

“Celebrating the 30th Anniversary of the
UN Convention on the Rights of the Child”

Friday 31 May 2019

Ulster University, Magee Campus, Derry-Londonderry

9:30am to 4:30pm



Keynote and Workshops

Keynote by: Prof. Dr. Michel Vandebroeck
Ghent University, Brussels www.ugent.be

“Early Childhood Education in the interest of children, parents and communities”

It is well known that ECEC is in the best interest of children. There has been less attention for the interest of parents and local communities, despite the fact that ECEC can foster social support and social cohesion. However, we can only expect the societal impact of ECEC when quality is achieved in five dimensions: accessibility, professionalisation, curriculum, monitoring and governance.

Prof. Dr. Michel Vandebroeck is professor in family pedagogy and head of the department of Social Work and Social Pedagogy at Ghent University, Belgium. His research focuses on early childhood and parent support, with a special interest for in- and exclusion in contexts of diversity. Together with Liselott Olsson, he is coordinating editor of the book series “Contesting Early Childhood” (Routledge), where he recently published a book on constructions of neuroscience in early childhood education. For his critical work, relating pedagogy and policy in ECEC, he was rewarded with an honorary doctorate at Tampere University.



Keynote by: Dr. Siobhán Fitzpatrick CBE
CEO of Early Years – the organisation for young children

“30 years of the UNCRC – what is the current state of play for young children”

This keynote address will discuss how policy for young children in Northern Ireland reflects the commitment within the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Paying particular attention to General Comment Number 7, which was introduced by the UN Committee to focus member states on their responsibility to young children, Dr. Fitzpatrick will reflect on the achievements and challenges over the past 30 years and highlight some key actions which need to be taken to ensure that Northern Ireland fully embraces a commitment to the rights of young children.

Dr. Siobhán Fitzpatrick CBE has been a leader in the early childhood sector in Northern Ireland for the past 30 years and is CEO of Early Years. The Organisation supports 40,000 children and families and provides support, training and quality assurance for 12,000 staff in the early years sector across Northern Ireland. Dr. Fitzpatrick was awarded an Honorary Doctorate from Queens University Belfast in 2017 for Public Service and a CBE from Queen Elizabeth in 2010 for services to community development, education and peace building.



Workshops

Healthy Bodies; Healthy Minds

An Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) led workshop on inspection findings and best practice in improving the quality of planning and provision for physical development in pre-school and the links with mental health and well-being.

Understanding the Disability Journey while Practicing Inclusion

This workshop will look at the role of the Early Years Practitioner in supporting disabilities, the pre and post diagnosis; enhancing knowledge and sign posting, listening, acknowledgement, identifying concerns as well as financial support for settings, care plans, individual education plans, training and resources.

Sinead Wadforth is the Disability Services Team Leader for Newry Early Years Children and Family Centre and has worked within the community sector in the development of inclusive programmes and projects for children and young people, of all abilities, cultural, social and economic backgrounds. Over the past 12 years, Sinead has held a more focused position supporting children and young people and their families through their journeys with disability, developing a range of services meeting their needs and adapting as needs change and developing innovative new approaches as well as being an advocate for equality, diversity and inclusion.

Building your SEN File

This workshop will focus on the contents of your SEN File and how this can be used to support children in your setting with an Additional or Special Educational Need. We will take some time to explore SMART Targets and how these should be used to develop an Individual Plan for children in your setting.

Nuala McEvoy has worked for Early Years for almost seven years as an Early Years Specialist, supporting, advising and training various groups within the sector. Prior to joining Early Years, Nuala worked in Liverpool managing a day care within a SureStart programme.



The Reggio Emilia Approach – creating a learning environment

The Northern Ireland Reggio Learning Community will share learning from the Early Years Erasmus+ KA1 Learning Mobility of Individual Adult Education Staff Mobility. Study trips have taken place annually since 2015 engaging participants in dialogue about the Reggio experience and how this has influenced and inspired the development of the Early Years curriculum from a child's rights perspective within their settings. A Reggio learning environment will be recreated at the workshop.

The Preschools and Infant-toddler Centers – Istituzione of the Municipality of Reggio Emilia, Italy have developed a significant educational experience since the first school opened in 1963 and the first infant-toddler centre opened in 1971. The town of Reggio Emilia has always been committed to the investment in early childhood education, with a strong belief that investing in education means investing in a better society. At international level the Reggio Emilia Approach is seen as a creative pedagogical project that enhances quality in education.

Promoting Good Relations

This workshop will reflect the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child and explore how Shared Education is promoting Good Relations and supporting reconciliation within our communities. Participants will have the opportunity to explore how Good Relations are developing through engagement in the Sharing from the Start programme.

***Karen Cooke** is a Senior Early Years Specialist with Early Years. Karen supports groups involved in the Sharing from the Start programme which aims to improve Educational Outcomes and Good Relations for young children in Northern Ireland and the border counties.*



***Noletta Smyth** has over 20 years' experience within a range of roles in the early childhood care and education sector. Noletta currently works as a Senior Early Years Specialist with the Sharing from the Start programme, Early Years.*



Emotional Intelligence: positive, safe and protective environments for children to express and explore their feelings (part one)

Participants will have an overview of the revised Toddler Module of the Media Initiative for Children, working with the presenters to build our understanding of what it means to be calm and regulated and learning how this promotes problem solving, emotional wellbeing and resilience.

***Dr. Josh Feder**, Child Psychiatrist, teaches at Fielding Graduate University Programme in Infant and Early Childhood Development and UCSD School of Medicine. Josh is a Senior Associate Member of the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children, promoting resilience and tolerance in regions impacted by conflict.*



***Zoe Kernohan Neely** is from an educational background and has taught throughout the Early Years and Primary phase. Before joining Early Years, Zoe was a Principal of a full-time Nursery Unit and Infant School in England. She brings a range of practical and strategic experience to the Organisation which supports developments relating to practice.*



Supporting Executive Function in Preschool Children's Play

This workshop will outline what executive function is and how it can be supported in preschool children's play. It will look at the importance of child centred and child initiated play in the process and identify and explore the five components of executive function and accompanying supportive adult strategies in this area.

***Elaine Sterritt** has been employed with Early Years since 1992 as an Early Years Specialist and HighScope Ireland Institute Endorsed Trainer. Elaine is now the HighScope Ireland Institute Consultant Trainer; training and supporting HighScope Ireland Endorsed Trainers and settings using the HighScope Approach.*

Children's Rights in a Digital Environment

The Committee on the Rights of the Child decided in 2018 to develop a General Comment on children's rights in relation to the digital environment. This will clarify how this rapidly evolving environment impacts on the full range of children's rights in positive and negative ways. Wyred – netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment a Digital Society, aims to provide a framework for research in which Children and Young people can express and explore their perspectives and interests in relation to the digital society.

The WYRED project captures children's views and experiences and how they can be expressed and taken into account when formulating policies and practices which affect their access to, and use of, digital technologies. WYRED does this by implementing a generative research cycle involving networking, dialogue, participatory research and interpretation phases. These are driven by Children and Young people out of which a diverse range of outputs, critical perspectives and other insights have emerged to inform policy and decision making in relation to C&YP's needs in the digital society.

The project recognises that young people of all ages have the right to participation and engagement. It has a strong focus on inclusion, diversity and the empowerment of the marginalised. This workshop will reflect on the WYRED methodology used to give C&YP a voice in relation to the digital society and to examine some case studies and explore the insights arising from the research projects carried out by C&YP over seven countries.

The workshop facilitators are WYRED researchers as part of the Horizon 2020 Project 727066 WYRED - netWorked Youth Research for Empowerment a Digital Society: Mairead McMullen and Mary O'Reilly from Early Years and Paul Butler from PYE – Partners for Youth Empowerment.

A Richer Understanding of Article 31 – the Child's Right to Play

Heralded as an important milestone for play advocates across the globe, General Comment 17 was adopted by the UNCRC in February 2013. Six years on how does Northern Ireland measure up? Focusing on Northern Ireland's Play journey, specific focus will be on reflection, learning and next steps.

Jacqueline O'Loughlin is the Chief Executive Officer of PlayBoard NI. Jacqueline has played an instrumental role in securing play in a policy context. Jacqueline currently represents play and PlayBoard on a number of national and international platforms.



A child rights approach to working with young children

This interactive workshop will explore a rights approach to working with young children using the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child's General Comment 7 as a guide. We will outline NICCY's work with young children and how we will be celebrating the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC.

Alex Tennant is Head of Policy and Participation at the Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY). She leads on a wide range of issues and is currently involved in planning a celebration of the 30th anniversary of the UNCRC in November, involving 1500 children of all ages.



Building Inclusive Environments

This workshop will provide an opportunity for participants to explore the underpinning values and principles of Shared Education, with a focus on building Inclusive Environments. We will use a range of activities to explore how Shared Education and Inclusive Environments supports the Rights of the Child.

Anne Marie Mulholland has worked within the early years' sector for over 25 years working with Early Years for 17 years supporting member settings to develop high quality learning and good practice. Anne Marie is currently a SEYS supporting Pre -schools and Nurseries implementing Sharing from the Start – a shared education programme for pre-school children. She is also an Incredible Years trainer, MIFC trainer, HighScope trained and recently participated in the Reggio Emilia International Study Group.



Fiona Scullion is a Senior Early Years Specialist supporting the Sharing from the Start project - a shared Education programme for pre-school children across Northern Ireland and border counties. Fiona has worked with Early Years for over 15 years supporting the development and implementation of good practice in member settings



Emotional Intelligence: positive, safe and protective environments for children to express and explore their feelings (part two)

This workshop follows on from the morning session (part one). Participants will apply the ideas of self-regulation in the revised MIFC to their own toddlers (and others!), generating ideas about how to promote regulation and interactions that support learning and problem solving now and for the future.

Dr Josh Feder, Child Psychiatrist, teaches at Fielding Graduate University Programme in Infant and Early Childhood Development and UCSD School of Medicine. Josh is a Senior Associate Member of the International Network on Peace Building with Young Children, promoting resilience and tolerance in regions impacted by conflict.

Zoe Kernohan Neely is from an educational background and has taught throughout the Early Years and Primary phase. Before joining Early Years, Zoe was a Principal of a full-time Nursery Unit and Infant School in England. She brings a range of practical and strategic experience to the Organisation which supports developments relating to practice.