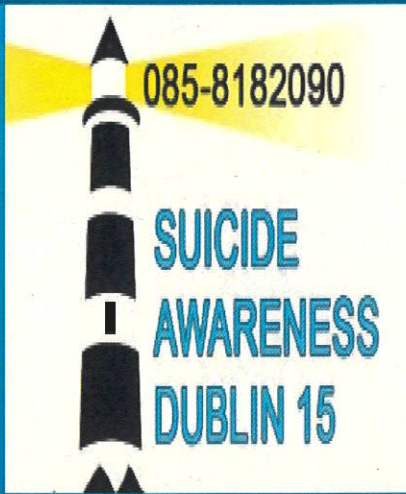


# Suicide Awareness D15 Annual Report 2021



If you think you would like to contact our service for assistance, to hear more about our work, or to help out in any way, please feel free to contact us at any time.

On 0858182090

Or on our  page

These brave lads ran 4 miles every 4 hours for 48 hrs in support of Suicide Awareness D15  
Many thanks from all the team



## Suicide Awareness D15: Here to help



*Speaking to someone about our troubling inner thoughts is very difficult for most people. When our thoughts continuously go around and round in our heads in the form of self-criticism or self-doubt, they can grind us down so that we cannot function properly throughout the day and we may find it difficult to sleep at night. At this point you should speak to someone you trust*

### Client comment

*"Suicide Awareness D15 is a safe port in the storm. A small part of the world where my voice and feelings can be heard in a professional and non-judgemental space. I would encourage anybody to make the call, I promise you, it's the best thing I have done."*

### What we do:

*We meet {at a time and place that best suits you}*

*We listen {with understanding and in confidence}*

*We support {we provide additional support if needed}*

The work of Suicide Awareness D15 is overseen by a voluntary steering group that meets bi-monthly to insure the efficient management and proper governance of the service.

### Steering Group Members

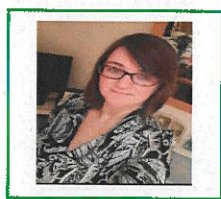
Lillian Parker:  
*Chair*



Suzanne Philips:  
*Vice Chair*



Catherine Kavanagh:  
*Treasurer*



Lorna Nolan:  
*Secretary*



Philip Jennings,  
Safer Blanchardstown:  
*Admin Support.*



## **Forward:**

**At last we seem to be coming out of Covid19 restrictions and we can return to face to face meetings in 2022. However, throughout 2021 restrictions continued to impact our work which meant we held only a limited amount of face to face meetings with the majority being phone contacts.**

As our supporters will know, Suicide Awareness D15 has been operating for the past 12 years providing support and guidance to those who have been bereaved by suicide, those thinking of self-harm and people suffering from high levels of anxiety due to sudden bereavement or suicide ideation. We also promote and raise awareness of the complex and challenging issues surrounding suicide. Our service operates across the wider Dublin 15 area.

Suicide Awareness D15 is a volunteer led group with volunteers drawn from people from our community who give up their time to be trained and to volunteer on a daily or weekly basis to support those in need in Dublin15.

All our volunteers are trained and have received ASSIST, Safe Talk and Living Links training, they are also trained to man our 24-hour phone line. In addition, Suicide Awareness D15 have engaged the services of a qualified counsellor who is available to us should people need her services.

Although we host our own fundraising events throughout the year, we are very grateful to the many individuals and groups who fundraise on our behalf, in the main, without any formal request to do so.

We also have several "Friends" who fundraise on an annual and regular basis on behalf of Suicide Awareness D15 whose generous support allows us to continue and expand, where necessary, our vital support.

We would like to extend our gratitude and thanks to all our supporters big and small.

***The following short report has been prepared in recognition of our responsibility to inform our sponsors and the wider community of the work carried out by Suicide Awareness D15 and to account in detail for funding gratefully received.***

*Lillian Parker: Chairperson*

## **Our service:**

It is important to stress that Suicide Awareness D15 *is not a counselling service*.

The main work of Suicide Awareness D15 is to be a local point of contact and a supportive link for people who have been bereaved by suicide or who are thinking of self-harm and to signpost them to available services.

Another important aspect of the work of Suicide Awareness D15 is to heighten knowledge within the community of the various issues surrounding suicide and to promote discussion around those issues.

Volunteers meet with people who contact the service via the phone line, who were referred by family, friends and others and those who walk in from the street.

Some of these people may be in crisis and in need of immediate counselling support. Unfortunately, it is not always possible to obtain immediate support as national services such as Pieta House have waiting lists and it may take up to four weeks for a person to be seen. This is where Suicide Awareness D15 use the services of our local counsellor who can support a person until they can get into mainstream counselling.

Some people who contact the service are in such crisis that they need to go directly to A&E and seek the professional assistance of the psychiatric unit of Connolly Hospital. On a number of occasions our volunteers have accompanied people to the hospital and sat for many hours encouraging the person in crisis to stay until they are seen by the on-call psychiatrist.

People often contact Suicide Awareness D15 as a result of experiencing a bereavement by suicide. Some people can talk of their experiences, doubts, fear and anger very soon after losing a loved one to suicide. For others it may take many years, but the feelings are just as raw no matter the length of time it takes for those feelings to surface. Our volunteers will meet with and listen to those who wish to speak of their experiences or express their concerns over a cup of tea at a venue of their choosing. This aspect of our work, which may be the initial step to entering counselling has been found to be especially supportive of people's needs.

***“The Suicide Awareness group saved my life, they were there when I needed somebody to listen and hear how I was feeling” Client comment***

Our phone service is manned as much as possible but is generally available from 7:00am to 12 midnight 7 days a week 52 weeks per year. Suicide Awareness D15 have been contacted by people living in many counties in Ireland seeking information and assistance. Although we can only provide support within the D15 area we will always guide callers to services nearer to home.

## **Awareness Raising:**

The issues surrounding suicide are very difficult for people to speak about and many fear mentioning the word "SUICIDE" in case it may be somehow infectious. In order to reduce such fear and to raise awareness of both the issues surrounding suicide and the supports available from Suicide Awareness Dublin 15 we would normally have embarked on a schedule of awareness raising. This aspect of our work would involve manning information stands, providing Suicide Prevention educational programmes, attending and speaking at functions, events and groups and distributing information leaflets and posters. Unfortunately, this year Covid19 has prevented us from engaging with this aspect of our work.

**"Talking about your feelings can help you stay in good mental health and deal with times when you feel troubled. Talking about your feelings is not a sign of weakness. It's part of taking charge of your wellbeing and doing what you can to stay healthy".**

## **Contacts with service in past 12 months**

### **Counselling:**

SAD15 provided a counselling service to a total of 43 people over 89 sessions from January 2021 to December 2021. People seeking the services of Suicide Awareness D15 came from every area of D15 and from all backgrounds. The 43 people who sought out our service were made up of 18 female and 25 males with an age range of 22 to 51 years of age. The average amount of sessions was 3 with some people needing as many as 5 sessions. There are a wide range of issues which affect our service users but in the main they relate to loss through suicide, anxiety and depression combined with thoughts of self-harm and suicide.

### **Phone Calls Received**

We had roughly 800 phone calls throughout 2021. Like in 2020, some calls were from Counties outside Dublin looking for information which was provided by volunteers. People were looking for the correct procedures to follow in cases where loved ones were suicidal and this included both children and adults. Appropriate information on support services was provided to all who requested it from SAD15.

### **Face to face meetings:**

Unfortunately, Covid19 prevented face to face meeting from taking place except for 2 socially distanced one to one meetings which were deemed necessary.

### **Assisted hospital visits:**

Covid19 rules around hospital visits prevented us from providing this service during 2020



### **Acknowledgements:**

**Suicide Awareness Dublin 15 works with a wide range of people with a variety of needs and people who contact the service need a wide assortment of responses.**

**These responses could be just a welcome listening ear at the end of the phone, a quiet and comforting support over a cup of tea, an anxious rush to the hospital or in-depth one to one counselling sessions.**

**None of this work would be possible if it were not for the generous support received from a wide variety of individuals and groups from across our community.**

**On behalf of all the people we support and work with, Suicide Awareness Dublin 15 would like to thank all our sponsors and anyone who contributed to the service in any way, big or small throughout 2021.**



**Financial Report:**

**Income & Expenditure Report Suicide Awareness Dublin 15 2021**

Date	Jan	Feb	Mar	April	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Closing Balance
Opening Balance	€ 14,421.29	€ 20,137.08	€ 21,547.81	€ 21,629.17	€ 25,154.35	€ 26,327.78	€ 31,969.18	€ 37,701.19	€ 37,720.63	€ 38,904.94	€ 33,885.97	€ 35,085.22	€ 36,052.74
Spencer'ship/Fund raiser	€ 5,734.11	€ 1,427.00	€ 753.14	€ 3,552.79	€ 1,190.69	€ 5,684.29	€ 5,750.00	€ 487.00	€ 1,208.00		€ 1,219.20	€ 1,000.00	
Donations	€ 5,734.11	€ 1,427.00	€ 753.14	€ 3,552.79	€ 1,190.69	€ 5,684.29	€ 5,750.00	€ 487.00	€ 1,208.00	€ -	€ 1,219.20	€ 1,000.00	€ 28,006.22
Total Receipts	€ 5,734.11	€ 1,427.00	€ 753.14	€ 3,552.79	€ 1,190.69	€ 5,684.29	€ 5,750.00	€ 487.00	€ 1,208.00	€ -	€ 1,219.20	€ 1,000.00	€ 28,006.22
Payments													
Bank Fees			€ 5.65			€ 5.94		€ 5.71			€ 5.48		€ 22.78
Insurance			€ 648.09										€ 648.09
Vodafone	€ 18.32	€ 16.27	€ 18.04	€ 27.61	€ 17.26	€ 36.95	€ 17.99	€ 17.56	€ 17.98	€ 18.97	€ 19.95	€ 27.00	€ 253.90
Petty Cash								€ 450.00					€ 1,650.00
Training													€ -
T-Shirts/jackets													€ 3,800.00
Office Rent													€ -
Other													€ -
Total Payments	€ 18.32	€ 16.27	€ 671.78	€ 27.61	€ 17.26	€ 42.89	€ 17.99	€ 467.56	€ 23.69	€ 5,018.97	€ 19.95	€ 32.48	€ 6,374.77

# The Loop



The difference between the mind and the brain is hard to determine or explain. Where does the brain end? Where does the mind begin? are very good questions that are hard to answer. When we look at photos of the human brain, we can see that it is a large grey muscle full of lumps and bumps. It's not very pretty to look at, that's for sure, but it is within this muscle that our mind is located.

While we can see the human brain, we cannot see the human mind, and this is what makes it very hard to describe. To locate your own mind within your brain you only have to be aware of the internal conversations you hold with yourself when planning an event or recalling some piece of information or past experience. This internal conversation takes place within your mind.

Our internal voice helps us make various decisions throughout the day and to make sense of the world around us. Our internal voice helps us to think about what we have seen, heard or experienced, how we felt at the time, and whether to immediately forget or store these experiences in particular places in our brain/memory in order for us to best recall and remember them in the future. This is what may be described as our thought process: how we think about things or more commonly, our thoughts.

Our brain is the storehouse for all our thoughts which are stored as memories and, very importantly, our brain associates particular emotions with each of these memories/thoughts. For example, a memory of getting a hug from your mother when you were a child may be very comforting and fill you with warm feelings and happy memories. Memories can also fill us with anxiety and a sense of dread, for example, "I'm going to tell your father when he gets home". Waiting anxiously for an imagined punishment can be very stressful indeed and such memories, when recalled, may produce anxious feelings even into adulthood.

So, our memories and thoughts are strongly linked to particular emotions. It's as if there is a person in our head waiting to hear our thoughts, linking them to memories and then pulling on the appropriate lever that releases a flood of emotional feeling (a chemical reaction, positive or negative) associated with those memories, into our bodies which in turn causes a physical sensation. This happens so fast, almost instantaneously, that we perceive and experience the memory/feeling/reaction to be a single physical sensation.



**Short exercise:**

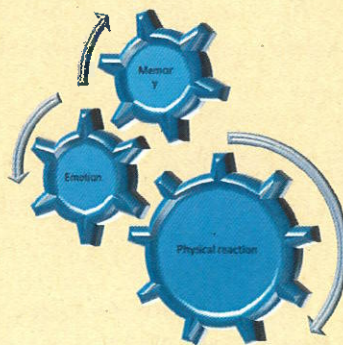
Try to remember a happy or pleasant event (hug from your Mam) and note the physical feelings and sensations that take place within your body.

Now try to recall an anxious or sad event (Threat of your Dad) and note the physical feelings and sensations that take place within your body.

The simple exercise above will show that if we recall pleasant experiences, we will become relaxed, feel happy and get a bit of a glow within our bodies and generally (if experienced in the evening before bedtime) these feelings will assist us in having a very restful sleep. Whereas if we recall unpleasant experiences, we may feel anxious, get a little knot in our tummy and generally feel a bit down. Should we persist in recalling such unpleasant experiences into evening time, then we will find it hard to get to sleep and may find that we wake early in the morning and feel tired throughout the day due to restless sleep.

In this way we can easily understand how our recalled experiences affects us **physically**. In other words, our mind is not a separate unexplainable mystical part of our existence, it is linked and tied, since birth, to our **physical body** through our stored memories and linked feelings, what could be described as a **“Memory-Emotion-Physical Loop”** or simply **“The Loop”**. In this way our overall **Wellbeing** is affected by our memories and associated emotions. So rather than separating our mental health from our physical health we should see both as being a natural part of our bodily **Wellbeing**.

Simply put, pleasant memories can relax us, and unpleasant memories can make us anxious. When worried or anxious a person may find it difficult to think about something else, find it hard to concentrate on any single task. The object of worry may keep on popping into a person’s head without any prompting or conscious thought, producing stress and anxiety at times when a quiet moment presents itself. A stressed person would probably find it hard to sleep, relax, read or watch a favourite TV programme, things we would normally associate with relaxation. For some people the **“The Loop”** is so persistent and constant in their lives that they learn to cope with and hide the very distressing **physical** state that is constantly damaging their overall **Wellbeing**.



**Figure 1.** Representation of *The Loop* showing how memories, emotions and physical reactions are interconnected.

These **memory-emotion-physical-loops** are wired together and can make it difficult for us to think clearly and rationally. So, the thought brings up an emotion and the emotion causes a physical reaction that *Loop's* back to the thought which reinforces the emotion etc. etc. and this is how people often describe the experience as "*the thoughts just keep going around and round in my head and I can't stop them ...no matter how much I try*". For those who are thinking of self-harm the *Loop* is so strong, they struggle to cope. They often learn to hide their distress and appear to be living a "normal" life and some can't seem to find a way out of their misery, which is being constantly reinforced by their internal voice.

### Case Study: *The Loop*

I love my family and would never do anything to hurt them, but I could never tell them how I am feeling almost all the time, I get some respite from time to time but it never lasts long. They cannot understand how I feel not connected or unable to connect with anyone, feeling not loved or cared for, how I feel less than everybody else. Kind of like living in a bubble made of one way glass, I can see out, but no one can see in. Where you can see and hear everybody around you, those close to you (Mam, Dad, Brothers, Sisters and Friends) but can never make a connection, an emotional connection that is. Even though I am never treated differently to anybody else, I can never or never had the ability, to make an emotional connection that makes me feel whole.

I do, of course, laugh with everyone else, join in whatever fun is going on, even on occasion, be the life and soul of the party, but always inside the bubble. It's as if my body is there, but my mind is not, I play the part but can never feel a part of any social gathering big or small. It's like looking through a window.

The almost constant internal dialogue is worst of all, and the feeling, it's the feeling, the debilitating feeling of loneliness, of wanting to cry but never doing so...fear of having to explain why or having to expose this weakness of mine stops me, not believing anyone would or could understand stops me, how can they, they aren't me, they can never understand. The stomach-churning painful feeling of un-connectedness never leaves, it's always there when I wake in the morning, throughout the day and while trying to sleep at night.

The feeling of dread, of impending implosion, of breaking down, tension, constant tension, sometimes more sometimes less but almost always a constant internal tension driven by an internal conversation that just keeps going around and round in my head. Never positive always negative. Sometimes it's like your soul is going to snap, break in half and then... well I don't know. Will I end up in the nut house, be ridiculed by everyone or worse, pitied. Sometimes I think people do know or they guess something may be bothering me, and then my paranoia kicks in, are they talking about me when I'm not there? Are they pitying me or sniggering at me? It's like living in a dark prison cell of constant despair with only the dark circling clouds of a tropical storm of thoughts as my tormenting companion, ever swirling deeper and darker with relentless physical pressure...../

As mentioned above *The Loop* can be pleasant and calming. But when it is harmful to our *Wellbeing* through becoming a strong negative *Loop*, so strong in fact, it is physically damaging our *Wellbeing*, we need to recognise that it is broken and needs fixing.

Just as a person may go to the hospital to get a cut hand, broken finger or leg or any number of physical injuries fixed.....there is a way to break the damaging spiral of the negative *Loop*

**Admit** to yourself *The Loop* is preventing you from sleeping, connecting, concentrating, laughing, liking, loving, living.....

**Admit** to yourself the negative *Loop* is having a powerful damaging effect on your **Wellbeing** that can be fixed just like any other physical injury.

**Admit** to yourself that this negative *Loop*, if not sorted, may lead to self-harm

**Acknowledge** that the first steps will be tender, difficult to take, short and unsteady, that you will need to be strong.

**Know** that once the first step is taken the following steps will become easier and easier.

**Understand** that there are ways to change a negative *Loop* into a positive *Loop* which will relieve the pressure and restore your **Wellbeing**

Seek help. **Talk**..... to a parent, friend, doctor, brother, sister, teacher or a stranger (Counsellor, one of the help or awareness groups in your area, outside your area or online). Remember, brooding fuels the flames of despair and talking douses those flames.

People who are living in a bubble should forget about mental health and realise what they are going through is a physical response to stored memories of past experiences that are damaging their **Wellbeing**. These responses happen so fast that it's hard to know which comes first the emotion or the thought?

Parents, family and friends can never know how a person feels living in a one way bubble...they can't see in.....they must be allowed to peek in, in order for them to understand.

Should a person continue to live inside a bubble then parents, family, friends and strangers can never know how the negative *Loop* is affecting that person.

Should a person's pain be highlighted through the shock of self-harm then those closest to them should not feel guilt, remorse or self-blame. They should not go through a process of self-interrogation, take on guilt or become a tortured soul because they could not see inside a bubble.....they should have been allowed or invited in and they were not.

If you feel like you are living in a bubble remember; The longest journey begins with the first small step.

Take the first small step, seek out someone you can trust and open the door slightly, let them peek in and allow yourself to find your inner strength

By slowly.....But surely..... turning the negative *Loop* Into a positive *Loop* Thereby restoring your **Wellbeing** and finding.....inner peace...



Philip Jennings; June 2021

