



# The Family Voice

*Guth an Teaghlaigh*

## Family Support Network Newsletter

December 2012

## Coordinator's Welcome Note

On behalf of the Family Support Network I wish you all a peaceful Christmas and New Year. We have held numerous events in 2012, most recently the Annual Work Conference and the cross party briefing to members of the Oireachtas. I would like to thank you all for your participation and support for these two events. Our evaluation of the Annual Work Conference will be distributed to our members in the New Year. As with our Annual Work Conference we were delighted with the high turn out at the cross party briefing and this was as a direct result of the letters that you

wrote to your local TDs and Senators.

Finally the Family Support Network would like to extend our condolences to all of the family members who have lost a loved one through drug use and to those groups who have lost members during 2012. Our thoughts are with all of you grieving the loss of a loved one while facing the Christmas period and we dedicate the poem below to all of you.

Best wishes,

*Sadie Grace*

### Useful Links

[HSE National Lottery Respite Grants](#)

[Family Support Network Facebook Page](#)

## In Remembrance

### I will wait for you...

*I will wait for you...  
Though we never had a chance to say  
goodbye,  
Remember me...  
When winter snows are falling through a  
quiet sky  
I'll remember you  
When, in our darkest hour,  
You held my hand and prayed I wouldn't go,  
But a silent voice called out to me;  
My time had come, and I had to travel  
Home...  
Since then, I know your life has never been  
the same,  
For I visit you each day:  
So many times I've felt your pain:*

*I've watched you cry:  
And I've heard you call my name...*

*But now, further along life's road I stand  
In a timeless world, just beyond your sight,  
Waiting for the day when I can take your  
hand and bring you across  
to this land of Golden Light...*

*Till then, remember me, you understand - and  
try not to cry.*

*But if you do:  
Let your tears fall  
For the happiness and joy we knew,  
And for the special love we shared,  
For love can never die.*

*Stephen O'Brien*

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## FSN Annual Work Conference 2012

The 2012 Family Support Network Annual Work Conference was held on the 24th of November in the Green Isle Hotel in Clondalkin. It was attended by 429 people from across Ireland.

The conference included six plenary speakers attending from Ireland, Northern, Ireland and the United Kingdom including guest speaker Emeritus Professor Jim Orford, Clinical and Community Psychology, University of Birmingham, and member of the Alcohol, Drug and Family Research Group. The plenary session touched on the experiences of members across the family spectrum, from children to grandparents. Perspectives on innovative models for working with families provided attendees with resources to drive their work in their own families and their communities.

The conference was carefully organised and planned to ensure a mix of information and training, holistic therapies, networking opportunities, social activities and respite for all participants. The range of workshops gave much needed information, support and an opportunity for family members to discuss crucial topics such as addiction dilemmas, CRAFT, 5-Step method with young people, legal rights, new drugs and latest trends and overdose prevention. Many participants also enjoyed holistic therapies including healing massage, guided meditation, yoga, shiatsu, relaxation and health and wellbeing samplers. There was great appreciation for the gala dinner and the opportunity to dance and socialise leaving all cares behind for the weekend.

An evaluation of the day was carried out using surveys and interviews with participants on the day. The following are highlights from the evaluation:

### ***The Conference***

People from 15 different counties attended; 87% of attendees were women and 13% men.

The vast majority of participants at the conference were family members, while a significant number of facilitators and other professionals attended.

The majority of participants at the conference said that they found the information & learning and the networking opportunities the most useful facets of the conference.

100% of attendees would recommend the conference to others. Almost 90% stated that the conference had 'absolutely met all of their expectations'.

Over 90% of attendees said the conference was 'good' or 'excellent' in each facet named: the speakers, training workshops, opportunities to learn and network, overall organization and the venue and food.

### ***The Family Support Network***

There was 100% agreement that the FSN played a vital, central role in representing the needs of families at a national level. The role of the conference was also seen as important in encouraging and maintaining a national presence on the issue of families and substance misuse.

When asked where they would go should they have a child protection concern, the vast majority of respondents said FSG/FSN was the first port of call for information and support. A larger number identified a role for FSN in ensuring FSGs have appropriate information and resources.

## Launch of the SWFSN Family Support Starter Pack



*Pictured above Minister Alex White presenting a Candle of Hope, to members of the Ellen family support group.*

The South Western FSN launched their Family Support starter pack on Thursday 29<sup>th</sup> November in Naas, Co. Kildare. The launch started a day of activities including a seminar, networking dinner, open meeting and holistic evening.

Alex White, Minister for Primary Care with responsibility for the National Drug Strategy formally launched **The Family Support Group Starter Pack**, which was designed with the support of the FSN and family members from the Ellen family support group, Halo Parents support group and the You are Not Alone group from Carlow.

The Family Support Group Starter Pack contains a number of practical resources to support the development of a family support group. The pack includes leaflets, posters, a website and texting service,

which enable promotion and outreach to families caught up in substance misuse. The pack also provides the essential tea/coffee, mugs, information factsheets, candle of hope and of course tissues as well as a consultancy and development package to support the development of a family support group within the South Western Region.

The South Western FSN would like to thank everyone who supported the event with a special thanks to Megan and Sadie (FSN), Breda and Angela (SERFSN), and for the contributions and support from the You are Not Alone Support group in Carlow and the East Coast FSN.

This project was made possible with funds from Dormant Accounts.



*Pictured above Sadie Grace (FSN) Steven Joyce (SWRDTF) presenting Caroline and Stella with flowers on behalf of the South Western FSN in recognition for all their input.*

## Cross Party Briefing 2012

The Family Support Network, on the invitation of Mary Lou McDonald, T.D. held a cross party briefing to members of the Oireachtas in Leinster House on the 17th of October 2012. This event was attended by over 40 T.D.s and Senators.

At the Cross Party Briefing an overview of the work of the FSN was provided and the value of peer led family support groups was highlighted. The FSN also made presentations on the issue of the intimidation of families as a result of drug related debt and the needs of kinship carers. Dr. Suzi Lyons of the Health Research Board

presented the most recent findings of the National Drug Related Deaths Index.

The FSN sent out a pre-budget reminder to all T.D.s and Senators urging them not to support any cuts that would have a severe impact on the lives of family members living with substance misuse. The FSN emphasised to our public representative that this would only threaten the opportunity for rehabilitation for the person dependent on drugs or alcohol and deepen the impact of substance misuse that families currently experience.

## Drugs Corner

**Trevor Bisset , CAD**

### Heroin

Few illegal drugs have caused the harm that heroin has. One study suggested that it is the most harmful illegal drug available ahead of substances such as crack-cocaine and methamphetamine (Drug Harms in the UK, Lancet 2010). This drug devastates individuals, families and communities. The most recent survey suggested that there are about fifteen thousand heroin users in Ireland (Drug Use in Ireland, NACD, 2005)

Heroin is what is known as an opiate which has strong pain killing qualities. Users of heroin identify intense relaxation and euphoria to be the main effects of heroin. After the initial rush, the relaxing effects of heroin can last for varying amounts of time depending on the purity of the substance used. The drug is highly addictive and can take a huge toll on those who become addicted. At a community level many users are forced in to criminal activity in order to fund their addiction.

Whilst heroin in its pure form does not pose a huge threat to health there are various health risks associated with its use. Among these is overdose, contraction of disease and bacterial infections or abscesses. Heroin is especially dangerous when mixed with other drugs such as alcohol and benzodiazepines.

Whilst the official number of users stands at about fifteen thousand, this can be multiplied many times when one considers the effects on the family. At the family level heroin can cause huge disruption. It leads to the breakdown of relationships, causes financial strains and can leave families feeling stigmatised and struggling to cope.



### Service of Commemoration and Hope 2013

The Service of Commemoration and Hope will be held on the 1st of February 2013 in the church of Our Lady of Lourdes, Seán McDermott Street. The service will begin at 7:30p.m. and there will be a social event following the Service in the Gresham Hotel.

A member of staff from the FSN will be collecting the quilts from family support groups based in Dublin on the 18th of January. If you would like us to collect your quilt on this date please ring the office to let us know on (01) 8365 168. Alternatively groups are welcome to

drop off or post their quilts to the Network office before this date. We are looking forward to seeing you in the New Year.



**DO YOU OR SOMEBODY YOU KNOW NEED SUPPORT?**

Call us on 01 –836 5168, We are here to help