



IASW

Irish Association of Social Workers  
Cumann na hÉireann um Oibríthe Sóisialta

## SUMMER NEWSLETTER

August 2019

# ALL-IRELAND SOCIAL WORK RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The 14th of June, a small committee in representation of IASW organised the 1st All-Ireland Social Work Research Conference in Dublin. The aim was to share and demonstrate the high standards of social work research that is being carried throughout Ireland. The conference had a total of 130 participants and 54 presentations, creating a great environment to raise awareness of the exceptional research of social workers. The feedback was excellent and the presentations from all the researchers were praised. We especially thank Niamh Flanagan, Sarah Donnelly, Kerry Cuskelly and Eavan Brady as well as Sylvia Ryan, CPD Officer and Danielle McGoldrick, Office Manager, who formed the committee that took care of organising this wonderful event. Due to the high interest and attendance, and the positive outcome, the IASW looks forward to the opportunity of organising more conferences in the future, furthering promoting and supporting the labour of social workers all over the country.



### Awarded Presentations

**Zoe Hughes**

AISWR Contribution to Practice Award

**Sean Lynch**

IASW Breaking Boundaries Award

**Deirdre McKenna**

AISWR Gasta Award

**Sandie Murphy**

AISWR Methodology Award



### PRESENTATIONS

In order to download all the presentations from the Conference, go to this link:

<https://iasw.ie/events/135-fully-booked-all-ireland-social-work-research-conference>



## CONTRIBUTIONS FROM THE WINNERS

The winners prepared a summary of the content of their presentations during the "All-Ireland Social Work Research Conference" in order to share with all the members of the IASW. We thank them very much for their contributions to the Newsletter.

### Zoe Hughes

#### **Talking Points: Developing the Care Alliance Ireland Discussion Paper Series for students, researchers, and front-line workers:**

I was very pleased to be awarded the 2019 AISWR Award for Contribution to Practice at the recent inaugural conference in Dublin. I was particularly pleased to showcase the Care Alliance Ireland Discussion Paper Series as the focus of the presentation, titled, "Talking Points: Developing the Care Alliance Ireland Discussion Paper Series for students, researchers, and front-line workers". The Series was developed to bring together core literature and practical feedback across a range of issues facing family carers, and the professionals who support them, in Ireland. Each paper in the series discusses a particular topic, ranging from the definitions of the term 'family carer' across sectors, to the impact of family care on intimate relationships, to the particular challenges facing family carers from minority populations. The series is designed and written to be accessible, practical and of interest to front-line workers, academics, students and family carers alike. All papers in the Series are available at:

<http://www.carealliance.ie/discussionpapers>.

### Sean Lynch

#### **Stability for Who? An exploration of the experiences of parents with children in foster care:**

This presentation focused on the initial findings of a research project being undertaken by Sean Lynch and Majella Hynan, Limerick Social Service Council CLG. The research focuses on parents who have experience of having a child/children in state care. The presentation discussed the concept of 'stability in care' but from the perspective of parents. Parent's personal sense of powerlessness was explored, as was their experiences of relationships and communication with foster carers and social workers.

In exploring the factors that contribute to 'stability' from a parent's perspective, this study highlighted the value that parents attach to being included and involved in matters pertaining to their children. This presentation concluded by highlighting the importance of relationships, continuity and communication in this context as well as the challenges faced by parents in navigating supports that are primarily focused on their child.

### Deirdre McKenna

#### **The Heart of Living and Dying:**

I was delighted to have an opportunity to do a Gasta presentation at the first All-Ireland Social Work Research Conference in Dublin. The presentation was on an initiative I developed called "The Heart of Living and Dying" which is a 2-hour group process contributing to a public health approach to advance care planning (ACP). I knew from my own practice as a specialist palliative care social worker in the Southern Health and Social Care Trust that getting the timing of when to introduce and conduct ACP conversations is difficult for people. This practice experience was borne out in a systematic narrative review I conducted through Ulster University's Evidence Informed Practitioner and Organisation course, called Family/Carer perspectives of advance care planning.

Through "The Heart of Living and Dying" we try to bring advance care planning into the public domain, encouraging anyone, not only those who are ill, to participate in a gentle, supported conversation about what matters to them in living and dying and then begin to plan ahead. By so doing, we hope it encourages people who are well, to think forward and explore their own goals, hopes, concerns, or fears regarding what is important to them for their final years.

I wrote a facilitator's guide to help health and social care professionals plan and hold this type of conversation so that more people have the opportunity to engage with the important reality of their own mortality.

I am currently completing an evaluation of "The Heart of Living and Dying" initiative, through UUJ Research Methods course. I hope this robust evaluation will provide practitioners with the evidence base they need to offer these conversations where they are. I was fortunate enough to have my Gasta recognized at the conference with an AISWR award. For this I am very honoured and grateful.

### Sandie Murphy

#### **Social Work Students Perceptions of their Readiness to Practice with LGBT Clients:**

The research was submitted as a M.A. dissertation to the National University of Ireland, Galway, and was supervised by Dr. Declan Coogan.

The research aimed to gather the perceptions of social work students on their readiness to practice with LGBT clients. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach, mixed methods were utilised. The first stage of data was collected through an online questionnaire. This data was analysed and further explored through semi-structured interviews.

The research found that 74% of participants felt somewhat or very prepared to work with lesbian, gay or bisexual clients. While only 42% of students felt somewhat or very prepared to work with transgender clients.

The research found that although there are a number of applicable core Social Work skills, values and knowledge that can be utilised for competent practice with LGBT clients, there is a need for increased information, training and awareness in Social Work education. The participants suggested that this could be achieved through further research on social work with LGBT clients, the inclusion of LGBT specific content in the classroom and the inclusion of the LGBT community in developing and delivering some aspects of social work education. All respondents identified the importance of transgender specific training within social work education.