

## **Aware calls for More Understanding and Awareness of Bipolar Disorder on World Bipolar Day**

- **In Ireland, it is estimated that 45,000 people experience bipolar disorder**
- **According to the World Health Organization, bipolar disorder is the 6<sup>th</sup> leading cause of disability in the world**
- **Aware's message is one of hope. Early intervention, as well as ongoing support, are very important**

**Thursday 30<sup>th</sup> March 2017:** In support of World Bipolar Day today, mental health organisation Aware is calling for increased education, awareness and advocacy against the social stigma of mental health conditions, in particular bipolar disorder.

Brid O'Meara, Director of Services with Aware commented, "World Bipolar Day is a great reminder to us all that help and support are available for those with mental health conditions. Bipolar disorder is a serious condition and typically consists of both manic and depressive episodes, separated by periods of normal moods."

Aware is a non-profit organisation which provides education, information and support to those affected by depression and bipolar disorder. The organisation runs a number of support services, such as a Support Line and Support Mail service, Life Skills Programme, a Relatives Education Programme and Support Groups. The nature of the peer-to-peer Support Groups for those affected by bipolar disorder mean that people can speak openly about their condition and listen to others going through similar experiences.

Trina, 33 from Cork, diagnosed with bipolar disorder, was encouraged by a family member to seek information and support from Aware. Trina completed Aware's Life Skills Programme and attended Aware's Support Groups. Speaking about the support she received, Trina said, "Attending the Aware Support Groups was the best thing I ever did to aid my recovery - the support was invaluable. Many people don't realise that bipolar disorder is a lifelong condition, so it's very important that people have a support network and somewhere where they can go to talk openly and in confidence where they don't feel judged. Aware did that for me."

Bipolar disorder can cause unusual shifts in mood, energy, activity levels, and the ability to carry out day-to-day tasks. The condition is characterised by extreme mood swings, which can range from extreme happiness (mania) to extreme sadness (depression).

Brid O’Meara, also explained the benefits of the many services Aware provide, “Aware supports treatment plans for people experiencing bipolar by providing weekly Support Groups, a Support Line, which is available 365 days of the year, and a Support Mail service. We also provide a Relatives and Friends Education Programme for those who are supporting a family member or loved one living with bipolar. Aware’s message is one of hope: that it is possible to lead an active, enjoyable and fulfilling life despite the diagnosis.”

Often people with bipolar disorder can feel isolated or embarrassed about their condition. World Bipolar Day’s vision is to bring global awareness to bipolar disorder and help eliminate the social stigma which can be associated with mental health conditions. World Bipolar Day aims to provide education and information through world partnerships and collaboration to help educate and improve understanding of the condition. World Bipolar Day is an annual awareness day, celebrated on the 30<sup>th</sup> March, the birthday of Vincent Van Gogh, who was posthumously diagnosed as probably having bipolar disorder.

A key focus for Aware is to raise further awareness of the range of support and services they can offer to individuals and their loved ones affected by depression or bipolar disorder, whilst reinforcing that with the right support, it is possible to lead a normal life.

- Ends -

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**Notes to Editors:**

**About Aware** – Aware is the national organisation providing support, education and information services around depression and bipolar disorder. Founded in 1985 the organisation now offers:

### **Support**

**Support Groups\*** | 38 locations nationwide | 11,550 visits (2016)

**Support Line** | FREEPHONE 1800 80 48 48 | open 365 days a year, 10am-10pm | 11,236 calls (2016)

**Support Mail** | [supportmail@aware.ie](mailto:supportmail@aware.ie) | 1,937 emails (2016)

### **Education**

**Beat the Blues** | Schools talk | Life Skills 6-session programme | 29,562 students (2015-2016)

**Life Skills** | Group | Online | 12,561 participants (since 2012)

**Wellness@Work** | Positive Mental Health at Work | 136 sessions nationwide | 3,500 employees

### **Information**

**Aware website** | 309,000 unique visits (2016)

**Aware lectures** | 160,000 views +, p.a.

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