**PRESS RELEASE**

**Tackling Stigma With Information Event On M.E.   
And Fibromyalgia**

HOPE for ME and Fibro Northern Ireland will host an event (Monday, May 20) to bust the myths over Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (M.E.) and the misinformation on Fibromyalgia at the Lagan Valley Conference Centre, Lisburn.  
As well as having a range of information leaflets and booklets available, volunteers on hand to talk to attendees and an exhibition by the charity there will be a session called ‘Stigma & M.E. and Fibro Is Real’ presented by campaigner Joan McParland.  
M.E. and Fibromyalgia are much misunderstood illnesses which are often misdiagnosed or diagnosed as each other, some patients receive a diagnosis of both conditions.  
According to the charity, the medical profession has struggled to help patients with limited research to fall back on leading to frustration for doctors and patients alike.   
Joan recognised these issues through her own illness and quest for a cure. Often feeling like she was banging her head against a brick wall Joan put her practical minded and determined spirit to work and decided to go straight to the doctors and to try to help them to help the patients.  
“This is an information and awareness event for patients and family members to learn more about their illness and what the charity I’d doing to educate medical students and the medical professional,” said Joan.  
“There is no specialist training in medical schools for M.E. or CFS and fibromyalgia is a speciality under rheumatology.  
“This will offer hope where there is none basically and will provide the best self-management advice."  
Recently Joan was honoured at the weekend as ‘Breakthrough Leader’ by NICON, the Northern Ireland Confederation for Health and Social Care.  
May is International M.E. and Fibromyalgia awareness month, and Joan’s award was in recognition of her efforts to help the estimated 7000 M.E. sufferers in Northern Ireland and a further 20,000 with Fibromyalgia. She is Founder and voluntary coordinator, of the charity HOPE for ME and Fibro Northern Ireland and is also a long-term sufferer of M.E. herself.  
Joan added: "HOPE for ME and Fibro NI will also exhibit at the event, and we’ll have self-help booklets for patients plus booklets they can give to their doctors to help with their search for answers."

***Local support organisation HOPE for ME and Fibro Northern Ireland is running a free event on Monday May 20 to help increase awareness about the condition, with the aim of breaking the stigma surrounding the invisible but painful symptoms of fibromyalgia.***

***‘Stigma and ME & Fibromyalgia is Real’ is a free awareness and information seminar being held on Monday, 20th May in the Lagan Valley Conference Centre, Lisburn, for 2pm to 4pm. Attendees can register on arrival.***

***For more information go to*** [***www.facebook.com/groups/newryandmourne.me.fms***](https://www.facebook.com/groups/newryandmourne.me.fms/)

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