

Irish Foster Care Association National Conference 1 – 3 November 2019, Limerick



Communicating Care

Call for workshop proposals

The Irish Foster Care Association National Conference brings together all those with an interest in foster care, including general and relative foster carers, care leavers, 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.

Conference theme

We are delighted to announce this year's conference theme: **Communicating Care**.

Communication: *a process of reaching mutual understanding, in which participants not only exchange (encode-decode) information, news, ideas and feelings but also create and share meaning.* **Care:** *the provision of what is necessary for the health, welfare, maintenance, and protection of someone or something.*

Within the field of foster care, the word *care* has many different resonances. Children who come in to foster care may have had early experiences that require specific and targeted forms of care. With respect to adult care-givers, attachment theory, trauma theory and others have evidenced that how we experience care, or a lack of care in our early lives, sets up dynamics which can impact our ability to give and receive care later on.

Adopting a caring approach includes the willingness to carefully consider our communication with each individual involved in a child's life, including other professionals and practitioners, in order to best care for that child. Lack of professional co-operation, communication and understanding has been cited in numerous reports and enquiries as the root cause of failure to adequately protect children and vulnerable adults¹. In such nuanced territory, it's critical that a child-centred approach includes self-awareness on the part of professionals and practitioners, and a resulting ability to communicate care in a way that is uncompromised by one's own subjective experiences.

The 'listening' aspect of communication, where we purposefully tune-in to the needs of others and also of ourselves, is an important part of the communication of care. At some point, practitioners of all disciplines and roles may identify the need for focused self-care practices to avoid experiencing burnout due to providing care in often intensely challenging circumstances.

How can we put valuable theories into practice, and communicate them appropriately and effectively? The conference will offer scope to explore and experience how care can be communicated within the many different relationships and approaches that are contained within the care system. Some questions that we may be invited to consider are: how can we respond to the care needs we may encounter in foster care? What are barriers to communicating care? How does risk prevention impact upon it? What are the joyful aspects of communicating care, and how can we strengthen our experience of these? How can we communicate care to ourselves as care-givers and practitioners?

Call for workshop proposals

We are seeking proposals for workshops of relevance to the conference theme. The conference programme will offer daytime workshops all day on Friday and Saturday, which will be two hours long. Workshop facilitators view contributing to the conference as an excellent opportunity to showcase their work. IFCA offers facilitators free day-attendance to the conference on the day of their workshop, discounted hotel accommodation and cover of travel expenses within the island of Ireland. We do not offer a fee to facilitators.

Submission instructions

You can submit proposals by using the online form [here](#). If you have any questions, you can contact Niamh Barrett at niamh.barrett@ifca.ie or on 01 4599474. www.ifca.ie. IFCA, Unit 23, Village Green, Tallaght, Dublin 24.

Please submit your proposal by Friday 26 April. You will be notified of the outcome of the selection process by Friday 10 May.

Proposal selection criteria

When reviewing the workshop proposal submissions, we will select based on the following criteria:

- The content offers a significant contribution to the purpose of the conference
- The workshop has a clear purpose and desired learning outcomes
- The workshop format is dynamic and engages those attending through participation and discussion
- The workshop provides participants with concrete ideas / models that can contribute to the development of best practice in fostering.

Irish Foster Care Association

The Irish Foster Care Association (IFCA) is the representative body for foster care in Ireland. Child centred and rights based, IFCA promotes excellence in foster care. 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, Learning and Development. IFCA seeks to build a culture of learning that values the accumulation of knowledge, skills and experience of all with an involvement in fostering in the development of best practice. The annual conference is one of a range of opportunities in its learning programme which also includes training, seminars, and a journal on developments in foster care practice, policy and research, '[Foster](#)'.



ⁱ McCluskey, U. (2016) 'What do we know about the dynamics of caregiving? Why are caregivers vulnerable to anxiety and burnout, and how do we support their well-being?', *Foster* 1, pp 6-13.