

IRISH FOSTER CARE ASSOCIATION LAUNCHES ITS NATIONAL CONFERENCE

PROGRAMME OF EVENTS

'REALISING POTENTIAL IN FOSTER CARE' WILL FEATURE OVER 33 WORKSHOPS OVER THREE DAYS

The Irish Foster Care Association launched details for its national conference today. Taking place in Mount Wolseley Hotel, Co. Carlow from 27th – 29th October 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 '**Realising Potential in Foster Care**' 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. With over 33 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 which includes an art workshop with 'Me and the Moon' and a trip to Castlecomer Discovery Park and the Chocolate Garden. The young people's programme is facilitated by EPIC and includes a trip to G2 Adventure Centre and a tree top walk and team building activities. The full conference brochure and ticket information can be viewed [here](#)

Some highlights from the workshops include:

- **DR. HELEN GOGARTY – REALISING POTENTIAL IN FOSTER CARE.** Helen is an Attachment and Jungian therapist specializing in the assessment and treatment of attachment and emotional disorders and unresolved trauma and will be the key note speaker at this year's conference
- **ANNE MCCLUSKEY - TRAUMA IS CATCHING, RECOVER TOGETHER, SUPPORT THE**

SCHOOL TO SUPPORT THE FOSTER CARER TO SUPPORT THE CHILD. Anne has been a teacher for more than 30 years and a foster carer for over 12 years. Anne has significant experience in the area of educational disadvantage and has designed training and awareness for teachers on dealing with children with attachment difficulties and trauma. She has campaigned and written on education and equality issues.

- **NICOLA O’SULLIVAN - LIFE STORY WORK – HOW FOSTER CARERS SUPPORT THE CHILDREN IN THEIR CARE TO DEVELOP A COHERENT LIFE STORY.** Nicola works at the Bessborough Centre, Cork. She has a Master in Child Protection and Welfare and has just completed a professional Doctorate in Social Care and Emotional Wellbeing.
- **CYNTHIA SILVA - FOETAL ALCOHOL SPECTRUM DISORDER – STRATEGIES FOR SUPPORTING THE CHILD, DEMISTIFYING FASD AND DEVELOPING STRATEGIES THAT REALLY WORK.** Cynthia works as Senior Educational Psychologist within the HSE, in an Early Intervention Disability Team in County Mayo. She is an associate lecturer in the areas of disability, FASD, assessment, and sexuality with the Doctoral Programme in Psychology at the National University of Ireland, Galway.
- **ANGELA PALMER - ADOPTION FROM FOSTER CARE IN IRELAND – WHAT DO WE KNOW?** Angela is a third year doctoral student in the Department of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice at UCD.
- **DR. VALERIE O’BRIEN & CAHAL MCHALE – FOSTER CARE ‘ENVISIONING THE FUTURE’.** This workshop will explore the current state of foster care provision in Ireland from the perspective of social workers. Valerie is a lecturer at the School of Social Policy, Social Work and Social Justice, UCD. She was a member of the Adoption Board and a board member of IFCA. Cahal is a former principal social worker for Alternative Care Services in Donegal and has over 30 years’ experience in developing, supporting and managing foster care services.
- **LORRAINE DEMPSEY – NAVIGATING THE SYSTEM – THE ROAD MAP TO SUPPORT CHILDREN WITH DISABILITIES**
Lorraine is Co-Chairperson of the Special Needs Parents Association and Parent Representative on the HSE Transforming Lives Working Group and is the Parent Advisor on the Cross Sectoral Implementation Group in the Department of Children

and Youth Affairs.

Speaking at the launch of the conference Catherine Bond, CEO, IFCA said: “We are delighted that our conference this year will offer 33 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

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 has over 1,600 members and provides a range of supports to those who are directly involved in or who have an interest in foster care.