

Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder and Hidden Harm Networking Breakfast

A networking breakfast brought together 22 community, voluntary and statutory sector organisations including community groups, families, local councillors, churches and food banks with the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership's (CYPSP) Fermanagh and Omagh Locality Planning Groups on 6 September 2016.



(Breakthru, CYPSP and Western Health and Social Care Trust staff attending the FASD networking breakfast)

The purpose of the event was to raise awareness of Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder (FASD) and encourage expecting mothers to stand firm in keeping their baby safe by not drinking alcohol during pregnancy. Evidence has found drinking at any stage of pregnancy can cause harmful effects to an unborn child with some resulting in longer term impacts on a child's life.

Local supermarkets including ASDA in Omagh and Tesco in Enniskillen got involved in the campaign through public engagement sessions with Breakthru a charity raising awareness of the impacts of drug and alcohol in communities. Breakthru attended supermarkets to raise awareness of recommended alcohol limits.

Michaela O' Kane from Breakthru states 'Foetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder is 100% preventable if an expectant mother does not consume alcohol during her pregnancy. At present the guidelines are clear, no alcohol equals no risk. Those who make up the support network around the pregnant mother could also think about cutting down on their intake as part of their support.'

The CYPSP Fermanagh and Omagh Locality Planning Group member organisations who work with expectant mothers and their families are committed to raising awareness of the impacts of drinking during pregnancy and highlight that Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder is preventable and avoidable for all expecting mothers.

Priscilla Magee, Omagh and Enniskillen Locality Planning Worker states; "Members have come together to support Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Day which is held on 9 September 2016. We anticipated reaching anyone who will be starting a family and their wider support network including

family and friends to inform them about the risks of drinking during pregnancy and support them to make the decision to abstain. Members felt strongly that it is not just the mother who has responsibility in doing this, but her partner, family circle, friends and the community in which she lives. Three key messages were driven during the event:

1. Stand Firm
2. Make the Switch
3. Everyone Cutback

Over 4200 members of the public were reached via social media during the networking breakfast. A short clip about the Foetal Alcohol Syndrome Disorder campaign in the Western Trust area can be found here:

<https://www.facebook.com/WesternHSCTrust/videos/1286260811405950/>

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