

IRISH FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES ITS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

'FOSTERING STABILITY' WILL FEATURE 27 WORKSHOPS OVER THREE DAYS

The Irish Foster Care Association launched details for its national conference today. Taking place in the Radisson Blu Hotel, Limerick from 2nd November – 4th November, the conference aims to bring together all those with an interest in foster care, including general and relative foster families, health and social care practitioners, academics, students, teachers, policy makers, and members of the community and voluntary sector to learn together, engage in dialogue, and share their experiences and best practice.

The conference theme this year '**Fostering Stability**' will offer scope to explore how the system can better support stability for children in foster care and look at many aspects of practice and policy of relevance to this theme. With 27 workshops taking place over three days there is a wide range of topics on offer to attendees. There are also two separate programmes for children and young people. The children's programme is run by IFCA and local volunteers and this year includes a slime making workshop with the Wacky Scientist and an art workshop with Me and the Moon. The young people's programme is facilitated by EPIC and includes a trip to the Escape Rooms and a treasure hunt with a difference. The full conference brochure and ticket information can be viewed [here](#).

The keynote speaker is Dr Montserrat Fargas who has a background in Sociology (BSsc), Women's Studies (MA.), and Education (PhD). Dr Montserrat (Montse) Fargas is Research Fellow at the School of Social Sciences, Education & Social Work at Queen's University Belfast. Her recent research has focused on children and young people in care and adopted from care, focusing particularly on the areas of stability and permanence. Dr Fargas has worked on the 'Care Pathways and Outcomes' study, which followed a population of children aged under five and in public care in Northern Ireland, and is currently working on the fourth wave of this study, which focuses on the early adult stage.

SOME HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE WORKSHOPS INCLUDE:

DIANE HANLY - THE IMPACT OF PRE-BIRTH AND DEVELOPMENTAL TRAUMA ON RELATIONSHIP BUILDING – REPAIRING AND INTEGRATION. Diane is a social worker and systemic psychotherapist. Diane has 15 years' experience in working with children and families where child sexual abuse is a concern. She works part-time in St Clare's Child Sexual Abuse Unit, Temple Street Children's University Hospital, Dublin. She also works with foster families, specifically around issues of developmental trauma, attachment and relationships.

DR. BARBARA REID - CIRCLE OF TRUST – TWO WORKSHOPS: ONE FOR FOSTER CARERS AND ONE FOR THOSE INVOLVED IN FOSTER CARE WHO ARE NOT FOSTER CARERS. Circles of Trust are talking circles where participants sit in a safe, confidential circle and where learning comes from participants' reflections on their lived experience. Barbara is a facilitator and retreat leader specialising in professional and personal formation. She has been prepared by the Centre for Courage and Renewal in the US to lead Circles of Trust and retreats based on the work of Parker J. Palmer, which she has been doing for the past five years.

SUSAN GEARY - AN OVERVIEW OF THE HIQA THEMATIC FOSTER CARE INSPECTIONS 2017/2018, COVERING THE RECRUITMENT, ASSESSMENT, SUPERVISION, SUPPORT AND REVIEW OF FOSTER CARERS. Susan is an inspector manager with HIQA and has worked with HIQA since 2012. She has carried out inspections across a broad range of services, including foster care, residential care, special care and child protection services.

ANGELA PALMER - PERMANENCE AND STABILITY: IS ADOPTION THE ANSWER? Angela is a third-year doctoral student in the Department of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice at University College Dublin. Her research is focused on the politics of adoption reform and the experience of adoption from care in Ireland. Angela has a professional background in political journalism and policy research. She was also a foster carer to two brothers whom she later adopted.

SUZANNE WALSH - GENDER AND SEXUALITY DIVERSITY IN CHILDREN AND ADOLESCENTS – CREATING STABILITY THROUGH DEVELOPING RESILIENCE. Suzanne is a lecturer in Applied Social Studies, and Co-ordinator of practice placements on Social Care and Child Care Degree Programmes at Waterford Institute of Technology. She is a qualified psychotherapist and has qualifications in child care, social care and process and skills facilitation.

PATRICIA MCSORLEY, EILIS MOORE AND CHARLENE O’CONNOR, CREATING SECURE ATTACHMENTS AND STABILITY FOR THE TRAUMATIZED CHILD USING AN ATTACHMENT-BASED SYSTEM. Patricia is a foster carer and for the last three years has provided care within the Specialist Therapeutic Fostering Service. Eilis has been a specialist therapeutic fostering carer for over two years and Charlene is a qualified social worker and systematic practitioner.

Speaking at the launch of the conference Catherine Bond, CEO, IFCA said: “We are delighted that our conference this year will offer 29 workshops on a variety of subjects that will be of interest to a wide audience of both foster carers and those with an interest in foster care. Our annual conference offers a chance for all those involved in foster care in Ireland to meet and exchange views and opinions, network, partake in workshops and hopefully come away from the weekend feeling more supported by the fostering community. We also have ensured our children’s and young people’s programme will offer something for all ages and support parents as they are taking part in the conference.”

Ends

9th October 2018

For further information please contact:

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About IFCA

The Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA) founded in 1981 is the representative body for foster care in Ireland. Child-centered and rights-based, IFCA promotes excellence in foster care for all those involved. We aim to accomplish this by providing information, support and learning

opportunities for all those involved in foster care through our direct work in advocacy, branch development, support and learning and development. Our membership is broad based and includes foster and relative carers, social workers, child care workers, academics and others with an interest in or who are involved in foster care. IFCA provides a range of supports to those who are directly involved in or who have an interest in foster care.