

# PIPS SUICIDE PREVENTION IRELAND Newsletter

SPRING 2021

## New Mental Health Support Service Launches in Enniskillen and Derry City

PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland (PIPS Charity) have launched a new face to face mental health service for people experiencing mental health or emotional wellbeing difficulties.

People of all ages will be able to access support, free of charge, from the PIPS Counselling team at ASDA Enniskillen Community rooms and at the Playhouse in Derry City centre.

PIPS Counselling services aims to promote positive mental health and emotional wellbeing to support clients "to move from surviving to thriving," Renee Quinn, Executive Director said. "We firmly believe there should be no financial or administrative barriers for clients to receive excellent mental health care. Because PIPS services can be accessed quickly, clients are likely to get better much more quickly and are less likely to develop serious difficulties or need more intensive and expensive mental health services later."

The service has been operating in the Belfast area for nearly 20 years with excellent results and has always ensured that people receive the right support at the right time and don't need to wait unnecessarily on long waiting lists. PIPS is a community based charity that supports and promotes positive mental health for anyone who has been affected by suicide or self-harm. PIPS services are for people who are experiencing depression, grief

and loss, loneliness, anxiety, low self-esteem, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, anger, stress, suicidal ideation, self-harming or abuse issues. We also support children with their emotional and behavioural issues.

PIPS Charity strives to combat the high levels of suicide throughout the various communities in Ireland by providing help and support to those families bereaved through a suicide or self-harm. Staff deliver suicide prevention and bereavement support services, one to one counselling, befriending services and advocacy support.

The current coronavirus situation has increased the demand placed on emergency services and we believe that we can provide a prompt solution to address this and to ensure those in mental distress are able to easily access the help they need.

PIPS Charity is always there for someone to contact when a person might feel vulnerable, might be at risk of suicidal behaviours or is simply in need of emotional support. PIPS is their light in the dark. Individuals can refer themselves into our services, you don't need a GP or Hospital referral letter. This means that we can provide services more efficiently and more quickly. In addition to providing this immediate support PIPS Charity also provide a range of bespoke training programmes

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## PIPS PEOPLE

### Meet our new Executive Director

Hello and welcome to the latest edition of PIPS newsletter. I have been in post since August 2020 and the last eight months have been both challenging and rewarding.

I come to PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland with 20 plus years' experience from the public, private and charity sector. I have gained experience across Local and Central Government, Women's, Housing, Mental Health, Carer's, as well as private sectors. I am a professionally trained Chartered Environmental Health Practitioner and Chartered Manager with many years' experience in Public Health and Housing. I have always been motivated by trying to improve the quality of people's lives in whatever sphere I have worked or volunteered in. I have held roles developing projects, partnerships and people across Operations, Finance, IT, HR, Marketing, Programmes and Events and I thrive in leading with a positive leadership style. I am extremely versatile with a creative approach to problem solving and strategy development. I have studied extensively throughout my career starting with a BSc(Hons) degree in Environmental Health, Diploma in Industrial Studies, Advanced Diploma in Management Practice and a Master's in Business Administration (MBA) all through Ulster University.

The Covid 19 Pandemic has seen PIPS deal with an increasing demand for services, as a result we have been able to recruit and extend our outreach services into Enniskillen and Derry City along with two new Child and Youth Counsellors and two Art Therapists. I am delighted to welcome these very professional, able, compassionate and caring new members to the PIPS team, they will work alongside and complement the work of our Care Team Manager, Administration staff, befrienders and students. In this exceptional year PIPS has not been seen wanting, we have risen to meet the challenges faced by our clients and with our Care team always going the extra mile, we ensure that we bring the hope and light to as many clients as we can and have extended our opening hours at our Belfast office to accommodate more client sessions.

Whilst we have not been able to carry out traditional fundraising events due to the pandemic, virtual events took place during the



year, right across these islands, with donations very gratefully received from a wide range of companies, members of the public and families' touched by suicide or self-harm. Financially, PIPS is dependent on those donations and I am pleased to report that we manage all donations and resources in an effective and prudent manner, which enables us to continue our vital, lifesaving work and extend our services to those clients in need. We remain committed to responding to client needs and we are deeply grateful for the continued support and involvement of our community in helping us.

My academic and practical experience has enabled me to dedicate my skills to enabling people, teams and organisations and to help them discover their strengths and develop approaches to make a positive impact in all that they do, which is also seen and felt. I am passionate about contributing to making the lives of others and the world around us better, I see my role as Executive Director of PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland Charity assisting PIPS to ensure we have a world free from suicide.

Since joining the team I know that working together we will be instrumental in ensuring PIPS Charity is a sustainable organisation, that is agile and responsive to community and client needs, now and well into the future. We are very fortunate to have such a dedicated team of professionals, volunteers and students who help ensure the smooth running of our services. I am deeply grateful for the continued support and involvement of our community in helping us. I want to thank our sponsors for their generosity both financially and in other ways. Our services provide excellent value for money but without the public support we could not deliver the range and quality of services on offer. Together we can continue to provide a first class service and continue to ensure PIPS' success for many more years to come.

I am a busy mum to two children and a dog. In my spare time, I love drinking coffee and frequenting coffee shops and I try to find some time being creative with crafts, painting and DIY. I enjoy socializing and live music concerts which helps my eclectic tastes in music.

With my best wishes,

**Renée Quinn,**

Executive Director, PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland (PIPS Charity)

## PIPS IN THE COMMUNITY

continued from page 1 ►

### PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland reaches out to Enniskillen and L'Derry providing a new mental health counselling service

which raise awareness and provide individuals with intervention tools and knowledge on topics such as suicide prevention, self-harm, eating disorders, self-care and befriending. To date, these programmes have been delivered throughout Northern Ireland to a wide range of groups, including coaches, secondary school students, universities, charities, community activists and a range of private businesses.

We're extremely lucky to be supported by many communities over the years. We as a charity do not receive any government funding, so we are kept open and functioning by every person who generously donates to us. We rely solely on donations from local businesses and communities, from individuals and from grants. People have carried out numerous events and fundraising activities over the years, giving us the vital funds that allow us to keep our doors open, which allows us to continue providing these necessary life-saving services.

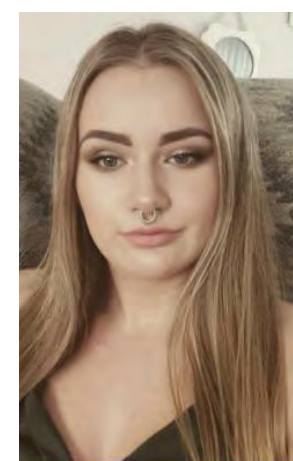
As the demand for our services continues to grow, the community support and belief in our services has never waned and it is only through the generosity of members of the public and sponsors that we are able to continue our services and now expand our services into the Enniskillen and Derry City areas.

Here at PIPS, we can guarantee that families who have lost loved ones and people in crisis will always be at the heart of our work and their needs will always remain paramount in our service delivery. PIPS Charity believes that the people of Enniskillen and Derry should receive mental health support at the time that they need it and PIPS works hard to remove the barriers to people receiving the support they need – like long waiting times or lack of information and guidance.

"Here at PIPS Suicide Prevention Charity we are taking significant steps to broaden our reach across Northern Ireland to better support the mental health of all. We have always provided services right across Northern Ireland but we are now extending our reach physically by embarking on a new

Opening up and talking about my trauma has been one of the hardest things to do, but it's given me hope, something I never had before.

**Erin.**



counselling service in the Enniskillen and L'Derry areas. We want to ensure that if someone reaches out to their GP or hospital or indeed directly with us, when experiencing mental health problems, that they can get appropriate, timely, professional and effective psychological support. With the restrictions on funding for mental health, however, that is not always possible and the NHS can't always see everyone all of the time.

We believe that we can deliver a much needed free counselling service to those that need us, with no waiting times and with long standing excellent outcomes in other parts of the country we want to work to strengthen the local mental health system and help those that need us. We firmly believe that you cannot ask people to put a pause on their mental health and languish on waiting list, just as we don't believe that clients should be restricted to six counselling sessions before being discharged, we will hold a client for as long as it takes to help them with their issue. Deep seated trauma and historical abuse issues can only be dealt with after building a rapport with the PIPS Counsellor, so we will be with the client for as long as it takes to go gently at their pace on their recovery journey." Renée Quinn, Executive Director, PIPS Suicide Prevention Ireland

Erin was able to get her life back on track following counselling sessions from PIPS Suicide Prevention Service.

She said: "You cannot put a price on a person's life. There is nothing that they will not try to do for you, PIPS are breathing life into me, helping me breathe."

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## PIPS SUPPORT

# Signs that Something is Wrong

Around 1 in 8 children and young people experience behavioural or emotional problems growing up. For some, these will resolve with time, while others will need professional support.

It can be difficult to know if there is something upsetting a child or young person, but there are ways to spot when something's wrong. Look out for:

- significant changes in behaviour
- ongoing difficulty sleeping
- withdrawing from social situations
- not wanting to do things they usually like
- self-harm or neglecting themselves

Remember, everyone feels low, angry or anxious at times. But when these changes last for a long time or are significantly affecting them, it might be time to get professional help.

You know your child better than anyone so, if you're worried, first think if there has been a significant, lasting change in their behaviour. This could be at home, school or college; with others or on their own; or in relation to specific events or changes in their life.

If you're concerned or unsure, there is lots of support out there, including professional help so please reach out, we are here to help and with our Child and Youth Counsellors we can see children from the ages of 0-18yrs.

### Tips to Boost your Mental Wellbeing

Keep an eye out throughout this Newsletter for tips on how you can boost your mental wellbeing.

**Track gratitude and achievement with a journal.**  
Include 3 things you were grateful for and 3 things you were able to accomplish each day.

**Work your strengths.**  
Do something you're good at to build self-confidence, then tackle a tougher task.



Keep it cool for a good night's sleep. The optimal temperature for sleep is between 15°C to 20 °C

## PIPS SUPPORT

# Looking after a child or young persons mental health

There are times when we all feel the strain. As parents and carers, there are ways we can support children and young people to give them the best chance to stay mentally healthy.

Some children and young people have enjoyed being off school, while others will have really struggled with the Covid outbreak keeping them at home and away from friends. Others may be coming to terms with family problems, loss or changes to their living situation.

With nationwide and local restrictions being reviewed regularly, they may also have to deal with self – isolation because of an outbreak in school or another period of school closure or have worried about getting or passing on the virus.

Feelings like these will gradually ease for most, but there are always steps you can take to support them emotionally and help them cope with problems they face. PIPS Charity is here to support everyone if you feel you or they need it.

**Experiment** with a new recipe, write a poem, paint or try a Pinterest project. Creative expression and overall well-being are linked.

**HA HA HA !**  
**Take time to laugh.**  
Hang out with a funny friend, watch a comedy or check out cute videos online. Laughter helps reduce anxiety.

### Top tips to support children and young people



#### Be there to listen

Regularly ask how they're doing so they get used to talking about their feelings and know there's always someone to listen if they want it. Find out how to create a space where they will open up.

#### Support them through difficulties

Pay attention to their emotions and behaviour, and try to help them work through difficulties. It's not always easy when faced with challenging behaviour, but try to help them understand what they're feeling and why.



#### Stay involved in their life

Show interest in their life and the things important to them. It not only helps them value who they are but also makes it easier for you to spot problems and support them.

#### Encourage their interests

Being active or creative, learning new things and being a part of a team help connect us with others and are important ways we can all help our mental health. Support and encourage them to explore their interests, whatever they are.



#### Take what they say seriously

Listening to and valuing what they say, without judging their feelings, in turn makes them feel valued. Consider how to help them process and work through their emotions in a more constructive way.

#### Build positive routines

We know it still may not be easy, but try to reintroduce structure around regular routines, healthy eating and exercise. A good night's sleep is also really important – try to get them back into routines that fit with school or college.



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## PIPS SUPPORT

## Children and COVID

While some children and young people will have been looking forward to going back to formal education, others will not have.

The changes brought in because of the Covid 19 outbreak like social distancing, mask-wearing, regular testing, improved hygiene, smaller classes and the possibility of not seeing some friends, may have left them feeling strange about going back.

Some may also have other worries, such as school-based anxiety or problems with bullying, or be dealing with big changes, like starting at a new school or college.

For those with additional needs, the changes to school life might be particularly upsetting and, as a parent or carer, you might need more support too.

We have some top tips and advice on how to make the transition back to being in school, college or other formal education as smooth as possible, as well as information about further help and support.

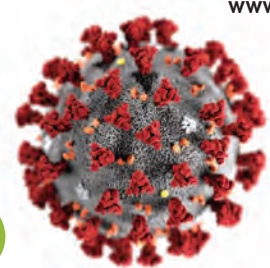
#### Top Tips – How do they feel about being back?

It's easy to think we know how the children and young people we look after feel about being back at school or college, but this might be an assumption based on how we feel about it.

Every family's experience of the coronavirus outbreak has been different, and restrictions now mean everyone is facing different challenges.

- Try reflecting on how it was for your child to be away for so long, and ask if there's anything in particular they're enjoying, looking forward to or worried about.

**Boost brainpower by treating yourself to a couple pieces of dark chocolate every few days.** The flavanoids, caffeine, and theobromine in chocolate are thought to work together to improve alertness and mental skills.



- For younger children, you could try asking them to draw or paint what being back at school is like. For older ones, try asking them what 3 things they're thinking about most.
- If they're anxious or have mixed feelings, let them know this is nothing they need to hide or be ashamed of and that others will be feeling the same.
- There's likely to be a lot of uncertainty around school life now, so listening to their thoughts will be really helpful. Reassure them that whatever they're feeling is understandable and reasonable.
- Try to resist any urge to have all the answers. The more we can all build resilience for uncertainty at this time, the better.
- No one knows exactly what the future will be like – but it's important to reassure them these changes will not be forever, and that you will be there to help them deal with whatever happens.



## PIPS SUPPORT

## Children with Additional Needs

If you're looking after a child or young person who has special educational needs, disabilities, autism, mental health issues or a combination of these, there might be extra stress as a result of the big changes to everyday life caused by the coronavirus outbreak.

Change can be good or bad and is likely to affect how they're feeling. They might be finding the restrictions hard and have difficulty adjusting to being back in education.

Even if they are struggling to adapt, it's important to be honest when talking about the situation and how they can stay safe. Planning out activities that they enjoy might help them feel better.

You could ask their care setting to send photos or videos of the changes that have been made, as well as detailed information about what else to expect, and use these to help explain what has happened and why.

Preparing a new routine will also help, as will practising hygiene routines or social distancing measures they have to follow, like handwashing, queuing safely or following 1-way paths.

Talking to your child's school

Organise a call or video call with your child's SENCO or teachers

**Spend some time with a furry friend.** Time with animals lowers the stress hormone - cortisol, and boosts oxytocin - which stimulates feelings of happiness. If you don't have a pet, hang out with a friend who does or volunteer at a shelter.

**Go ahead and yawn.** Studies suggest that yawning helps cool the brain and improves alertness and mental efficiency.

to talk about returning to school. If English is not your first language or you use Sign Language, ask what support is available for you to arrange a meeting so that you're comfortable.

You may want to ask:

- what safety measures will be in place, like face masks and social distancing;
- which staff will work with your child and how they can get to know them before returning;
- if transport will be available, for example if your child usually takes the school bus;
- what other changes your child should expect;
- what you can do to prepare your child for returning to school;

You could also share any concerns you have, like:

- changes to your child's routine;
- your child falling behind or feeling unprepared for the new school year;
- their transition to a new school;
- not enough educational support when they return;
- how they'll socialise safely with other children;
- how the situation will affect their wellbeing and the rest of your family;

If you have a difficult relationship with the school, try to keep the focus on your child's wellbeing. Say that you'd like to work with them to make sure your child can return smoothly. For example, you could keep a diary to show how your child is coping at the moment.

If your child is older, ask if they want to be on the call with you. Let the school know if they do, and if they have specific worries or triggers at the moment.

If your child is moving to a different school, try to organise a video call with staff from both. Ask what the schools are doing if they can no longer offer transition days to students.

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Huhtamaki cheque presentation.

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## PIPS SUPPORT

# Tips for Kids Returning to School

## 1. Encourage your child to face his/her fears, not run away from them.

When we are afraid of situations, we avoid them. However, avoidance of anxiety-provoking situations maintains the anxiety. Instead, if a child faces his or her fears, the child will learn that the anxiety reduces naturally on its own over time. The body cannot remain anxious for a very long period of time, so there is a system in the body that calms the body down. Usually, your anxiety will reduce within 20-45 minutes if you stay in the anxiety-provoking situation.

## 2. Tell your child that it is okay to be imperfect.

Often, we feel that it is necessary for our children to succeed in sports, school, and performance situations. But sometimes we forget that kids need to be kids. School becomes driven by grades, not by enjoyment of learning if an 85 is good, but not good enough. This is not to say that striving is not important. It is important to encourage your child to work hard but equally important to accept and embrace your child's mistakes and imperfections.

## 3. Focus on the positives.

Many times, anxious and stressed children can get lost in negative thoughts and self-criticism. They may focus on how the glass is half empty instead of half-full and worry about future events. The more that you can focus on your child's positive attributes and the good aspects of a situation, the more that it will remind your child to focus on the positives.

## 4. Schedule relaxing activities.

Children need time to relax and be kids. Unfortunately, sometimes even fun activities, like sports, can become more about success than they are about fun. Instead, it is important to ensure that your child engages in play purely for the sake of fun. This may include scheduling time each day for your child to play with toys, play a game, play a sport (without it being competitive), doing yoga, paint, have a tea party, put on a play, or just be silly.

Do your best to enjoy 15 minutes of sunshine, and apply sunscreen. Sunlight synthesizes Vitamin D; which experts believe is a mood elevator.

## 5. Model approach behavior, self-care, and positive thinking.

Your child will do what you do. So, if you avoid anxiety-provoking situations, so will your child. If you face your fears, so will your child. If you take care of yourself and schedule time for your own needs, your child will learn that self-care is an important part of life. If you look for the positive in situations, so will your child. Children learn behaviours from watching their parents. So, when you think about your child's psychological well-being, think about your own as well.

## 6. Reward your child's brave behaviours.

If your child faces his or her fears, reward this with praise, a hug, or even something tangible like a sticker or a small treat. This is not bribery if you establish this as a motivator prior to your child being in the situation. If you reward behaviours, your child will engage in them more often.

## 7. Encourage good sleep hygiene.

Set a bedtime for your child and stick to it, even on weekends. Also have a 30-45-minute bedtime routine that is done every night. This helps your child to transition from the activities of the day to the relaxed state necessary to fall asleep.

## 8. Encourage your child to express his/her anxiety.

If your child says that he or she is worried or scared, do not say "No you're not!" or "You're fine." That does not help your child. Instead, it is likely to make your child believe that you do not listen or do not understand him/her. Instead, validate your child's experience by saying things like, "Yes, you seem scared. What are you worried about?" Then discuss your child's emotions and fears.

## 9. Help your child to problem solve.

Once you have validated your child's emotions and demonstrated that you understand your child's experience and are listening to what your child has to say, help your child to problem solve. This does not mean solving the problem for your child. It means helping your child to identify possible solutions.

If your child can generate solutions, that is great. If not, generate some potential solutions for your child and ask your child to pick the solution that he or she thinks would work best.

## 10. Stay calm.

Children look to their parents to determine how to react in situations. We have all seen a young child trip and fall and then look to their parent to see how to react. If the parent seems concerned, the child cries. This is because the child is looking to their parent for a signal of how to react to the situation. Children of all ages pick up on their parent's emotions and resonate with them. If you are anxious, your child will pick up on that anxiety and experience an increase in his/her own anxiety. So, when you want to reduce your child's anxiety, you must manage your own anxiety. This may mean deliberately slowing down your own speech, taking a few deep breaths to relax, and working to ensure that your facial expression conveys that you are calm.

## 11. Practice relaxation exercises with your child.

Sometimes basic relaxation exercises are necessary to help your child to reduce their stress and anxiety. This might mean telling your child to take a few slow, deep breaths (and you taking a few slow breaths with your child so your child can match your pace). Or it might mean asking your child to imagine him or herself somewhere relaxing, like the beach or relaxing in a backyard hammock. Ask your child to close his/her eyes and imagine the sounds, smells, and sensations associated with the image. For example, close your eyes and picture yourself on a beach. Listen to the sound of the surf as the waves come in and go out. In and out. Listen to the sound of the seagulls flying off in the distance. Now, focus on the feel of the warm sand beneath your fingers and the sun warming your skin. Your child can do these techniques on his or her own during anxiety-provoking times.

## 12. Never give up.

Anxiety and stress can be a chronic struggle. Often, the source of a child's anxiety changes over time so it can feel as though you are always putting out fires. With repetition of the anxiety and stress management techniques, your child will learn how to lower his/her anxiety level and how to cope with anxiety-provoking situations. The key is repetition, so keep it up!

## What to do if your child is struggling at school?

If your child is struggling at school, the important thing is to recognise that there is a problem to be solved, and to work with your child and the school to find the right support as soon as you can.



## PIPS SUPPORT

# Looking After Your Own Mental Health

Parenting or caring for a child or young person can be tough. It's important to make sure you look after your own mental wellbeing, as this will help you support yourself and those you care about.

Try to recognise and acknowledge when you're feeling low or overwhelmed. Struggling with something or experiencing your own mental health problems does not make you a bad parent or carer.

It's completely normal to be worried, scared or helpless during difficult times, and feeling this way is nothing to be ashamed of.

Is there a friend, fellow parent or carer you trust enough to tell how you're feeling? Maybe there's family, friends or a colleague who could support you or allow you a break?

There's plenty of help out there. You should never feel like you have to cope on your own.

If you're concerned about a child or young person's mental health or the young person has or may have an eating disorder, you can get free, confidential counselling with one of our Child and Youth Counsellors, which is a dedicated service to help children, young people and their families or carers with problems caused by the coronavirus outbreak including experiencing the loss of a friend or loved one.

Never hesitate to get urgent support if you think either you or your child needs it. PIPS Charity are always here to help.



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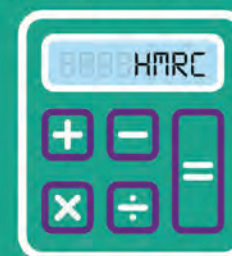
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