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**Press Release – Bridge of Hope welcomes FASA new satellite office**

**Monday March 21@3pm McSweeney Centre, Henry Place, Belfast BT15 2BB**

Bridge of Hope, the leading Belfast based victims and survivors organisation has warmly welcomes its new neighbour FASA to the McSweeney Centre community hub.

FASA, a community organisation providing services to those affected by substance misuse, suicide and self harm, is moving into the McSweeney Centre, just off Clifton Street as part of a new chapter in its growth.

 The new office is based beside Bridge of Hope’s clinic in the brand new McSweeney Centre, a £2million complex of offices that was built by Ashton Community Trust. The centre was formally opened by the then DSD minister Margaret Ritchie in June 2009 and hailed as a symbol of regeneration in an area that had stood derelict for 20 years.

**On Monday (March 21) FASA formally launched their new satellite office with the help of leading political and community stakeholders including North Belfast MLA and former Stormont Junior Minister Gerry Kelly.**

FASA’s new office signals a new era in partnership working between the New Lodge based Ashton and Shankill/Woodvale based FASA who are both considered leading lights in the community sector.

The neutrality of the venue has been hailed by FASA as an important dimension in their development of outreach services.

“We are opening this office in Henry Place in the new McSweeney Centre due to demand from our clients,” Anne Bill Managing Director of FASA explained.

“We are inundated with clients who have been affected by drugs, alcohol and suicide from all over Belfast and what should worry us all, is that these levels have steadily remained very high. With this new office we hope to extend our services to even more people who represent some of society’s most vulnerable.”

Head of Victims Services at the Bridge of Hope Irene Sherry said FASA’s outreach into the area represented an important step in community development.

“FASA is an important community organisation that is working hard on many levels around some of the most difficult mental health issues facing society today. Our congratulations go to the team on their expansion and our best wishes for their continued growth and success.”

**Notes to Editors:**

Interviews/photos opportunities are available. The event takes place at 3pm, McSweeney Centre, Henry Place, Belfast BT15 2BB, on March 21, 2011. Please contact FASA for further details.

**Background notes**

**FASA**

FASA was formed in 1995 by local parents in the Greater Shankill area, FASA has developed a range of services designed to cater to geographical and thematic areas of need.

Its services include: Targeted Education, Intervention, Treatment, Training & Crisis Response for dealing with experimental, problematic and dependant use of alcohol drugs and other substances. Since 2006 FASA has developed further integrated services to support those directly or indirectly affected by Suicide or Self Harm including: Prevention, intervention and postvention support as well as Training, Crisis Response and Bereaved Family Support Groups.

FASA is a caring, professional and highly skilled organisation which prides itself on a holistic integrated approach to those affected by Substance Abuse, Suicide or Self Harm. Support services are also offered to clients, family & friends to deal with related issues.

**Bridge of Hope – 10 years old**

The Bridge of Hope opened in 2001 as a direct response to the overwhelming levels of stress and trauma in North Belfast.

It was abundantly clear that these strains, which manifested itself mainly through poor physical and mental health, were conflict related. In any post-conflict society the anguish endured by so many families comes to the surface and North Belfast is no different to anywhere else in the world in that respect. Community practitioners now acknowledge that in order to progress past the pain, the individual needs of those who are suffering must be addressed and positively channelled.

Bridge of Hope’s core aim in addressing this massive legacy issue is to offer people time to heal via its holistic approach to trauma recovery. Our process begins with an individual assessment and after that, several different pathways are offered. That direction may involve complementary therapy sessions, stress management/personal development courses, life-coaching or accredited training. All of these services have rapidly expanded in response to overwhelming demand.

The beneficiaries of the Bridge of Hope’s services reside mostly in wards which according to government indicators are the worst areas for deprivation in the North of Ireland.

On a bigger scale Bridge of Hope continues to research the needs of victims and survivors of the conflict.

**Ashton Community Trust - 20 years in the business of regeneration (1991-2011)**

Ashton started in the Eighties as a small community organisation in the New Lodge which launched a share drive in the local community. Over seven hundred people purchased shares which allowed the group to purchase the land on which the Ashton Centre now stands. It has since developed where it now has a turnover in excess of £3million and employs over 120 people in some of the most deprived wards in Northern Ireland. It now owns five centres across North Belfast and is seen internationally as a model of best practice.

Ashton Community Trust (ACT) is a registered charity engaged in the delivery of projects aimed at social and economic regeneration of North Belfast. Economic regeneration is a central focus of their work and income generation is essential to its service delivery. This is done primarily through physical development, childcare services and government contracts for employability training and healthcare.