

Emergency services to join forces with healthcare students

Northern Ireland's emergency services, community groups and voluntary agencies will join forces to run multiple scenarios and training exercises for healthcare students, during 'Resilience Day' on Saturday 23 March at the Ulster University campus in Derry.

Resilience Day will see the various agencies in Northern Ireland such as the PSNI, military reserves, ambulance and fire services, first responders etc, come together on Saturday 23 March. They will roll out several 'incidents' to enable paramedic, nursing and allied health professional students to put into practice what they have been taught over the previous years, according to Mary Marren, Event Co-Ordinator and Lecturer in Nursing at Ulster University.

"Up to 450 students will take part on the day – 360 adult and mental health nursing students, 40 paramedic students and 50 allied health professional students will be divided into 54 teams of eight. At least 20 scenarios, to run concurrently, will include mass casualties, community and in-hospital chaotic events, natural disasters etc.," she told 'Emergency Services Ireland'.

So, what first prompted Ulster University to hold an event such as 'Resilience Day'? "Traditionally healthcare students do not see themselves as having the leadership capabilities or skillsets to respond appropriately to chaotic/crisis events.

"We wanted to change this perspective and allow students to experience these type of events in a safe environment so that they can build resilience to respond appropriately in such situations," noted Marren.

"Simulation is the teaching method of choice as building muscle memory helps respondents to increase their likelihood of responding to a stressful event in an appropriate way as opposed to trying to make sense of what has just happened.

"The use of live actors enhances the fidelity of the simulation exercise, providing invaluable learning for all involved. Derry City has encountered much crisis events over the years and therefore the community organisations were keen to get involved and see this as learning for all.

"By coming together, participating and sharing information we each get a sense of each other's roles within the community and have an opportunity to form strong bonds allowing us all to work together effectively should we encounter crisis events in the future."

Agencies taking part in 'Resilience Day' include:

Derry City Airport Fire Service
Northern Ireland Ambulance Service
North-West Community First Responders
Health Action Training
St Johns Ambulance
Military Reserves
Red Cross Northern Ireland
Ulster University's Faculty of Life and Health Sciences
Police Service Northern Ireland
Western Health and Social Care Trust
Royal National Lifeboat Institution
Eglinton Community Group
Northwest Regional College
Derry City & Strabane District Council

Mary Marren said that they would very much welcome to hear from EMS agencies from the Republic of Ireland who may be interested in taking part in 'Resilience Day'.

PARAMEDIC/NURSING COURSES

The students who will take part are into the third year of the BSc (Hons) Paramedic Science course – the first such university-based course in Northern Ireland, according to Niall Carty, Lecturer in Paramedic Science in the School of Nursing and Paramedic Science at Ulster University. The Nursing Course at Ulster University is ranked seventh in the UK and supplies several hundred nurses every year near and far, he noted.

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A '999 week' in January introduced students to several agencies they will encounter during their careers.