

## **Key message Aileen Lynch - Hidden Grief video**

The death of someone in drug dependence is an additional trauma on family, friends and community. Drug Related Deaths cause complicated grief due to the many factors surrounding them.

These are stigma and shame from criminality and the legal system and from society's prejudices and misconceptions around addiction. Stigma and shame and the silence around them add an extra layer to the grief and make it harder to process.

The relationship with the person who used drugs may have been strained before the death leading to regret and guilt in the bereaved.

The lack of addiction and mental health services also can lead to guilt and regret of the family and friends as they feel an enormous failure that they could not keep their loved one alive.

We need to reduce stigma and to improve family support, addiction and mental health services to provide better support, harm reduction and healthcare that will reduce the burden on the community.

Specialised bereavement counselling and groups provide care and help the bereaved move through their grief and come to terms with their frequently sudden and traumatic loss.

Ireland has the highest rate of DRDs in the EU. The number of deaths have increased by 82% from 431 in 2004 to 806 in 2020.

409 poisoning and 397 non poisoning, hanging being most common.

We have 97 deaths per million people compared to the EU average of 22.5 per million.