

# PRISON OFFICERS' 17,000 SICK DAYS

**By KEN FOXE**

PRISON officers have taken more than 17,000 days off sick in two years due to mental health issues including stress, anxiety, post-traumatic stress disorder and panic attacks.

The Irish Prison Service said last year 257 officers were off work for a total of 5,769 days due to psychiatric or psychological issues.

The toll of stress on prison officers was even higher in 2020, according to data released under Freedom of Information, with 11,492 days taken by 262 officers due to mental health issues.

The prison service said the



Pressure... officers

## Life's best in Ireland

IRELAND is the best country in the world to move to based on the quality of life and cost of living, a study has shown.

Business Insider used International Monetary Fund data to compare house price-to-income ratios in 57 countries.

However, the average cost of a two-bed home was among the highest in the top 13 countries.

Turkey, UAE, Cyprus and Romania filled out the top five in the list.

**NO SEX DRIVE**

Carjackers interrupted a couple having sex in Brazil, leaving the shocked lovers naked in the streets.

# FAMILY ON



Family... Sean Kelly with his mum Deirdre, dad Stephen and sisters Aoibhle & Bronagh

**THE family of a "miracle boy" who was brought back to life by a defibrillator after collapsing in his school playground has revealed how the young lad is thriving, and declared: "We feel like the luckiest family in Ireland."**

Sean Kelly was only nine years old when he was dramatically revived by one of the devices after collapsing with a cardiac arrest.

According to medics, he had a two per cent chance of survival and only pulled through as a nearby GAA club had an automated external defibrillator and his teachers were resourceful and quick-thinking enough to use it.

**EXCLUSIVE by GARY MENEELY**

In an exclusive interview with the Irish Sun on Sunday, the Kelly family speak today of their "total gratitude" as they mark the fifth anniversary of Sean's collapse and his sensational survival.

Proud parents Deirdre and Stephen say Sean is now 14 and has just started his Junior Cert year with "big dreams" for the future.

And the Dublin lad's loved ones are issuing an impassioned appeal to the Government to get more defibs rolled out across the country.

Speaking five years to the day since their traumatic ordeal, Deirdre told us: "Sean is doing really, really well. He's loving life and is starting Junior Cert year with big dreams for the future."

"We are just so grateful all his ducks fell in a row when he collapsed. It is total gratitude that he was lucky enough to pull through."

"We feel like the luckiest family in Ireland."

Battler Sean received specialist hospital treatment after his brush with death at school in Rush, north Co Dublin, including having his own defibrillator fitted.

The teen, who joined pupils going back to school this week, now only requires a check-up with doctors every six months.

As mum Deirdre spoke of her "miracle boy", she also revealed how Sean has scored some star support, including GAA commentator Marty Morrissey.

She told us: "Sean is a great lad, he is so laid back. Things are going great for him."

"He has a great bunch of friends and is doing really well. He takes everything in his stride."

"He met Marty Morrissey when he was in hospital and he met him again recently as part of the GAA's campaign to get defibs in clubs across the country. Sean is getting so big. Marty was saying he is towering over him now!"

Sean, who had no known underlying health problems, fell to the ground during yard time at Gaelscoil Ros Eo on September 4, 2017.

Quick-thinking principal Tim O Tuathaigh performed CPR on the youngster as a defibrillator was rushed to the scene.

In a major stroke of luck, the device had been supplied to the GAA club next door by Apache Pizza. Medics say the boy is only alive because the AED was at hand.

After The Irish Sun first reported Sean's story, we launched our Show Some Heart campaign to get life-



saving defibrillators rolled out across Ireland. Now calls are growing for VAT to be removed from defibs to help to protect communities nationwide.

Ahead of the upcoming Budget, it has emerged the Department of Finance Tax Strategy Group Papers includes an option to extend the zero rate of VAT on medical equipment to defibrillators. The devices are currently taxed at the standard rate of VAT at 23 per cent.

Deirdre told us: "The Government should do anything that makes it easier to get defibrillators out there."

"Schools and sports groups are trying their best to fundraise for these devices and they are being hit with the VAT on top."

"With the cost-of-living crisis, fundraising is becoming more difficult. So anything that can be done to get more defibrillators should be done."

"You just want to see them in as many places as possible."

"Sean was one of the lucky ones who had a defibrillator nearby when he collapsed. The defibrillator was there, it was fully maintained with the pads, and the teachers had the sense and the speed to use it."

"It is just awful to think that it could happen to someone else and they don't have the defibrillator to help them."

Sean's family are speaking out to raise awareness of defibs and to urge the Government to make them more available in schools and community groups across the country.

Dad Stephen told us: "Without the defibrillator, Sean would not be here. It is as simple as that."

"It is five years on from what happened to Sean but it remains big in our thoughts, especially at the minute with the anniversary."

"It was 2017, so time is flying and Sean is doing great, thank God. He is doing good, he is heading into his Junior Cert year. We're truly one of the lucky ones. Defibrillators need to be more commonplace than they are. The Government needs to take responsibility."

Stephen says removing VAT from defibrillators would greatly increase their availability. He said: "It is a tax on life-saving equipment. You wouldn't believe that (the Government) would have a tax on life-saving equipment because these things

# SON SURVIVING 2017 COLLAPSE

# Without a defibrillator Sean would not be here today... we are so lucky

## PARENTS URGE GOVT ACTION



**OUR AMAZING DEFIB STORY**

Five years ago... Deirdre and Stephen with Sean, then nine



are so important. The Government is still not providing defibrillators to schools, they need to do more. If it wasn't for that AED, I wouldn't be standing here talking to you, telling you Sean's story.

"It was a miracle that Sean survived. It was time and place for Sean, he was so fortunate. The school was luckily on the grounds of the GAA club and the GAA club had a defib. And Sean just happened to

be in the right place for it to happen at the right time."

The Kellys have spearheaded the roll-out of a batch of defibrillators in their home town after launching their own fundraising drive.

Stephen says Taoiseach Micheal Martin and his Cabinet need to show more urgency on the need for defibs to be made publicly accessible. He said: "After what happened to Sean, we

felt we had to do something to help. We did Rush Heart Safe and all the defibs were handed over to the Rush Community First Responders. So they are maintaining them now."

"VAT is a big issue. It is holding back the likes of schools and community groups from purchasing one. The extra cost is significant. And even on accessories for the AEDs, you are going to have to change the pads and the batteries. And by paying VAT, it adds to the cost."

"Defibrillators start at around €1,000, excluding VAT. There are different models and many of them are getting more advanced now and connect to wifi and can be checked

automatically. I look out for defibs everywhere I go. And it is clear to me the Government needs to do so much more."

"It is only when things happen, that they're highlighted. A lot of incidents are not reported because there is not really a happy ending."

"Sean is an example of the importance of defibrillators. He is 14 now, he was nine when it happened. He is getting on great. He goes back to the hospital just for check-ups. Sean's story shows just how important defibrillators are."

Story... in The Irish Sun

gary.meneely@the-sun.ie



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# FROM ST KEVIN'S BOYS TO ONE OF THE BEST PROSPECTS IN WORLD FOOTBALL

EXCLUSIVE by GARY MENEELY

**EVAN Ferguson goes into Brighton's final game of a remarkable season today worth more than £50million and one of the hottest properties in world football.**

But the people who helped put the "brilliant young man" on the football map remember how even as a kid he would go out of his way to thank everyone, from officials to the lads cutting the grass.

Karl Lambe, from the famed St Kevin's Boys club, hailed the 18-year-old's soccer star dad Barry and mum Sarah and beamed: "It was an honour to coach this lad."

Ex-Coventry City and Shamrock Rovers player Barry put thousands of miles on the family car driving the young prodigy from their home in Bettystown, Co Meath, to Santry in Dublin for matches and training after signing him up to the club aged four.

Karl said: "Coaching Evan is my claim to fame. It will be written on my headstone!"

"I started coaching in St Kevin's in June 2011 and when I went in to watch the under-6s, I thought this is not normal - he was ridiculous."

"So I started coaching Evan's group, they were all born in 2004. I started coaching them in 2011 and had them until January 2019, so I had them for nearly eight years."

"There's lots of that team doing well. But obviously the standout one is Evan. It was an honour to coach Evan. It really was."

The small-sided games supreme recalls telling a determined dynamo Evan "with conviction" that one day he would score in the Premier League.

## 'Best player from an early age'

And Karl says the down-to-earth star has left St Kevin's "over the moon" with his goal-getting exploits in England's top flight.

He told The Irish Sun on Sunday: "He has made us immensely proud."

"I have seen so many great players down the years not fulfil their potential. But with Evan I'm not surprised."

"He is, literally, a brilliant young man. And his family are unbelievable people. And he has gone to the right club in Brighton."

"I'm not surprised to see him doing as well as he's doing. I'm immensely happy for him because he has worked so hard."

"It was evident from a young age that he was the best player (at the club). I would be lying if I said he wasn't the best player."

"From an early age, Evan was incredible. But he never lost the run of himself. His family never lost the run of themselves."

"His workrate, his attention, his hunger to learn, his ability to learn - he is just a phenomenal young man. Not that you say it was guaranteed, because I've seen some brilliant players not make it."

"But I'm not surprised to see Evan fulfil his dream of playing in the Premier League, which was always his dream from a young age. He always wanted to play in the Premier League and he wanted to score in the Premier League."

"That was his goal, that was his target. And I'm not surprised to see him do that."

Quick and powerful, Evan is at the centre of a frenzy of interest after his brilliant brace against Southampton last weekend fired the Seagulls to Europe for the first time in the club's history.

The ten-goal whizz kid is set to finish the season as the Premier League's top-scoring teen in the final round of fixtures today.

Luckily for Brighton, Ferguson recently penned a new long-term contract at the club, pledging his future to the Seagulls until 2028, with boss Roberto De Zerbi insisting that the young Irish lad can become one of the "best strikers" in the top flight in England.

He has been linked to Manchester United and Spurs, experts comparing him to a young Harry Kane.

Evan, who marked his first international start for Ireland with a goal against Latvia in March, is backed to develop into a £100million player.

But those who know him insist they are not surprised by the starlet's success.

St Kevin's chairman Michael O'Callaghan maintained Evan could handle the spotlight - describing him as "the most grounded kid".

Michael highlighted how Evan comes from a family with a strong football pedigree, with the Ferguson clan's DNA "ingrained" in St

GAFFER... Evan with De Zerbi



STAND-OUT STAR... Evan, circled, enjoyed success playing for St Kevin's from an early age

# Match made in Evan

LAT'S HOW TO DO IT... Evan scored in his first full appearance for Ireland against Latvia last year

Kevin's. Great-uncle Damien was on the books at Old Trafford in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

And Evan's father Barry also honed his skills at the Dublin talent factory before landing a move to England. Even Evan's sister Ellie is a soccer star in her own right and was on scholarship in the US.

Michael told us: "I'm sitting here in my house and I'm just looking at all the media coverage about Evan."

"There is great pride at St Kevin's in Evan's development."

"His family has had a strong connection with St Kevin's for many years."

"His family DNA is in the club right the way through from great-uncle Damien. And then there is Barry, his father."

"I would have played with his great-uncle Damien. Damien went from St Kevin's as a youngster to

Manchester United way, way back. Damien was a brilliant player but suffered bad injuries. And Evan's father Barry would have played at St Kevin's and went off to Coventry and a number of other clubs."

"Barry is working for the FAI now and is the regional manager for our area. Barry would know Evan's game, and have his finger on the pulse. They are the most grounded family."

## Took on Chelsea aged just 14

Like Evan, Barry was an early developer, having played for Ireland's under-21 team.

Throughout Evan's childhood, the Ferguson family spent hours travelling down to the Dublin club from their native Bettystown in Meath two or three times a week.

Chairman Michael says he is "delighted" the dedication has helped Evan achieve his childhood dream of scoring in the Prem.

And the St Kevin's chief told how the striker "stood out" from an early age.

Michael said: "When Evan was around four or five, he lived up around the Bettystown area and his dad Barry just felt that St

Kevin's was the best place to bring him for coaching and for young kids to develop in the right way."

"And he brought Evan down and he played for us right the way through the age groups."

"Evan played for St Kevin's in the mini league from ages five and six."

"His dad knows the game but wouldn't be showy either."

"His dad would come in and say a few words to us, keep in the background, he wouldn't be roaring and shouting at coaches."

"Evan was a smashing player all the way through. No matter what position you would play him in he would be good."

"Sometimes if someone was injured he would be moved into midfield and he was excellent there."

"And you would move him off to centre forward and he was excellent there. He was just a natural all round."

Evan faced some of the biggest clubs in Europe - including Barcelona - at youth tournaments during his formative years playing at St Kevin's.

The high-flying Dublin outfit inaugurated

an international invitational tourney at Under-13 level known as the Academy Cup.

Played at Easter, the Academy Cup has now grown to become one of the top tournaments for elite clubs across Europe.

Michael says Evan began to be spotted "more widely" because of his performances against the best continental talent.

He said: "Evan was seen by a lot of people to be really something special."

"The bigger the occasion, the more he seemed to develop in a quiet, soft spoken, gentle kind of way. He wasn't a loudmouth or a flashy sort of a lad."

"But once he got into those big games, he just really seemed to shine against the Real Madrids, the Barcelonas of this world."

"That tournament was for under-13s. But Evan would have played in it when he was 12 and we would have moved him up to our under-13s."

"So when he was 12 and 13 he played in two different Academy Cups. In those tournaments there was a lot of hype and buzz, but Evan would always be so grounded."

More national and international



EVAN SENT... playing for Bohs

CALL UP... playing for Ireland



BRIGHT SPARK... Evan celebrates getting Prem goal with Brighton teammate Alexis Mac Allister

'He is just the nicest most down to earth lad and always has been'

attention came in 2019 when Evan made a substitute appearance for Bohemians against Chelsea in a pre-season friendly - at the age of just 14.

The teenager's clever dummy allowing trialist Eric Molloy to equalise for Keith Long's side a minute from the end.

Michael recalls how it was "typical" of Evan to make a big impact as a kid despite coming up against top-level opposition.

## 'Not a flashy lad'

And despite drawing the attention of a string of leading clubs, Michael last night declared Evan's character would help him handle the hype.

He told The Irish Sun on Sunday: "He is just the nicest and most down-to-earth young man and has been from the start. When he was with St Kevin's, when I was doing doorman, I would

be welcoming officials and the like, and if Evan saw you from 50 yards away he would come across and say 'thanks for everything'."

"I would almost feel embarrassed, because it was his coaches putting in all the hard work."

"I do the background and make sure the administration and governance is correct. But Evan had that appreciation from a young age."

"Of all the young people down the years, he was just a nice lad, with a proper attitude. There was nothing flashy about him, no wearing flashy boots or trackuits or anything like that."

"None of that. He would just come over and say 'thanks for everything, fair play to you'."

"Evan takes things in his stride. I would say that's down to his parents and also his manners and attitude."

gary.meneely@the-sun.ie

# VICTIM'S FAMILY BACK OUR CAMPAIGN & CALL ON GOV'T:

# Don't let any one else die like Jennie, act now and save women

## BRO'S MEETING WITH HARRIS

EXCLUSIVE by GARY MENEELY

**MURDER victim Jennie Poole's family have called for urgent new laws and support services to help domestic abuse victims.**

And they told The Irish Sun: "If the Government doesn't act, they will have blood on their hands."

We can reveal Jennie's crusading brother Jason will meet with new Justice Minister Simon Harris next month amid an explosion of violence against women.

Jason has been campaigning for new measures to tackle domestic violence since Jennie, 24, was killed by her psycho ex-partner Gavin Murphy, 31, in April 2021.

The Poole family today tell The Irish Sun of their horror at the country's domestic violence "epidemic", highlighting how there have been 17 women murdered here since January last year.

Jennie's anguished loved ones are pushing for a domestic violence register to be introduced in Ireland to identify thugs convicted of attacking their partners.

They are campaigning for new legislation in a bid to protect people in abusive relationships, more funding for improved support services for victims and tougher sentences for those found guilty of domestic abuse.

But almost two years on from Jennie's murder, Jason says the Poole family feel "let down" by the lack of action by the Government.

And issuing an impassioned plea following a horrific spate of recent domestic violence cases, Jason pleads with ministers to "act now" to save other victims.

Jason told The Irish Sun: "The Government needs to act now. Tackling domestic violence should be a national priority."

"There has been a lot of lip service and words from the Government. But we need action. If the Government doesn't act, they will have blood on their hands."

"Since this time last year, there have been 17 women murdered in Ireland. We can't keep allowing that to happen."

"My message would be: Don't let anyone else die like Jennifer. She didn't have access to a domestic violence register."

"There are measures the Government can take that could help victims of domestic abuse."

Mum-of-two Jennie was stabbed seven times at her Dublin apartment by ex-partner Murphy.

She had met Murphy, from Ballymun, in May 2020, with the killer moving into her home in Finglas "reasonably quickly" after their relationship began.

But it was only during sentencing at the Central Criminal Court last year that Ms Poole's family learned for the first time that Murphy had previously been jailed for attacking a former partner and her mother with a knife in 2015.

The calculating beast hid his past as a violent abuser of women from loving mum Jennie.

Instead of confessing he had been imprisoned for attacking a previous partner and her mum with a knife, Murphy told carer Jennie that he had been working away in Spain.

Jennie's relatives are now calling for new laws and supports to help domestic abuse victims in her honour, including the creation of a domestic violence register to lay bare information on offenders.

As he fights for 'Jennie's Law', Jason revealed he is preparing for showdown talks with Simon Harris, who was recently appointed interim Justice Minister.

Jason, who is also backing The Irish Sun's Call This Out campaign for an end to violence against women, said: "Action from the Government to tackle domestic abuse is urgently needed."

"I'm going to Minister Harris with a very clear structure and a very clear set of priorities that need to be included in Jennie's Law. This includes a domestic violence register. And safety and protection orders being done at a local level rather than the courts, that people can go into their local Garda station and it can be done by a superintendent."

Jason insisted the Government needed to introduce new laws and radically improve services and supports for victims.

He continued: "Domestic violence needs to be a law on its own. And we need more funding for wraparound support services. Nothing is going to work unless we have those supports."

"We need to have all the agencies that are currently working on their own all working together."

"There is no point having strategies, first strategies, second strategies, third strategies, and talking about this and that. Where is the actual get up and go, the drive, doing what needs to be done? You need to have a very clear plan and clear structure."

Jason admitted feeling "frustrated and angry" at a lack of "concrete" action on domestic abuse since Jennie's brutal slaying.

He told us: "They have Clare's Law in the UK. They have a register and a family member can do it on behalf of the victim."

"I want to go through all that with Minister Harris."

"Minister Harris does seem a bit more proactive. I do hope he will see the benefit of Jennie's Law."

Gardaí are continuing to see an increase in domestic, sexual and gender based violence.

Provisional figures show a nine per cent rise in domestic violence reports last year, with almost 50,000 incidents reported.

Amid the surge in domestic violence across the country, disturbing cases have hit the headlines on an almost daily basis - many with deadly outcomes.

But Jason believes there is a risk of domestic violence becoming "normalised".

He told us: "Since this time last year, there have been 17 women murdered in Ireland."

"It is completely out of control. And because it is happening so often, it is almost becoming normalised."

"When you turn on the radio or turn on the TV, it is like 'ah it's another one'. And people move on. But there shouldn't be another one."

"We shouldn't be in that mindset that 'oh, it's another one'. You see comments on social media like 'what is the world coming to, you are hearing this every day'. And then they move on. But we shouldn't be hearing it every day. It shouldn't be accepted in society."

"But the only people who can change it is the Government. We need the register and we need stronger laws and strong punishments for offenders."

"We need our laws to change. We need minimum sentencing for peo-

ple who are convicted of murder. We need stronger sentencing. If you are convicted of murder it should not be a so-called life sentence but we'll let you out in 18 years."

Interim Justice Minister Harris has pledged to get tough on domestic violence and abuse during his time in the hot seat.

The Fine Gael TD recently told how he plans to increase maximum sentences, strengthen victims' rights and increase the monitoring of known sex offenders.

He is aiming to make stalking and strangulation a stand-alone criminal offence and allow the courts to impose ten-year sentences for assault. He also told how electronic tagging will be used to track sex offenders.

While welcoming the "positive talk" from the Minister, Jason pleaded with Harris to "act soon".

Jason insisted: "The time for pledges is long gone."

"My conversation with Minister Harris will also focus on knife crime in general and the need for stronger laws on knife crime."

"We have seen the amount of people who have been attacked and the amount of women in particular who have been murdered like Jennifer. We need action."

gary.meneely@the-sun.ie



We need a domestic violence register

Murdered in her own home... Jennie was killed by monster ex-Murphy, right. Above, bro Jason wants new laws



### IT'S TIME FOR A CHANGE IN OUR CULTURE

IT'S time for change. After the violent deaths of 11 women last year, including teacher Ashling Murphy, the nation is screaming: Enough is enough! It's time to end violence against women, the culture that contributes to it and the misogyny that still exists in some sections of society.

There can be no more shying away or ignoring the problem. We are asking everyone - men and women, young and old - to call out any situation that makes a woman feel uncomfortable, disrespected or unequal, not to mention scared, threatened or endangered.

It's up to all of us to CALL THIS OUT - whether it is a sexist joke, a throwaway comment about a woman's image, a lewd look, or anything that raises concern for a woman's safety.

It's only when we all act together that we can make a meaningful change.

So, please, join us and CALL THIS OUT!

For more information or support, contact Women's Aid 24/7 on 1800 341 900.

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