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HSE Media Release

Community Healthcare Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo

“Suicide is Everyone’s Business” theme of Connecting for Life (CfL) Implementation Group Donegal Conference

The Connecting for Life (CfL) Implementation Group Donegal, today hosted a Midterm conference “*Suicide is Everyone’s Business*” for community leaders and health care professionals. The conference acknowledged the mid-way point of the Community Healthcare Cavan, Donegal, Leitrim, Monaghan, Sligo *Connecting for Life Suicide Prevention Implementation plan 2022 – 2024*.

The conference, held at the Clanree Hotel in Letterkenny, provided an opportunity for the community of Donegal to come together to hear the voices of those bereaved by suicide; and to once again connect on a shared vision to reduce the suicide and self-harm rates in Donegal and among priority groups, including members of the Traveller community, young people and people with dual diagnosis among others.

Dr. John McCardle, Area Director of Mental Health Nursing Donegal Health Service and Chair of CfL Donegal Implementation Donegal said **“when we look at the reality that 1 in 4 people who take their own lives are in services in the year up to their death; and the fact that this number is mirrored among those engaged in self-harming behaviour; it is clear that suicide prevention is everyone’s business; As a community it is about reaching in when others cannot reach out. Today is a shining example of community action on suicide prevention”**

John Meehan, Head of the HSE National Office for Suicide Prevention, who opened the conference and presented some of the findings of the Irish Probable Suicide Deaths Survey 2022 said, **“HSE NOSP works to realise the vision of an Ireland where fewer lives are lost to suicide and we are indebted to the tireless efforts of individuals, communities and agencies who have prioritised suicide prevention and mental health promotion in their lives and work.”**

The keynote address on the first-of-its-kind National Suicide Bereavement Survey was given by researcher Dr Eve Griffin at the National Suicide Research Foundation (NSRF), in collaboration with Fiona Tuomey, Chief Executive Officer, of suicide bereavement charity HUGG (Healing Untold Grief Groups).

Dr Griffin said **“worryingly, half of our participants reported poor current mental wellbeing, especially young adults. At the time of the survey, one-in-five expressed some thoughts of self-harm or suicide. While those who did access support following their bereavement were broadly positive, a significant number of people did not access any help. Given the increased risk of suicide among**

those impacted by suicide, our findings have important implications for the development and implementation of timely supports, which should be tailored to individual need.”

HUGG (Healing Untold Grief Groups), a partner of the NSRF on this research project, was founded by Fiona Tuomey, following the death of her 11-year-old daughter Milly by suicide in 2016. HUGG provides peer-support groups for those who have experienced suicide bereavement - led by people who have themselves lost a loved one to suicide.

Fiona said **“death by suicide devastates many lives in many ways. We know this first-hand because we asked those affected. They’ve told us they need affordable, timely access to support and ways to find the right support easily and quickly. We must also help our young adults, who are telling us how much they are hurting.”**

Ciarzo and the Ephades played the newly released ANXIETY song written by young people for young people and developed in partnership with Donegal Youth Service (DYS) and CfL Donegal. Ciarzo stated **“when DYS and CfL Donegal asked us to produce a song on anxiety written out of my personal experience during COVID-19, we jumped at the chance. Music can be used to bring identification and hope.”**

The Donegal Travellers Project also presented findings of OUR LIVES, OUR VOICES, OUR FUTURE: Research into Traveller Men’s experiences and wellbeing in Donegal funded by Connecting for Life Donegal.

Tommy Ronaghan spoke of the importance of becoming more suicide aware. Tommy who highlighted the importance of the Suicide Prevention Training offered free of charge through CfL Donegal said **“most people with thoughts of suicide don’t truly want to die, the evidence shows us that they just want a different life. Individuals living and working in their communities and trained in suicide prevention can recognise invitations for help from those struggling with their mental health and take action by supporting people to connect with life-saving resources, supports and services.”**

Emotional support services in attendance at the event also included Grow, HSE SCAN and Pieta, Donegal Parent and Family Support Service, Family Resource Centre Network, Suicide Prevention Training, Pieta, Social Prescribers, ASCAIN, DTP, Letterkenny CDP, Foroige and the Mens Shed.

Are you, or someone you know, in crisis now and need someone to talk to? Please do not be alone. If you are worried about yourself or someone you know it is important to get help as soon as possible. Everyone needs help from time to time. Remember no feeling is final. Asking for help is a sign of personal strength.

Mental Health Supports available

Your first point of contact is your local GP. If it is late in the evening or at the weekend, contact your local out of hours doctor’s service:

Donegal NoWDOC: 0818 400 911

Emergency Department: Letterkenny University Hospital

Contact the Emergency Services on 999 or 112;

Call the Samaritans 24-hour Freephone listening service on 116 123; or visit www.samaritans.ie

Call the HSE YourMentalHealth Information Line, anytime day or night, for information on what other services and supports are available near you – Freephone **1800 111 888** or visit www.yourmentalhealth.ie

Visit www.mymind.org or www.turn2me.ie

Pieta, visit www.pieta.ie or Freephone **1800 247 247**.

To access further information on suicide prevention training please contact;

Ciara Wray Resource Officer for Suicide Prevention County Donegal

Ciara.wray@hse.ie

ENDS

Caption: Front Row Left to Right Fiona Tuomey- Dr Eve Griffin - Ciaran Mongan- Dr Christina Corbett - Ciara Wray- John Meehen - Tommy Ronaghan - Micheal Mongan - David Friel- Cora Mc Aleer- Frankie McGreavy, Edward Friel, Dr.John McArdle.

Back row: Kyle Warner, Grace Murphy, Ciaran Doyle, Grace Nugent, Cashir Doyle.

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