to reduce suicidal behaviour in these areas.
- More than 5,000 Youth Mental Health Resource booklets have now been distributed to secondary schools in the city and county. See the story on the right for more details.
- Work has been undertaken with the Cork branch of the Samaritans in the design of new signage to replace older signs in key areas across the city and county.
- Preparations are underway for Green Ribbon month in May- see page 2 for details. This year we're looking for public and private groups to get involved.

Launch of a Youth Mental Health Resource booklet

A Youth Mental Health Resource booklet was recently launched as part of the Connecting for Life Cork plan. Lord Mayor Cllr Mick Finn together with the Head of Mental Health Services for Cork and Kerry, Sinead Glennon, launched the booklet at City Hall in early February where the important role of youth groups, organizations and secondary schools around the city and county in alerting young people to the supports that are available to them was highlighted.

The booklet was produced by Suicide Resource Officer, Martin Ryan, together with partners across the community and voluntary sector. The booklet contains information regarding mental health in terms of what it is and ways of minding it, as highlighted by the Little Things Campaign. More importantly, the booklet features information about, and contact details of online, phone, or face-to-face services across the city and county which support young people across various issues such as depression, eating disorders, self-harm, suicide, alcohol and drug related issues and many others.



Although the Mental Health Resource booklet is targeted at young people aged 15 years and over by providing information in an accessible, clear and youth friendly way, it is hoped that families and adults working with young people in their everyday work will find the booklet to be a useful resource as well.

Copies have been distributed widely, including as part of three Teentalk events run recently by Cork County Council Healthy Ireland team. You can download a copy of the booklet at www.connectingforlifecork.ie www.yourmentalhealth.ie

Highlights from the work streams and actions:

- We have a closer connection with the business community in terms of supporting positive mental health in the workplace. All stakeholders are now working more closely together for a joined-up approach to mental health and services.
- On-going engagement is underway with vulnerable groups.
- We can see a close working relationship with key mental health services within the HSE, and with our community and voluntary partners across Cork city and county.
- There has been increased training in courses such as safeTALK and ASSIST, and an on-line booking system is in place.

Experiences of a newcomer to the Suicide Resource Office

Hello all.

My name is Klaudia Mačejná and I'd like to take this opportunity to share with you some of my experiences of working at the Suicide Resource Office as part of my Applied Psychology Masters placement.

I have been working at the Suicide Resource Office alongside Martin Ryan for the past two months and I can safely say that even as early as two months into my 6-month-long placement, I have learned more about the importance of mental health and suicide prevention than I have in my undergraduate college days.

As someone with a keen interest in mental health and suicide prevention, having been directly exposed to the Connecting for Life Plan has definitely been one of the most valuable experiences in my life so far.

Up until now I have been given the opportunity to present to various groups on mental health and suicide prevention, be part of implementing local action plans which aim to reduce suicidal behaviour in the city while also working on response documents which aim to improve the response of a community to a suicide and much more.

Being able to take part in these actions has been an eye opening experience which has shown me not only the importance of responding to a suicide, but also the importance of preventing it by both raising awareness but also by putting various measures into place.

Join with us to fight mental health stigma during Green Ribbon Month 2019



The Green Ribbon month of May is nearly upon us. For those who may not be familiar with the Green Ribbon Campaign, this is a mental health awareness campaign, now in its 7th year, which aims to help combat the stigma associated with mental health problems.

Overall, the Green Ribbon has three main aims:

- Get people talking openly about common health problems
- Encourage everyone to listen
- Help people feel less alone or seek support

Last year's event was hugely successful as the Resource Office teamed up with Cork City Football Club, Youth Services, ESB, UCC, private companies and others, all with the aim of raising awareness and reducing stigma surrounding mental health.

For this year's event, we are asking for support from any services and organizations which would like to engage with us and help us fight the stigma. To get involved or for more information email

The Samaritans out in action

Samaritans is a service that provides people with the opportunity to talk and get support when they are struggling with life issues and challenges. Samaritans has been supporting people in Ireland since 1970, but since the introduction of freephone five years ago, calls increased by 80%. Samaritans volunteers in Ireland have answered almost three million calls in the past five years since the launch of the freephone helpline 116 123.

Figures also show that more than 500,000 calls were answered last year, almost 46,000 text replies and 5,300 e-mails sent. More than 4,000 people were given emotional support in branches and further 2000 support calls were offered in the country's prisons. Among the main issues discussed were mental health (36.2%), /loneliness (30%), family issues (28.5%) and relationship problems (20.9%). Other raised concerns about physical health, bereavement, violence, drug and/or alcohol misuse, and finance/unemployment.

Suicidal thoughts were expressed in 16.6% of contacts. Samaritans also engage in o

utreach services and Partnerships by providing talks to schools, workers in the community with high risk groups, in prisons and the GAA by promoting positive mental health to men and boys through the medium of sport. Additionally, six charities transfer their callers to Samaritans after hours to ensure that people in need can avail of support at any time of the day or night. Samaritans are based in 13 locations across the country and are available to the public 24/7 by phone, text and SMS. All branches are open for face to face drop in sessions. *You don't need to be suicidal to ring Samaritans.*

We would encourage anyone who is struggling to call Samaritans on freephone 116 123, email jo@samaritans.ie or text 087 2609090.



Community Action on Alcohol Cork/Kerry



Gemma O’Leary (Lead on Alcohol Pilot Sites for Cork Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force) and Joe Kirby (Cork Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force Rehabilitation Co-ordinator share with us the progress of their work on reducing harm from alcohol abuse in the community while supporting the Connecting for Life Cork Plan.

Findings from research conducted in 2016 by the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF) have indicated that among hospital presentations of self-harm in 10-17 year olds, alcohol was involved in 11% of the presentations, with a 15% presence for boys, and a 10% presence for girls. It is well known that alcohol, especially when misused is a very harmful substance which has a negative impact on mental health, as well as often playing a part in self-harm presentations and suicidal behavior. Some great work has recently been done by the Cork Local Drug and Alcohol Task Force and Joe Kirby is directly and actively involved with the Mental Health Workstream of the Connecting for Life Cork Implementation Steering Group. This coordinated approach is working to reduce alcohol related self-harm and suicidal behavior in Cork city and county.

The North-West of Cork city was selected as one of the pilot sites for the implementation of the first Cork and Kerry Alcohol Strategy 2016-2018. The Cork and Kerry Alcohol Strategy 2016-2018 *“Time for Change”* was launched to address alcohol related harm in the Cork/Kerry region. Therefore, along with Youghal in Co.Cork and Listowel in Co. Kerry, the North-West side of Cork, which covers the areas of Knocknaheeny, Hollyhill, Gurranaברה and Churchfield is now *“having conversations in the community and taking local action to reduce harms caused by alcohol”*.

The local group made up of community, voluntary and statutory representatives developed and delivered a Local Action Plan 2016-2018. This plan was informed by the findings of local research conducted by The School of Public Health (University College Cork). Ipsos MRBI conducted household sampling, a cross-sectional, household survey on health and lifestyle – comprised of 35 questions on drinking patterns, drinking context, attitudes and harm. The total sample consisted of 1,075 participants across Cork and Kerry. Over the past two years the Community Action on Alcohol North-West side have organised many community events and trainings to inform local people and community groups about the risks and harms caused by excessive alcohol consumption.

A qualitative implementation study was conducted in 2018 by The School of Public Health (University College Cork) to examine the implementation process of the Local Alcohol Action Plan in each of the three pilot areas. The induction training; enthusiasm and commitment of group; alcohol-only focus; learning gained; action plan format and particular events and activities were identified as aspects of the process which worked well. Resistance from wider community; lack of engagement by community groups and negative perceptions of the alcohol pilot project were some of the challenges identified.

The Cork and Kerry Alcohol Strategy Group, along with all three Alcohol Pilot Site groups have committed to developing a second Alcohol Strategy and Local Action Plans for the region. Findings from the household study and the qualitative implementation study will inform the successive Alcohol Strategy and plans for Cork and Kerry. The welcome passing of the Public Health Alcohol Bill into law in October 2018 gives local groups encouragement and a vehicle to implement change and continue to challenge people’s attitude towards alcohol, creating awareness of the risks associated with alcohol consumption. Not only is this strategy beneficial to the specific highlighted communities, the on-going work is a great contribution to the mental health Workstream of the Connecting for Life Cork Plan. For more information contact

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Need to talk?

Help is a phone call away



Free-phone 24/7 on **116 123**
Text **087 2609090**
Email: jo@samaritans.ie



Call **1800 247 247**
Email: info@pieta.ie



Free-phone 24/7 **1800 666 666**
Text "Talk" to **50101**
Go to www.childline.ie

If you are in crisis please contact your local GP. Out of hours, contact SouthDoc on 1850 335 999 or your nearest Emergency Department.

For further information and a list of other supports please access:

www.yourmentalhealth.ie

www.bereaved.ie

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