

Mental Health Services - The role of 6 Mental Health services available in Northern Ireland

KEY:

- P1: Presenter 1
P2: Presenter 2
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P6: Presenter 6
P7: Presenter 7
PMB: Peter McBride, Northern Ireland Association for Mental Health (NIAMH)
MF: Margy Falloon, Forum for Action on Substance Abuse (FASA)
COP: Claire O'Prey, Lifeline
CC: Carol Crooks, Children and Adolescent Mental Health Service (CAHMS)
MS: Maria Sharvin, CAHMS
KL: Katrin Lehmann, Child and Family Clinic, Belfast Trust
JH: Joe Hyland, SOS
PF: Patrician Ferrin, Public Initiative for Prevention of Suicide and Self-harm (PIPS)

- P1: According to the World Health Organisation, "Mental health is a state of wellbeing in which every individual realises his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and are able to make a positive contribution to his or her community".
- P2: In Northern Ireland, over 20% of young people face mental health difficulties before their 18th birthday.
- P3: With so many people suffering, we wanted to find out what services are available.
- P4: We found there were lots of services in Northern Ireland so we chose to look at six organisations.
- P5: We want to know what service they provide.
- P6: We want to find out what challenges they face.
- P7: We want to know what recommendations they would make.

What service do you provide?

- PMB: We're an organisation that is passionate about mental health. It really matters to us, we care about it. We're now quite a large organisation and we provide a lot of housing for people with mental health problems to help them live in the community. So we provide support for them to live in their own homes so that they don't need to live in institutions or go into hospital, and it allows people to live normal lives; ordinary, normal lives, in their communities, even though they're living with mental health problems.

- MF: FASA (Forum for Action on Substance Abuse) covers four key main areas - substance misuse, suicide, self-harm and mental health. Some of the services we would offer would be like one-to-one work, counselling, group work, holistic therapies, maybe the likes of some craft groups, and I think all our environments are quite bright and quite vibrant and very welcoming. So I think those are some of the positive things for us.
- COP: The Lifeline Service is a 24/7 helpline and we work with people who are in distress and despair throughout Northern Ireland regardless of what age they are. Northern Ireland as we know, is post conflict and we have a lot of individual and very unique problems that have happened in Northern Ireland. So it would seem that something would need to be put in place to try to help prevent against suicide. And, hopefully, what we've been doing along all these years, working together with community groups and groups on the ground level, is working towards making sure that suicide becomes a never event.
- CC: I'm Carol Crooks. I'm the Assistant Children's Service Manager for Child and Adolescent Mental Health. A big part of our role is that we also support partner agencies within the voluntary sector. For example, FASA and DAISY (Drug and Alcohol Intervention Service for Young People) would be a couple of them where we would supervise and jointly work with them, and we're significantly involved with Lighthouse, PIPS and all the other organisations.

What challenges do you face?

- MS: My name is Maria Sharvin and I am the Team Lead at the Adolescent Mental Health Service in Belfast (CAHMS). With where things are at and the political climate, and with austerity and whatever, it's getting much harder to manage things. We're constantly having to manage within the financial constraints that we have. Our referrals have increased significantly over the last four to five years – our staffing hasn't increased to quite the same level. So it does take a lot of careful planning and managing the resources that we have which are our staff.
- KL: I'm Katrin Lehmann I'm the Team Lead for the Child and Family Clinic, which is the under 14 service in Belfast Trust. We are constantly reflecting and thinking about how we can do this better. You know we want to ensure, like yourselves, that mental health stays on the top of everyone's agenda because it's not really a service that is just an additionality, if the money is there. This is an essential and critical service really, where early intervention and support for people can actually ensure that people are having a full and successful life.
- JH: My name is Joe Hyland I'm the Chief Exec of SOS. There are two sides to what we do. What you're seeing here on this bus is crisis intervention. It's when things go wrong, you become vulnerable and needy. For young people, we have schools programmes where we go into schools and we spend an inordinate amount of time building relationships. The higher purpose is to make my children's lives potentially better in the future. I think every human being, every father has a responsibility and every mother has a responsibility to make the world a better place for their kids. So people have to know that we genuinely care for them and there's no other reason we're doing it. So we don't look for any reward. The ethos of the organisation is "unconditional giving, expecting nothing in return".

What message do you have for MLAs?

- MF: In terms of a message to the MLAs I would be just really keen that the communication that we already have there is continued. If that could be expanded then great. We would work

very well with some local MLAs and politicians because at the end of the day they're working in the communities we work in. So it's about that up and down passing of information. So if we feel that there are areas that need certain support or a certain campaign, as an organisation we have the responsibility to take that information to them. But as people working in the community they have a responsibility to maybe highlight the services that are available to their constituents.

PMB: I've loads of messages for MLAs and strangely my first message is not necessarily about money. My first message to MLAs is about taking mental health and wellbeing seriously. I think to some extent we do, although I would say that mental health services here have not necessarily been as well resourced as they would have been in the rest of the UK. So the first thing I would say is to take mental health seriously because, actually, it impacts on lots and lots of other things.

JH: I understand fully that you (MLAs) live in a world that contains you, that binds you and actually in a way disconnects you because you've got to live in this political place with limited resources that are diminishing all the time. But what I'd like to say to you is remember that before you were an MLA you have a family that you love and you care about and if you really want to change the world, when you encounter people like me, and there's lots of us, that want to make a difference, don't look at us as a cost. We're a huge saving.

(VOICE OVER) Most people don't know about mental health services until they need them.

PF: My name's Patricia Ferrin and I'm with the Family Group here in PIPS (Public Initiative for Prevention of Suicide and Self-harm). I lost two sons to suicide - Niall who was aged 19 died four and a half years ago and Kieran who was aged 23 aged died almost a year and a half ago on Valentine's Day. The reason why I used PIPS was because it was nearest to my heart. When my two youngest sons took their lives, this was the only place I could come to. I just feel they know my story, they know what I've been going through. Here people understand what you've been through because they themselves have been through it. And it's only when you go down that road do you realise what it's all about, and it's a very hard and lonely road. Now it's got the full attention of people and it's good to see the MLAs actually getting on board to try and do something about mental health because, believe you me, it's very hard to work with.

What have we learned?

P3: We learnt that mental health and mental illness are not the same thing.

P6: We learnt there are many different mental health services in Northern Ireland.

P4: We learnt that each service provides a unique and vital role for service users.

P2: We learnt that these services face a number of challenges such as stigma.

P5: We learnt that services are concerned about funding.

P7: We learnt that lots of these services collaborate to be as effective as possible.

P1: We learnt that decision makers need to take mental health seriously.