

## YELLOW RIBBON SUICIDE PREVENTION PROGRAMME ANNUAL GENERAL REPORT

### AGM Tuesday :26th February 2024

#### SUMMARY :

First of all I wish to thank each member of my Committee for all their help and support throughout the past year, without their commitment and input week after week, we could not function effectively as a registered charity. In addition I wish to thank our Chartered Accountant David Brown for his cooperation advice and guidance year after year in the preparation of our accounts for the NI Charity Commission. During our past year from September 2022 until present, we have had another very successful year seeing GP referrals from mostly Orchard Practice in Portadown Health Centre ( Dr Claire Williamson's Practice) besides taking a small number of referrals from Pat McKeown Nurse practitioner in charge at Trasna House Lurgan, Southern Trust. This has eased the pressures from Trasna house especially those with more complex psychological needs ie suicidal behaviours, chronic depression anxiety and PTSD.

**Bereavement** : During the month of December 2022, our esteemed colleague and long term close friend Denis Hollywood passed away after a short illness in January 2023. Denis had been a keen men's hockey player and had played with me and also with Willie Magrath in Portadown Men's Hockey teams. He was also a close friend of David's through their daily work. Denis had always been willing to come to our assistance as a mental health charity when we needed any plumbing done in our original premises in Church street. Our sincere sympathy is extended to his wife Jenny and family at this time. We welcome Bill Magrath to the Committee of Yellow Ribbon.

#### **Placement Students University of Ulster**

Last year we had the pleasure of having Caitlin Nelson, Sarah Fletcher, Bernadette Dynes Holly Adamson and Caolan McCann with us until May 2023. My professional health psychology work would be impossible without the significant and vital input from each student in recording clinical notes and assisting me with patients psychological assessments, besides data protection and maintenance of the office accommodation. During the year they carried out research work on suicides in NI and UK and focused on the weaknesses of current therapeutic interventions. A significant development was the current research into suicides and children's exposure to traumatic experiences on watching avatars in highly addictive circumstances. In addition they prepared several psychological presentations for surrounding Colleges on social media in today world. These presentations were given to Portadown College fifth and sixth formers besides students attending Southern Regional college in Portadown and at the Armagh and Banbridge

campuses. The students also were present at the health Education fair at SRC Armagh where they were taking students blood Pressures and engaging in various discussions on mental health and social media. They are now progressing onto their MSc Degree programme in Psychological Therapies at the University of Ulster

## **PSNI**

During the past year we were privileged to have an officer from our local PSNI present to discuss the impact of Mental health in the community and the impact this can have on serving police officers lives. We were able to explain to the Police how we work all year round in terms of increasing locals psychological health and wellbeing besides seeing suicidally vulnerable clients. Having given out Yellow Ribbon flyers and our “ be a link and save a life “cards to PSNI, we felt enriched learning on how we can as psychologists train local police in understanding mental health issues in our community.

## **Living Life to The Full**

We wish to extend our sincere thanks to our valued committee member Hilary Knight for her role in running this well known course of training in positive mental health. Our current students and some members of the public attended the short course and we intend to run it again this new year. On behalf of the committee we extend our gratitude to Hilary for the organization and presentation of this programme once again in a few months time.

## **Local GP's Feedback and CAMHS**

A few local GP's who refer some patients to us have praised the work of Yellow Ribbon in the weekly provision of psychological emotional support and structured guidance for their patients as they recover from many psychological issues that can precipitate self harm or suicidal depression. Most of this past year's referrals were middle aged men suffering from anxiety problems, chronic or suicidal depression and self harming via alcohol or narcotic abuse as a result of loss of employment, death of a parent, or relationship breakdown. A small number of around twenty individuals called in for help spontaneously. There is a small rise in the number of young women attending for help with relationship difficulties or alcohol dependence, especially foreign nationals from Europe. Since February last year there have been some parents attending each month seeking help with being informed about social media Apps which they consider dangerous to their children's mental health. These children had attended CAMS at Craigavon Hospital but found it was not working for them. We were able to teach them some useful psychological techniques to overcome these addictions and how to deal with issues such as dealing with internet trolls, online

threats and ethics of online behaviour as minors besides current legislation from PSNI.

## **Update on Suicide Rates in Northern Ireland 2002 – 2022 ( Full Report from NISRA )**

This report presents the finalised suicide statistical series in Northern Ireland for 2002 to 2022. Suicide death statistics and mortality statistics more generally are published by NISRA as the number of deaths registered within a calendar year, rather than the number of deaths that occurred in that period. This method ensures annual data do not continuously change; however, it introduces a limitation to the statistics as registration-based figures build in delays in procedural systems and processes and do not enable occurrence-based analyses which may be important in informing operational and policy responses.

**Key points** • **There were 203 suicide deaths registered in 2022.** While this represents a decrease of 34 (14.3 per cent) from the 237 suicide deaths registered in 2021, it is important to remember that annual fluctuations in registration-based figures build in procedural delays. The three-year rolling average of suicide deaths has remained relatively stable since 2017.

- The age-standardised suicide rate in Northern Ireland reduced from 14.3 deaths per 100,000 in 2021 to 12.3 deaths per 100,000 in 2022.
- **156 (76.8 per cent) of the 203 total suicide deaths in 2022 were males and 47 (23.2 per cent) were females.** The rate for males decreased from 21.6 per 100,000 males in 2021 to 19.2 in 2022, while for females, the equivalent rate decreased from 7.2 per 100,000 females in 2021 to 5.7 in 2022.
- The crude death rate per 100,000 population was higher for those suicide deaths in 2022 with a marital status of divorced (20.8) or single (17.7), compared to those recorded as widowed (11.4) or married (9.5).
- The percentage of suicides in 2022 from Northern Ireland's most deprived areas (31.0percent) was over three times that of the least deprived areas (9.4 %)

**NOTE: The Belfast Trust had the highest number of suicides in 2022 (51) followed by the Southern Trust (43)**

Dr Arthur Cassidy C.Psychol, AFBPsS.

