Press Release Tuesday January 26th 2016

55 Belfast hearts on steps of Stormont

Community suicide prevention groups working across the city of Belfast are holding a dignified event on the steps of Stormont today at 12.30pm to highlight loss across the city of Belfast to suicide.

In Belfast from 1st January to 31st December 2015, there were 55 deaths: 36 males and 19 females.

* 20 of those deaths were within North Belfast,
* 14 in South Belfast,
* 10 in West Belfast and
* 11 in East Belfast.

At this event Co-Chairs of the North & West Protect Life Implementation Group (PLIG) and South & East Belfast Communities of Interest (CoI) group will call on Stormont and its elected representatives to refocus hearts and minds on the topic of suicide prevention and mental health.

They will be lobbying for two specific items – firstly to call for a cross departmental working group at local level to be established. The second request is to meet with an All Party Group on Suicide Prevention.

Suicide in Belfast continues to be a chronic, unrelenting tragedy for communities and loved ones Irene Sherry Co-chair of North & West Belfast PLIG said.

“We know from information provided to us through the PSNI as part of the Community Response Planning process that there were 55 deaths by suicide in Belfast last year.

“Each of these hearts represents pain and loss for families, communities and those working to seek to prevent suicide. That’s why it’s more important than ever we have a more co-ordinated approach to suicide prevention so that we have a wider focus on the quality of life issues like deprivation, isolation, and poor mental health.”

Suicide prevention groups, staff and volunteers are working hard on the ground right across the city but a more strategic focus is needed Stephen Barr, Co-chair of South & East Belfast CoI added.

“We know all too well the good work, supported by government funding that has been done and is currently ongoing. There are good systems in place that work, and have undoubtedly saved lives. But we strongly feel a fresh approach is required and believe that a cross sectoral and cross departmental working group should be re-established,” Stephen Barr said.

“Suicide knows no boundaries. We will be speaking with a united voice of the sector and communities and advocating a united message. We are requesting support and believe we can go on to help more people reaching out in the best ways that are accessible, timely and appropriate.”

ENDS

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