

The Larchfield Estate Christmas Fair is raising funds to bring a powerful play that highlights the risks of drugs to schools across Northern Ireland.

Wednesday 30 October, 2024

On 4th and 5th

November [the Larchfield Estate](#) in Lisburn will again host Christmas in the Barn, the popular annual event organized by Lucinda Kinnaird, that brings people from miles around to purchase beautiful crafts produced by local artisans, and which every year also raises funds for charities bringing benefit to people in Northern Ireland. This year their chosen charity is drug education charity the [Daniel Spargo-Mabbs \(DSM\) Foundation](#), and the money raised by the fair will enable the charity to fund a new production of their powerful commissioned verbatim play, 'I Love You, Mum – I Promise I Won't Die' by Mark Wheeler, which will tour schools across Northern Ireland for two weeks in Spring 2025. This verbatim play tells the true story of the joyful life and tragic death from MDMA of sixteen-year-old Dan Spargo-Mabbs, whose loss left his parents with a passionate commitment to prevent any harm happening to anyone else's child, and led them to start a drug education charity in his name. Ten years on they are now well established across England, growing rapidly and successfully across Scotland, but not yet working in Northern Ireland. This year's Christmas in the Barn intends to change this.

The DSM Foundation has commissioned Ballymena and Coleraine-based educational theatre company, [Ever Unique Productions](#), to create a new production for Northern Ireland schools, based on the highly successful production their two youth theatres performed in 2023. The play had such a profound impact on their young cast members, as well as their audiences, that Ever Unique Productions co-founders and co-directors Hannah Reilly and Martina McAfee, were keen to bring it to more young people in Northern Ireland.

All of this is being promoted and supported by [Sandra Larmour](#) from County Armagh, whose daughter [Jeni sadly died when she was 18](#) on her first day at Newcastle University having taken ketamine. Sandra has been working closely with Fiona Spargo-Mabbs, Director and Founder of the DSM Foundation and Dan's mum, as fellow bereaved mums both determined to prevent the harm that happened to their own children happening to anyone else's. They have engaged the support of PCSPs across the country, and other public bodies.

Also attending Christmas in the Barn, to speak with Fiona and Sandra and find out more about their stories, hopes and plans, will be Minister for Education Paul Givan of the DUP, and Michelle Guy of the Alliance Party, both MLAs for Lagan Valley.

Sandra Larmour, mum to Jeni Larmour, said: 'Whilst I will never condone drug use, I fully support and endorse this important work that Fiona and her team are doing in educating and supporting school children giving them insight and knowledge that can only be of benefit to them in making future choices'.

Sarah Mackie, co-owner of the Larchfield Estate, said: "As parents we feel the need to equip our children with the knowledge to make informed decisions in the life choices they will make as they grow up. When I came across Fiona's book 'I Wish I'd Known', the tragedy of Dan's death resonated and we hope that the funds raised by the 2024 Larchfield Christmas Fair will both raise awareness of the sadly essential need for drugs education in schools in Northern Ireland, and springboard funding to be able to deliver this to help protect children across the region."

Martina McAfee, Ever Unique Productions co-founder and co-director said: "Getting to perform the Irish premier of the play was something our young people welcomed with open arms. They truly became invested in telling Dan's story. Additionally, all the drug education workshops we did around the play inspired them to be more open and honest with their peers and parents about the topic of drugs."

We knew as soon as our project was over that we weren't ready to finish shouting about Dan. He had found a place to live in our hearts and he wasn't going to be leaving anytime soon. We knew this story was not just one that needed to be heard by our young people but indeed, all young people across Northern Ireland."

Fiona Spargo-Mabbs OBE, DSM Foundation Director, Founder and Dan's mum said: "We're so excited to have this opportunity to bring this new production of our play to schools across Northern Ireland, and so heartened by the warm response we've received as we explore the potential for our wider drug education programme to support the work going on to equip young people in Northern Ireland

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to manage decisions about drugs and alcohol more safely. Sandra and I stand together as two mums who share the lived experience of that going badly wrong for our children, determined to do what we can to protect others better.”

Information for editors:

Christmas in the Barn Monday 4th November 10am – 8pm, Tuesday 5th

November 10am – 5pm. The fair is open to all, set within the lovely Estate of Larchfield (by kind permission of Gavin and Sarah Mackie) and all in aid of charity. The organiser Lucinda Kinnaird is really excited that proceeds this year will be funding the first productions in Northern Ireland schools by DSM Foundation. The DSM Foundation team will be in attendance, and Fiona Spargo-Mabbs welcomes visitors to come and meet her at the DSM Foundation stand in the Piggery.

DSM Foundation/ Ever Unique Productions ‘I Love You, Mum’ NI tour dates: Monday 24th February to Friday 7th March 2025

Showcase performance: Tuesday 4th

March 2025 Portadown Town Hall (afternoon – times tbc)

Sandra Larmour Mum to Jeni Larmour from Co. Armagh who tragically and undeservedly lost her life on 3 October 2020 during her first night at Newcastle upon Tyne University having taken ketamine given to her by another while under the influence of alcohol. Jeni previously attended The Royal School, Armagh, was an A* student, and Deputy Head Girl. Sandra’s one aim in telling Jeni’s story is in a hope to educate the young people of NI to make informed choices socially to prevent other families experiencing a similar loss.

The DSM Foundation is a drug education charity established in 2014 following the death of 16 year old Daniel Spargo-Mabbs from an accidental overdose of ecstasy. His family felt that he simply hadn’t known enough to be able to make decisions that would keep him safe, and realized there was a huge gap in the resources and support available to schools, so set up the charity in order to spare other families going through what they had experienced.

The aim of the DSM Foundation is to provide young people with relevant, age-appropriate, up to date and evidence-based information about drugs so they develop the skills to make choices that will keep themselves and their friends as safe as possible. To this end, the charity is currently working in around 750 schools, colleges and community organisations across England and Scotland with children and young people, and also provides workshops for parents and caregivers, and training for school and college staff. Educational settings are also able to access “I Love You Mum, I Promise I Won’t Die”, a verbatim play by Mark Wheeller that was commissioned by the charity to tell Dan’s story in the words of his family and friends, through studying the work itself, which is a GCSE Drama set text on the Eduqas syllabus, or booking a Theatre in Education performance. Schools and colleges can also download age-appropriate, relevant, up to date and evidence-based drugs education lesson resources free of charge from the DSM Foundation website for delivery by teachers through PSHE provision.

For more information about the DSM Foundation, go to <https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/>.

Media enquiries about this press release should be sent to enquiries@larchfieldestate.co.uk

Media enquiries about the work of the DSM Foundation should be sent to media@dsmfoundation.org.uk

Company Contact:

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The Daniel Spargo-Mabbs Foundation

T.

E. media@dsmfoundation.org.uk

W. <https://www.dsmfoundation.org.uk/>

Additional Contact(s):

Asha Fowells, media@dsmfoundation.org.uk

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