



Irish Foster Care Association

National Conference, 27-29 October 2017

Realising potential in foster care



The Irish Foster Care Association National Conference brings together all those with an interest in foster care, including general and relative foster carers, 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. We run three parallel programmes for children, young people and adults. This year, the conference will take place from 27 to 29 October at the [Mount Wolseley Hotel](#), Tullow, Co Carlow. The full conference programme will be available in late summer.

Conference theme

The 2017 conference theme is **Realising potential in foster care**. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child recognises that all children, regardless of gender, race, ethnicity, nationality, religion, disability, parentage, sexual orientation or other status have the right to develop their potential in all situations and at all times. This applies to the spheres of health, education, family life, play and recreation, an adequate standard of living and protection from abuse and harm. Due to the circumstances which lead to children being received into care they may have specific vulnerabilities. Furthermore, they have been identified by the Ombudsman for Children as facing multiple obstacles to the enjoyment of their rights¹. The conference will offer an opportunity to explore ways in which practice and policy in respect of children and young people in care can support them to realise their potential. It also allows scope for consideration of how the potential of all those with an involvement in foster care can be realised.

¹Kilkelly, U. (2007) Barriers to the Realisation of Children's Rights in Ireland. Dublin: Ombudsman for Children.

Keynote speaker – Helen Gogarty

We are delighted to announce that Helen Gogarty will be the keynote speaker. Helen is an Attachment and Play Therapist specialising in the assessment and treatment of attachment and emotional disorders and unresolved trauma. She has worked in the field of fostering since 1985 where she developed assessment protocols and home-based attachment programmes for foster parents and children in care that utilise attachment theory and other related methodologies aimed at helping children to regulate emotions and to stabilise placements. She has also developed some symbolic methods to help children in care to realise a sense of permanence once long-term care orders were granted.

What people said about last year's conference

“Great to meet old and new friends. Mix with professionals, get interesting insights and learnings from residential settings. Great choice of workshops.”

“Plenary and workshops were excellent. It was clear a lot of planning had gone into the event as everything ran very smoothly.”

“It was great to get training done in two days, while the children were looked after and happy.”

“The kids' entertainment /programme [...] allowed me to feel confident attending my own programme.”

“Great conference with plenty of interaction and time for discussion. Lovely venue. IFCA and hotel staff all very welcoming and friendly.”

Spread the word

Please forward this information on to any colleagues who would benefit from participating. It would also be greatly appreciated if you would post the conference information on your organisation's website.

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'.

Further information

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The conference brochure will be available in late summer.