

MORE COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FOR FIRST RESPONDERS

Mark Callanan, Community Engagement Officer for the Western Division of the National Ambulance Service, urged community first responders at this year's National CFR Conference in Mullingar to keep in touch with community engagement officers throughout the country. Report by Grace Heneghan.

The best part of being a community engagement officer for Mark Callanan is meeting with individuals and new groups to look at what's going on in the community.

Addressing CFRs at this year's conference in Mullingar, he said that he never ceases to be amazed by the enthusiasm shown in their local communities.

"For example, an awareness and training event which took place recently in Carrigaline, Co. Cork, saw over 1,500 people trained in CPR, which is fantastic."

Mark Callanan, who was appointed as Community Engagement Officer (CEO) for the Western Region of the HSE National Ambulance Service in June 2017, is now one of three CEOs operating throughout the country. He works alongside Norma O'Donnell in the southern region and Desmond Kelly in the eastern region.

"We work in close partnership with organisations such as CFR Ireland Network and the Irish Heart Foundation on the development of community first responder (CFR) groups. If it wasn't for the work of people like Brigid Sinnott and her colleagues in the Irish Heart Foundation, we wouldn't have such a strong instructor network established in Ireland."

TRAINING PLAN IN PLACE

Callanan said that a training plan has now been put in place for the rest of the year with the Irish Heart Foundation to train more instructors through instructor support training days. "And CFRs should keep in touch with their CEOs to see if we can support you on this also," he told delegates.

In outlining the role and remit of community engagement officers, he said that they work very closely with all of the departments of the National Ambulance Service. "Major thanks is due to the National Emergency Operations Centre (NEOC) managers for their support in opening up the doors to show



"We want your input and your feedback," Mark Callanan told community first responders at 'Respond 2018' on 21 April.

CFRs exactly how their system operates. This has generated great feedback from both our own staff and also from CFRs themselves.

"Another vital element of the command and control system is our informatics team – these are the guys who put you up onto the control system and make sure that you get the calls, and if it's not working these guys will undertake the investigations."

Based on the information submitted by CFRs, he said that the informatics team also registers the AEDs located throughout the country. "For example, in December 2016 a total of 498 AEDs were registered in Ireland; today that figure is over 1,000; we wouldn't have that information if CFRs weren't sending it in so thanks and please keep up the good work."

GENERAL DATA PROTECTION REGULATION

With the GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) due to be enforced on 25 May, he said that CFRs will shortly

receive guidelines from their community engagement officers. “We will be putting stringent policies and procedures in place on meeting the challenges and overcoming them.

“Please let us know how we can transfer your information, patient care reports etc, to the ambulance service. Patient confidentiality will be of the utmost importance. So, get in touch with your CEOs and give us some ideas.”

He pointed out that a lot of initiatives are currently underway and in the pipeline.

“Firstly, we’re increasing the call volume and call types – 31 deltas will be rolled out on a gradual and phased basis nationwide. There’s also a renewal process currently underway, to solidify our foundations and gather information so we know exactly who we’re working with and where.

“The process has been completed in the west, the south is now underway, while Dublin and North Leinster Division will be later in the year. It’s being done on a phased basis and I wish to allay any fears CFRs may have but they need to talk to their community engagement officers.

THE PSYCHOLOGY OF PERFORMING UNDER PRESSURE

Since the first National CFR Conference was held in 2014, the event has gone from strength to strength with the biggest number of community first responder groups to date turning up at ‘Respond 2018’ on Saturday 21 April, returning to the Mullingar Park Hotel for another year.

‘Respond 2018’ again offered a unique mix of informative speakers, workshops, exhibitors/traders and networking opportunities. This year’s keynote speaker psychologist Niamh Fitzpatrick provided a practical hands-on guide to performing under pressure.

Niamh, who has many years’ experience in optimum mental health and peak performance, is the sister of the late Irish Coast Guard Captain Dara Fitzpatrick. So, she offered a unique perspective and understanding of the role of first responders.



“Training and working together is extremely important, and it doesn’t matter if you’re an advanced paramedic or a CFR

following completion of your training. We have plans in place to roll out regional training days and to bring CFR instructors and co-ordinators together with the National Ambulance Service crews.

“We will be putting you through a series of training drills and scenarios with the crews whom you’re going to meet on the side of the road or at the scene of the incident, which is all designed to boost your confidence.”

INSTRUCTOR TRAINING DAYS

With co-ordinator training days ongoing, he pointed out that the next Instructor Training Day will take place in the southern region in the near future, followed by the western region towards the end of the year. Details will be released in the regions in due course.

“We will also have specific instructor support events where instructors will come together and ‘trouble-shoot’ any issues which they may have encountered, or just to learn from each other.

“This would certainly not be possible were it not the invaluable assistance and help offered by the Irish Heart Foundation. So, regional meetings and training courses are set to continue in association with the Foundation.

“This is how we’re supporting CFRs, so we want your input and your feedback. We cannot improve the situation without your help.”

SOME FACTS AND FIGURES

1. In Ireland 5,000 people die each year from cardiac arrest, 13 people every day. These people are going about their daily lives, at home, work, shopping, at sports events collapse and die without warning.
2. 70% to 80% of these collapses happen in the presence of family or friends.
3. After suffering a cardiac arrest, for every minute that passes, the chances of recovery are reduced by 7% to 10%.
4. The current survival rate of Out-of-Hospital Cardiac Arrest (OOHCA) in Ireland is 6.9%. (Source: The Irish OOHCA Register)
5. The current survival rate of OOHCA in Seattle, USA, is 39.9%.



One of the main CPR demonstrations to take place during ‘Respond 2018’ at Mullingar Park Hotel on 21 April.