

On a winter's night in the throes of a wild storm, Caoilte finally found cold peace. In life, he had suffered unknowable pain for an immeasurable length of time, his condition exponentially worsening with every hospital discharge, every dark moment of self-medication and at any sight of hope.

Hope. We held hope close for so long. When we reached out to others who had been on similar journeys, we held hope close. When we heard that the 'system' failed others, we held hope close. When we were told that there was nothing that could be done, we held hope close. When we were told that Caoilte's position and likelihood of survival would be improved or ameliorated by making him homeless, we held hope close. When we were lucky enough to engage in a more meaningful way with the services, we held hope close. When paramedics, GPs, Gardai and friends were there for us in our desperation, we held hope close. When Caoilte went missing over New Years, we held hope close.

And now, in the wake of Caoilte's passing, hope itself holds on to us.

In the fixed grip of mental illness, we could not find answers for Caoilte. Tonight, we gather in memory of Caoilte. Our fight for answers is no longer singular, and our journey is no longer to be made on our own. We stand in solidarity with the mothers and fathers of the broken, the brothers and sisters of the fractured and the friends and the families of the lost. We stand in solidarity with those who hold hope, with those who are engaging with the mental health system, and with those who believe that a change must be made in order to better the minds of Ireland's sons and daughters.

In the past number of years, we have seen more and more mental health awareness campaigns, more and more signals of encouragement, more ambassadors, more discussions, more Facebook posts, more tweets... more and more young men and women speaking out about their troubles.

These campaigns have laid the seeds of what has to be an entire systemic and systematic refit and rethink with the approach toward mental illness.

- Cases must be assessed on a case per case basis.
- Collateral information must be a legal requirement in the case of a chronically ill loved one.
- A nationwide school programme to build good mental health must be implemented.
- We must have access to 24/7 crisis support, so that 24/7 crisis intervention services can be easily engaged when needed.
- Every person should have easy access to counselling services.
- Everyone should have a right to advocacy support. As it stands, there is no legal right to an advocate to support people with a mental health difficulty in the services and to help them get access to health services, housing, employment advice or welfare benefits.
- Families and loved ones need to be part of the discussion with medical professionals.
- Children should legally take priority in a home where a family has reported a mental illness. Home visits, home assessments, risk assessments as well as care plans and packages for families must be legally implemented.

- Sufferers should be lawfully provided with a mental health team to include, but not limited to Occupational Therapists, psychiatrists, GPs, area nurses and family...
- No sufferer should be first criminalised before being able to access the proper medical attention that they deserve.
- People who suffer at the hands of mental illness must not be dehumanised or made to feel 'other', and the approach from within the system should be of more humane and heartfelt spirit.

Tonight, a little over five weeks since finding Caoilte, we ask you to become part of one resounding voice. We ask you to consider what you're going to say to the next person who canvasses on your doorstep, we ask you to consider Caoilte when you vote on the 26th, and we ask you to reach out and say 'This is not OK anymore'...

For the hundreds of people whose lives are taken by mental illness, 'this is not OK anymore'...

For the families of those affected by failing services, 'this is not OK anymore' ...

For the families of the missing and the lost, at the hands of mental illness, 'this is not OK anymore'...

For those who have been made afraid to speak out about how they feel, 'this is not OK anymore'...

For those who live in guilt thinking that they could have done more for a loved one if only the system had let them, 'this is not OK anymore'...

To the anachronous language used when talking about mental illness in Ireland, 'this is not OK anymore'...

To this culture that promotes and celebrates drink at every corner, then punishes you should you fall victim to alcoholic self-medication, 'this is not OK anymore'...

To the approximate average of 525 suicide cases documented in Ireland per year, 'this is not OK anymore'...

To those who currently have a loved one engaging with the system but feel they're not getting the support that they need to carry the emotional stress, 'this is not OK anymore'...

To the masks of false self many feel pressured to wear on a day to day basis, 'this is not OK anymore'...

For every Garda cell that a mentally ill loved one has to spend hours inside of, 'this is not OK anymore'...

For every time the problem of mental illness in Ireland is addressed and nothing pro-active comes of it, 'this is not OK anymore'...

To every family who is denied the right to share their struggle with healthcare professionals,
'this is not OK anymore'...

For every candlelit vigil, for every minute's silence, for every funeral, remembrance, rally
and protest, 'this is not OK anymore'...

Our moment of silence tonight represents those who are silenced and those who are denied
a voice when seeking help for a loved one...

We remember Caoilte as a human. We remember Caoilte as someone who never got a
chance at the things he so richly deserved and was so dolefully denied; to fall in love, to be
loved in return, to travel the world, to get a job in something he loved, to more involve
himself in the charities that were dear to him, to make a meaningful impact from his studies
in psychology, to become independent, to sing in the shower, to learn to drive, to marry, to
be a dad, to be a grandfather, to follow a dream, to master new skills, to hang out with
friends, to make new friends... to smile, and to be happy...

We remember that Caoilte was Anyone's Brother. Caoilte could have been me, he could
have been you, he could have been your son or your daughter, your brother or sister...

Change must come. We must hold hope close. We must make our voices heard and we
must hold those who make broken promises accountable.

It has befallen to us to make Ireland better. No family should suffer as Caoilte's did, and no future generation need suffer in the shadow of this generation's inability to affect real and tangible change.

Thank you for your continued support, your constant and consistent love, your care, your sharing of experiences and your help in finding Caoilte help. We would like to thank the paramedics and the Gardai who were countlessly infallible in seeking help for Caoilte, and for all those in the online community who helped us share our story. In particular, we would like to thank JOE.ie who were with us from the very start, who gave us a platform to have a voice and who too held hope close on our behalf. We would also like to thank Bressie who has been an upstanding friend during this, who opened doors for us when Caoilte was alive, and who has been a constant force for change in the mental health system in Ireland, as well as a powerful voice for many... We would like to thank Carol Moore and all the team at Dual Diagnosis Ireland and those in Mental Health Reform for the continued support and advocacy they so adamantly and passionately engage in for so many suffering...

Finally, on behalf of myself, Caoilte's friends, Caoilte's loved ones, Caoilte's extended family and Caoilte's mother Phil, his sister Cat, his brothers Daire, Daniel and Peter, and Caoilte's late father Niall, thank you all so much for being a part of this...

Caoilte was Anyone's Brother, and we hope that his death can pave the way for a better system.