

COMMENT

A guest article on poor mental health by Chris Walsh, Cosaint Training



How are you?

It's a simple question that we ask and are asked, probably on a daily basis.

We usually give a standard reply of 'fine', 'ok'. 'not too bad' but do we mean it when we ask, and do we answer truthfully?

I am reminded by words spoken by the late great Robin Williams who said 'All it takes is a beautiful fake smile to hide an injured soul and they will never notice how broken you really are.'



Whilst preparing training materials I came across some facts that stopped me in my tracks. I thought there must be a typo or an error in the data.



Numerous sources placed Northern Ireland as a world leader in the prescription of antidepressants, many quoting double the level of prescription rates over England. Whilst Northern Ireland has a 25% higher prevalence of mental health problems than England, there is still a

higher rate of prescription than would be expected.

The Belfast telegraph reports that antidepressants, effective drugs which do help a lot of people, are prescribed to around 1 in 7 of the Northern Ireland population.

If you're reading this then you are probably a health and safety professional and if you're like me you'll love your statistics and know that for the year 16/17 the NI fatal accident incidence rate was 0.55 per 100,000 employees, which is above the GB rate of 0.43.

But did you realise that in the same year **the NI suicide rate per 100,000 of the population was 18.5, nearly twice that of England.** 4783 suicides have been registered in NI in the first 18 years of this century and **whilst men are three times more likely to complete suicide, women are three times more likely to attempt suicide.**

There are many reasons for this disparity, not least that women in



Northern Ireland are more likely to present with a mental health problem than men.

With these stark numbers, maybe we should not be asking how we are as individuals but rather how we are as a country!

When you've read this article, do me a massive favour and if you know a colleague or family member with a mental health condition, ask them how they really are and if someone asks you, tell them the truth.

It's only with frankness and honesty that we will remove the stigma of mental health issues.

Guest Contributor
Chris Walsh



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Chris Walsh, Director, Cosaint Training & Consultancy Ltd. has a background in senior level training and has a wealth of experience dealing with mental health crises including suicide intervention. Having witnessed the effects of mental ill health first hand he is passionate about improving the mental health of all those in work in Northern Ireland. His relaxed but realistic style drives home the seriousness of the subject.