

Manifesto

2022

LIGHT)(HOUSE
"A beacon of hope"

Lighthouse Manifesto for Suicide Prevention 2022

The number of lives lost to suicide in Northern Ireland increased by more than 30% in the four years up to 2020. In 2020, 198 people took their own lives which was up from 149 in 2016. Figures for January to March 2021 showed that 71 people died by suicide over this period in Northern Ireland.

The increased mental health burden associated with the COVID-19 pandemic is likely to be profound and felt for many years. Staff and services have had to work under even greater pressure, and in new ways.

Demand for mental health services continues to increase and is anticipated to continue to rise after the pandemic subsides.

Lighthouse is an organisation committed to the prevention of suicide, the promotion of positive mental health and the provision of support services to individuals and families who have been bereaved due to suicide.

The organisation was established in 2003 as a community response to a community problem – the exceptionally high incidences of suicide in North Belfast. The organisation has undergone various stages of growth and change during this time; however, the vision of the organisation remains unchanged:

‘To be recognised as a beacon of hope, saving lives and creating a brighter future.’ We realise that this vision is everyone’s business, and all politicians have a part to play in saving lives, whether that’s by influencing party policy, pushing for change in their constituency, or keeping the issue on the agenda in the Northern Ireland Assembly.

Lighthouse have developed a Strategic Plan for 2022-2025. The plan reflects the future direction and focus of our work over the next three years.

We feel that it is very timely with our new strategy and with the elections coming up in May to highlight major areas of concern and asking that our political leaders commit to addressing these issues.

We must invest in mental health

Our political parties agreed on the Mental Health Strategy seen as the road map to reform our mental health services. However, and in particular with the predicted mental health aftermaths from the pandemic, to deliver real change for people with mental illness requires political will from everyone.

Without funding like that proposed by our Mental Health Champion (£1.2 Billion over the next 10 years), the road map will go nowhere.

We ask the next mandate to fully implement and fund the commitments made in the Mental Health Strategy.

Provide speedy access to mental wellbeing support within communities across Northern Ireland, without the need for referral

It can often take too long and the process can be complex to get help for a mental health problem, particularly today with the increases in referrals partly due to the pandemic. The problem can then intensify unnecessarily. Early intervention is essential to ensure that people with mental health issues can have the support they need and deserve to live healthy lives.

Additionally, we should examine the pathway referral mechanisms to enhance and nurture effective transfers between the statutory and voluntary/community agencies for the benefit of clients.

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We ask the next mandate to include mental health reforms in the overarching health transformation to streamline support services.

Continue to understand the drivers of suicide and means restriction, and in particular medicine management and online harms in Northern Ireland

Work alongside key partners and educational research experts to understand the complex ranges of suicidal causes and develop our prevention strategies accordingly and see programmes such as Protect Life 2 continue to have longevity in support and funding after 2024.

We ask the next mandate to establish a co-produced, co-designed, cross-departmental working group to garner the local intelligence that can help develop successful suicide prevention strategies and continue to support programmes such as Protect Life 2.

Noone bereaved by suicide should go without support

Losing a loved one to suicide shatters our sense of a predictable world. The complex grief that follows may include intense emotions or unexpected challenges.

We ask the next mandate to prioritise mental health and suicide prevention and in line with the Programme for Government Outcome that ‘We all enjoy long, healthy, active lives.’

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