

Minutes of the North Belfast District Policing and Community Safety Partnership

Public Meeting

Highfield Community Centre, Belfast
Wednesday 23rd March, 2016

Political Members

Alderman Patrick Convery
Councillor Mary Ellen Campbell
Councillor Mary Clarke

Independent Members

Michael Murray (Vice-Chair)
Jennifer Cornell
Catherine Patrick
Gerald Solinas

Designated Organisations

Inspector Roy Watton, PSNI
Sergeant Nick Williams, PSNI

Staff Present

Richard McLernon, Safer City Coordinator
Saranne Gallagher, Partnership Support Officer

Apologies

Councillor Guy Spence (Chair)
Patricia Muldoon, YJA

1. Welcome from the North Belfast DPCSP Vice Chair

- i. The Vice Chair welcomed Members, key speakers and members of the public to the North Belfast DPCSP Public Meeting on Suicide Prevention.

2. Suicide Prevention Discussion

- i. Ms. Irene Sherry from the Bridge of Hope, provided an overview of the ongoing work within North Belfast with regards to suicide prevention. She advised the group that there had been an increase in the number of suicides in North Belfast, a total of 20 to date (14 male and 6 female).
- ii. Ms. Sherry further highlighted to the meeting the most common factors that contributed to a person committing suicide. She further advised of the processes undertaken by the PSNI when they attend a sudden death.
- iii. Ms. Sherry provided details regarding the support mechanisms available to families who had suffered from death by suicide. She highlighted the importance of connecting with families and ensuring the message around resilience is voiced.
- iv. Ms. Roberta Coates who until recently worked for FASA provided an update regarding the Forum For Action on Substance Abuse (FASA) and the recent developments regarding their operational status.
- v. A member of the public asked which organisation(s) would be carrying out the services in the absence of FASA. Ms. Coates commented that services within the Shankill area would remain the same, and that she would be working on a voluntary basis until services are hopefully reinstated.
- vi. Mr. Philip McTaggart from Mindskills provided an overview of the work that he had been involved in regarding suicide prevention. He informed the Members of the importance of maintaining a positive mental health and for politicians to play a more

active role in supporting mental health. He further commented that there had been a need to work with local schools to help build a level of resilience and confidence in young people.

- vii. Sergeant Nick Williams informed the group of the role of the PSNI when they are called to a sudden death. He highlighted that during the last year there had been a rise in the total number of suicides in North Belfast.
- viii. Sergeant Williams advised of the warning signs and the risk factors associated with suicide. He commented that there is no typical person who commits suicide. He highlighted the importance of recognising signs of a person who may be considering committing suicide and how people should not be afraid to avail of the services available.

3. Discussion

- i. A member of the public commented that recent research highlighted that people who had been directly affected by conflict were more likely to commit suicide.
- ii. Ms. Sherry agreed that recent research showed that people who suffered from conflict also suffered from mental health issues. She further commented that additional research should be undertaken to analyse mental health and how mental health impacts on a person committing suicide.
- iii. Ms. Sherry provided an overview of mental health hubs. She informed the group of how the mental health hubs work and the benefit of them.
- iv. A member of the public asked how referrals are made to the mental health hubs. Ms. Sherry replied that all referrals are made through a doctor.
- v. A member of the public asked where should people be signposted to in the absence of FASA. Ms. Coates advised that people should contact organisations such as New Life, Lighthouse and Lifeline in the absence of FASA. She further commented that she had been hopeful that services offered by FASA should be operational soon.

4. Close

- i. Inspector Roy Watton thanked Highfield Community Centre for hosting the public event and welcomed the discussion around suicide prevention. He also thanked local community organisations for their efforts regarding services being offered in relation to suicide prevention. He also wished FASA good luck with their attempts of remaining operational.
- ii. The Safer City Coordinator advised members of the public that North Belfast DPCSP had been working with a number of local groups to deliver projects on suicide prevention.
- iii. The Vice Chair thanked the keynote speakers for their informative discussion around suicide prevention. He further thanked members of the public for their attendance and closed the meeting.