

April 2009

THE LINK



Did You Know...

Over 1250 social care students will graduate this summer?

See Kevin Lalor's article on page 2 of The Link.

That CAAB (Children Acts Advisory Board) is holding a one day seminar on Thursday, May 21st in Dublin? The seminar theme is "Restorative Practices: A collaborative and proactive approach to behaviour management." A number of speakers from abroad as well as from Ireland will present their views and the format will facilitate the opportunity for participants to question, challenge and explore the issues under discussion.

Details from www.caab.ie; Marion Martin (marion.martin@caab.ie) or 01 672 4116.

"Applied Social Care...An Introduction for Students in Ireland" edited by Perry Share (Sligo IT) and Kevin Lalor (DIT). and will be published in August of this year?

This is a second edition comprehensive introduction to all key areas within Applied Social Care: The Field of Social Care; Theoretical Approaches; Practice Issues; Social Care and Specific Population Groups. Areas covered include mental health issues; drug, alcohol and substance abuse; multidisciplinary teamwork; responding to challenging behaviour; analysis of up to date research, practice developments, statistics and findings with an expanded field of national and international expert contributors.

That Northern Ireland's Children's Commissioner lost her appeal against the law that allows parents to use smacking as chastisement?

Lord Justice Girvan upheld a High Court ruling and is quoted as saying that the use or threat of force is not always unlawful and "may be justified on the basis of actual or implied consent, self defence, crime prevention or crowd control and on the basis that it involved the lawful punishment of a child." The Commissioner had argued that the Secretary of State was acting legally when by bringing the law on smacking in Northern Ireland into line with England and Wales. Afterwards, the Commissioner, Patricia Lewsley said that while the court had found her arguments persuasive the judgement was based on the court saying that she was "not a victim within the Human Rights Act."

Kilkenny Community Early Years Project was the overall winner at the Awards for Services to Children and Young People at the CAAB Awards in Croke Park recently?

Categories from which the Kilkenny Project emerged as winner included Inter Agency work; Community projects; Education; Residential and Juvenile Justice.

That the next edition of CURAM is due out in mid June?

Change of Address?

Please contact the association if the postal address given on your membership application has changed.

Articles, opinions, comments are welcome for consideration to nh99@eircom.net; iascw@hotmail.com or by post to IASCW, 12 Manorfield's Walk, Clonee, Co. Meath.

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UNCERTAINTY

Since you got the last edition of CURAM good news has been scarce. There was an anticipation, as the magazine went to print before Christmas, that there would be less uncertainty around where service provision found itself by the time we would get to Easter.

Rumours of the suggested nine new regions making up the new HSE being reduced to six have been confirmed by the HSE Head of Human Resources, Mr Sean McGrath. Speaking at a health care conference in Dublin he is quoted as saying that it will be the end of the year before six new regional directors will be in place. With that as a beginning we now have some idea of how long it will be (if ever) before this latest attempt at effectiveness is realised. His further comments that the HSE would suffer the corporate equivalent of a "massive coronary" if changes are not made do not make for encouraging reading.

In the meantime assistant national directors of Primary, Community & Continuing Care (PCCC) have been advised that workforce reductions in this area be achieved by non renewal of temporary contracts. This will affect social care. Kevin Callanan of IMPACT has warned of the consequences of this "sledgehammer" approach which will, for many so affected, see them on the dole, costing almost as much to the state as if they were still employed. The Minister for Finance, imposing a freeze on public sector recruitment, said on March 27th that "necessary" frontline health staff can still be appointed. The problem will be whose definition of "necessary" will count!

The pity is that there are many committed, passionate people in the HSE, not least in the social care scene, doing marvellous work every day despite being victims themselves of an energy sapping bureaucracy.

The ongoing uncertainty, coupled with bad news stories on the economy being churned out daily, does no one any good and leaves the most vulnerable more marginalised than ever before.

REGISTRATION

Delegates attending the IASCW / IASCE conference in Sligo in late February benefited from a timely keynote address given by Ginny Hanrahan, CEO of the Health And Social Care Professionals Council (HSCPC). In her talk she indicated that this rather long, cumbersome title may be amended to a more workable one in time. No one disagreed!

David Power, the social care representative on the council, joined Ginny for the presentation and Q+A session. Half of the council will come to the end of their tenure of office in March and each body within the council's remit will submit suggested representatives to the Minister for Health & Children to be considered for the council's next four year term.

She outlined the progress made to date and adverted to some of the complications that inevitably arise where there are a number of different bodies to be accommodated. She mentioned the issue of EU qualifications and qualifications acquired abroad by Irish and non national practitioners. While unable to be specific she said that it is anticipated that two bodies (obviously social care not being one) will formally have registration boards in 2009 with the aim of opening the first registers in 2009/2010.

The general impression gleaned from the talk was that much remains to be done and that, for example, the composition of each board within the council will take some time because of the representative numbers involved. The HSCPC is the first Council to have a lay majority and the registration boards will follow suit. Each registration board will be made up of 13 members, 6 from the profession consisting of 1 educator, 2 managers and 3 practitioners.



Annual Conference March 10, 2009

The 2009 Annual Conference was a new venture, a leap in the dark so to speak. It was the first time that the conference was co hosted with another social care organisation. IASCE (Irish Association of Social Care Educators) joined the IASCW in presenting the conference. Co-hosting gave the conference a wider, more varied scope and certainly that was evident in the range of workshop presentations which were very well attended.

The three keynote addresses were also varied and relevant. David Devine's opening presentation for the conference was delivered with quiet conviction. It was an inspired and inspiring opening which uniquely looked at Belonging and being Acknowledged in the Care System. The publication of David's story in book form is eagerly anticipated and we will inform members when publication date arrives.

Tony Moore, Catherine Carty and Helen Buggle delivered a rounded and relevant view of Sustaining an Ethos of professional Learning and Personal Development in the Provision of Therapeutic Child Care. In that context we also look forward to Catherine Carty's final analysis of her research.

As noted elsewhere, Ginny Hanrahan spoke on Statutory Registration and progress to date.

Two snapshots on IT Sligo's social care programme and community child care in the North West gave a local flavour to events.

On Wednesday night of the conference a presentation was made to Pat Brennan and Sr. Stanislaus Kennedy for their pioneering work in developing a training course in Kilkenny in the wake of Justice Eileen Kennedy's watershed report on residential child care in Ireland published in 1970. The course ran for ten years until 1982 and the two hundred graduates were very much to the fore in bringing what they learned of themselves and the theory and practice of care into the workplace. Pat and Stan spoke eloquently about those years and the need for current training to imbue and inspire those in receipt of it with compassion, conviction and the belief that they can make a difference in today's very different Ireland.

How many Social Care students does Ireland need?

Dr. Kevin Lalor is Head of School of Social Sciences and Law, Dublin Institute of Technology. What follows is an updated synopsis of his presentation at the first Joint IASCE/IASCW Conference, 25-26 February, 2009 in Sligo.

This paper highlighted the dramatic expansion in social care student numbers and course providers in recent years. In 2002, there were seven social care course providers (Institutes of Technology in Athlone, Cork, Dublin, Sligo, Waterford; St Patrick's College; and the Open Training College). Together, they produced approximately 500 Level 7 and 8 graduates. Today, there are 16 providers, who will produce 1269 graduates in June 2009.

It is not known how many Social Care Workers there are in Ireland. The 2008 HSE Personnel census records 3405 in HSE and HSE-funded agencies. The trade union IMPACT estimates 3000-5000 members are social care workers. At the upper end of estimates, the Health and Social Care Professionals Council predicts 8000 people will be eligible to register once the Social Care Workers Registration Board is established. In the meantime, there are currently 4201 Level 7 and 8 social care students nationwide (and many more in the Further Education sector at Levels 5 & 6).

It is a matter of concern that this expansion of student numbers and course providers has occurred in the absence of any central planning or strategic vision as to how many social care workers Ireland needs. Surely a profession with a membership of somewhere between 4000 and 8000 cannot absorb 1269 (and growing) graduates each year?

The Institute of Technology Act (2006) transfers responsibility for funding of IoTs to the Higher Education Authority (HEA) which has a role in managing diversity of provision of Higher Education so as to avoid unnecessary duplication. Specifically, the HEA has a role:

"To ensure that quality and value for money is achieved in the allocation of exchequer funding, especially towards high-cost areas of provision, such as architecture, medicine and others, and, in particular, that unnecessary duplication is avoided and beneficial collaboration is fostered"

(HEA Strategic Plan 2008-2013, p. 24).

This issue should be a matter of particular concern to members of the Irish Association of Social Care Educators, which should lobby the HEA for a more coordinated, strategic approach to social care education.

Upcoming Events

The IASCW, IASCE and RMA (Resident Managers Association) will meet in early April to continue developing a coordinated approach in all matters dealing with registration. This meeting will also have the benefit of hearing from Peter Cullen of HETAC who is head of a consultative group to develop National Standards for Social Care Education. This is a high priority for HETAC.

At another level IASCW, IASCE and RMA have indicated that there is need for discussion on developing closer links at organisational level and the individual executives will give a direction on this as to what is the best and most effective way forward. From an IASCW perspective it is worth noting that this process is not simply about amalgamating the three groups. A number of areas would demand particular scrutiny. The ones that come to mind immediately are to do with the IASCW constitution, executive representation, membership, fees etc. It is important, however, that a start is made and it is expected that we will have news on this when you get your next edition of CURAM in June.

Membership

Why not get your social care friends to join the IASCW? Membership details are available on our website at www.iascw.ie or iascw@hotmail.com

Executive Changes

Anne Morahan and Karen Heavey have been co opted on to the IASCW executive following the AGM. Anne replaces Dunia Hutchinson as residential rep. while Karen (2nd yr. DIT) becomes student rep. replacing Brian Reed who is now the detention schools' rep. David Power is now Vice President. Many thanks to Dunia for her work in the past and agreeing to stay involved on matters regarding the association website.

Phone Bullying

An increasingly unwelcome phenomenon of the age we live in is the problem of cyber bullying and mobile phone bullying. When the foster parents of a fifteen year old girl with mild learning difficulties found she was being plagued by bullying phone calls they decided to do something about it. They found that Sentry Wireless had developed software to deal with this problem but none of the Irish operators had taken on the system.

In August of last year the parents wrote to the four mobile operators with the result that Mobile Operator 3 has launched the "KidSafe" application on the Nokia 6220 handset and hopes to extend the range in the future. The foster parents in question have found the system to be working extremely well.

Thanks to Sentry Wireless we are enclosing some basic information on 3's KidSafe system as we are fairly certain that children in the community or in care situations along with those who care for them may find this useful.

Thanks to Matt Norton and Sharon Kiernan of Sentry Wireless for their help in this matter and to Sharon Storey for her initiative.

A thought does occur about the reluctance of the other mobile operators to take up on such a system. Is it purely mercenary in that they would lose revenue by having a social conscience on this issue? Well done to Sentry. In a not unrelated topic, neuroscientist Professor Susan Greenfield recently told the British government that the prevalence of onscreen friendships via Facebook, Twitter and the like will create an infantilised mid 21st century mind that is characterised by ADHD, "a disregard for consequence," "an inability to empathise" and a "shaky sense of identity."

All in all, not a pleasant prospect.