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OFFICIAL PHRASES ILLUSTRATED
'The matter is under active consideration.'

Dublin Opinion, September 1954

See Registration Article inside - Page 10

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healthcare

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Cover Illustration: with appreciation to Pauline Bracken.

EDITORIAL - LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

As usual, this edition of the IASCW's first publication of 2013 is an eclectic mix. And speaking of 2013, it may be the end of January before you open this but best wishes for the new year and every success whether you are in practice, management or education. Will it be a better year? A year ago the cover of CURAM looked toward 2016 with a question New Dawn or False Dawn?

Social care workers, managers and educators will be at one in pointing to the deepening cuts and hardly a conversation takes place without adverting to how "things have changed" or "that was then but this is now". 2012 saw a number of things happen that the sceptic might, understandably, have cast doubt on a year ago.

The referendum on the rights of the child, the wording of which was argued about for years, was carried on November 10th. The cynic who suggested the referendum would not take place in 2012 may have been proven wrong but may well and rightly have posed a question about the appalling voter apathy so evident on the day.

After years of moralising about all the wrongs of the past surely it was a fair expectation that the Irish voters would, once and for all, let the world see that it was passionate about children's rights. Whether in the YES or NO camp, at least one might expect a very high turnout. Did that happen? Incredulously, over 66% of Irish voters did not see fit to make the effort to vote on a constitutional amendment that so many had called for and so many had championed as a symbolic and practical indication that Irish people are on the side of children.

Further analysis and comment in the media suggesting that many of those who did vote may have followed a time worn path relating to referenda, took an opportunity presented to vote on something or anything and simply voted against the government. That simply poured salt into the wounds and raises further questions about the real commitment or rather lack of it toward children that characterises us as a nation. In many ways it reveals so much about the many questions raised in abuse reports about who knew what was going on when and where children were being abused. If "doing something about it" was the question then, let us fast forward to the referendum turnout. It can certainly be contended that in one way nothing has changed. All the bleating, hand wringing, outrage on radio, TV, print and social media after the Ryan Report and others seems somewhat feigned now if our response, whether YES or NO on November 10th last, was so abysmally depressing and pathetic.

This leads to another area about which constitutional change may again arise in the future. The Constitutional Convention has begun its deliberations on eight issues and has set an ambitious target of reporting its view to government on all eight issues by the end of this year. The first two areas to be considered are a possible reduction in the presidential term of office from seven to five years and a **reduction in the voting age to seventeen(17)**. In 2010 the IASCW gave its view on the reduction of the voting age from 18 to 16 and argued against it. No response disagreeing with that view was received. Now that 16 has become 17 the executive of the association has taken a similar stand and has done so on the principles enunciated in the 2010 edition of CURAM when it's cover called for YES on Children's Rights being enshrined in the constitution and NO to votes at 16. Elsewhere in this edition you will find what has been submitted by the IASCW to the Constitutional Convention. This submission had to be with the Convention by January 11th so the executive decided to go ahead based on the principles which underpinned the argument relating to votes at 16. The executive is confident that it reflects the views of our members who work with the marginalised and deprived who by law are children up to the age of 18. There are far greater needs for children than reducing the voting age to 17.

A year on the sceptic may be in a position to have their doubts confirmed on another issue. Moving the **Child and Family Services** away from the HSE to within the Department of Children was to take place on January 1st 2013. That will not now take place until later this year. Over 4000 staff will move to the new agency so the logistics of that can be appreciated. Again, we all called for this move to take place for reasons that are obvious. Let us hope that it will be a new beginning, albeit in tough economic circumstances, which will "do what it says on the tin". We wish all those involved every success in what is a daunting task.

One area where the cynic was proven right was that the Social Care board within CORU to begin the **Statutory Registration** process, promised before the end of 2012, did not materialise. Hopefully, 2013 will see the board established which will be the beginning of what may well be a long and tortuous process to get the social care register open. Even with some of the bodies seeking registration, smaller in number and far clearer in terms of qualification, etc. than social care workers, unforeseen issues have arisen and slowed the process down. With social care workers as the largest group it is simply realistic to expect that similar issues may arise. See elsewhere in this edition for further information and a contextual reference to 1988 which led to choosing the cover illustration for this edition.

Another area where we had hoped progress might have been made was on the appointment of a CPD officer for social care. Much progress has been made on this matter with the HSE and the IASCW. DIT, which will employ the new officer as part of its external contracts system is in the final stages of approving the process and it is planned that advertising and interviewing will then take place. As all of the above suggests, 2013 will be an interesting and challenging year. A foretaste of what's ahead may emerge at the Social Care Ireland conference in Limerick with its theme of Social Care 2013 – Challenge, Change, Opportunity?. The date for your diary on that is March 20th and 21st and information is included elsewhere in CURAM.

BETTER BULLIES

KIARAS GHARABAGHI © NOVEMBER 2012

Bullying is widely recognized as a significant and growing problem in North American society, and likely elsewhere. The rise of mobile technologies, combined with social media, has accelerated this trend. Young people are committing suicide at alarming rates after having been victimized by bullies. Anyone can become a target, although we do tend to focus on specific issues or identities when it comes to the victims. I worry that this emphasis on specific characteristics may inadvertently expose some young people to even more bullying. Gay youth, for example, are often seen as particularly vulnerable in this context, and as much as we try to express empathy for and acceptance of gay youth, as well as outrage about their victimization, we are ultimately reinforcing their identity as victims, as individuals in need of societal protection, and therefore as legitimate (in a macabre sort of a way) targets for the bullies. After all, from the perspective of a bully, it hardly seems worthwhile to invest all of that energy and effort into bullying those who conform to mainstream expectations of what is normal.

It seems to me that our core approaches to mitigating the bullying problem are not working particularly well. 'Protecting the victims' is an affront to those labeled as potential or even likely victims, accentuating that far from acceptance, we are hyper conscious of their difference, and we are constructing that difference as weakness and vulnerability. The other extreme, popular amongst 'common sense' right wing extremists, involves criminalizing the bullies and their actions wherever possible, imposing increasingly stiff sentences, and exposing bullies as evil, good for nothing losers who need to be removed from places where youth gather (such as schools). This approach has not worked in any other context where young people behave insensitively to others, break the law, or conduct themselves in opposition to social norms and expectations. The 'get tough on bullies' approach is further complicated by the fact that many bullies are themselves victims of being bullied, if not by their peers, than perhaps at home.

The more we tell young people that bullying is wrong, mean-spirited, and devastating and potentially deadly to the victims, the more bullying seems to proliferate. Far too many young people find comfort in those spaces that are constructed as anti-social and outside of what is deemed acceptable by parents, school administrators and law enforcement agencies. In my experience, young people who feel attacked (and telling them that they are evil is an attack) tend to do what good soccer teams do; the best defense is a strong offense. "If you call me evil, I will prove you right, but to an extent and with a forcefulness that will surprise you". I am tempted to suggest an entirely different approach to this problem. Instead of labeling bullying as wrong, we might label it as a mental health problem, a sickness, a disorder. But I am all too weary about invoking yet another form of attack that ultimately serves to not only perpetuate stereotypes about mental health, but also allows all of us to abdicate responsibility for this issue by constructing it as an individual's disease with no societal connection. I can just imagine the joy in the boardrooms of the pharmaceutical companies who undoubtedly would produce a little white pill to treat this new disorder.

With no particular idea about how to deal with bullying or bullies, I started thinking about what we might be missing here. And it occurred to me that perhaps our uncertainty about how to deal with this is impacted by an out of date concept of what bullying actually looks like these days. The now almost romantic notion of a big, not very bright guy waiting for the little, somewhat nerdy kid on his way home from school and then proceeding to push him around or beat him up is probably not reflective of the contemporary bullying problem (but it does still happen). Something much more sinister is unfolding these days when it comes to bullying. Given social media and the almost immediate access to an audience, bullying is not really about the act of victimizing a particular individual; it is instead about the responses to publicly engaging in this act in as witty, brutal and consequential manner possible. There is a competitive element that has crept into bullying culture amongst young people; it isn't just about hurting someone; instead, it is about outdoing how others might have hurt that someone. The victim is incidental in the process of bullying, a mere rudimentary tool for the glorification of the bully. And that glorification is now a social need, not an individual need. No amount of therapy, medication or punishment can match the exhilaration experienced when others are impressed with the sheer brutality, the thoughtless exploitation and the absolute abandonment of social standards performed by the modern bully. And no sooner is there even the slightest indication that a bully may have done well, is there the seed for the next bully seeking to up the standard of bullying greatness. Today, nobody wants to be a bully; many young people want to be the best bully.

If I am even partially right, the bullying problem is a problem of an entirely different nature than what we perceive it as. Far from reflecting dysfunction and abnormality, it in fact reflects the very values that we work hard to instill in young people everyday. “Be the Best at something”; “Everyone has a talent, you just have to find yours”; “Aim high”; “Play to Win”; “Shoot for Gold”; “Be the best that you can be”. Let’s face it, we reinforce the concept of one-upmanship all the time. In hockey, we tell kids to hit harder. In school, we evaluate the performance of our kids based on the class average, and we encourage kids to beat the average. In fact, we role model bullying all the time too; in politics, a good debate is about beating the other guy, not about making good points. The means justify the end and in the process, truth is an expendable commodity.

Every bully knows that their victim might be hurt severely by their actions; indeed, most bullies know that their victim might die. This is not enough to stop them. Being good at something, in this case bullying, is more important than the fate of the victim. At some point, we have to take a long, hard look at what we are teaching our young people. And we have to reassess whether encouraging young people to try and be the best is a good thing. What is wrong with being good at something, without the ambition of being better than everyone else? Does ‘good’ become mediocre or even weak if someone else is better? These questions give rise to what may at first appear as a rather confusing and convoluted way to fight bullying. You may have to read the next paragraph twice:

If we want to encourage young people to be or do better, we should encourage them to be or do more good, because more goodness is better than less goodness. But it is best not to think of better as a replacement of good, since this inherently means that better could mean something that is not good. Outdoing each other to be or do more good is a good thing. And it is different than outdoing each other to do better, which then renders the good as less than good, because now the better is the new good.

I recognize of course that not all bullying is in search of an audience. Much of on-line bullying takes place anonymously, although I am not entirely certain that anonymity is really as complete as it may appear. Many young people know each others’ pseudonyms, and in fact there is an element of outdoing one another even in the selection of the pseudonym itself. Still, it is likely that some bullying is intended to remain anonymous. In those cases, I would still suspect that this is about an audience, albeit an audience of one – oneself. The impact on another person of one’s bullying efforts is at least better than irrelevance and having no impact on anyone. And being or doing better, as mentioned, is the message we impose on young people every day. Being good is never good enough.

One pattern that has become well documented in some of the higher profile bullying cases in recent years is that young victims are rarely driven to desperation by just one bully. They are victims of multiple bullies banding together in an ever-deepening assault on the very right to live of the young victim. Somewhat disturbingly, these group bullies are not ‘bad kids’ in the traditional sense. Many of them are high performers in school, live happy family lives, are active in sports, etc. But they are driven to succeed, and success is always about striving for ‘the better’. I think the time has come to help young people find inspiration in the good rather than the better. More good is a valuable goal, challenges young people to find their place in multiple settings, reflects a call to action that is inherently anti-bullying oriented and ultimately rejects the valorization of always having to do better, even if one is replacing good with bad.

Fundamentally, the goal ought to be to help young people pause and think before responding to someone else’s insult of another person. Ideally, the outcome of that thinking process will be the realization that there is no need to outdo the initiator. It is unnecessary to do better or to be the best. If we want to render a bully vulnerable, we ought not to insult him or her, nor ought we to label him or her as evil. Instead, a Bully should learn that his or her actions just aren’t worth outdoing. The message is “you’re on your own with this one”, and it seems to me that if there is one time when bullies get very sacred, it is when that screen on their mobile device stays ‘silent’.

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With Appreciation to CYC-net for its co-operation in allowing us to use this article.*

KINDNESS - THE FORGOTTEN INTERVENTION

MAX SMART

KINDNESS: A LANGUAGE THE DEAF CAN HEAR AND THE BLIND CAN SEE.

(ANON)

A few days prior to writing this article a middle aged woman came to my home. She had previously enquired, a short time prior to this visit, about my youngest son who had been playing outside the home of an older gentleman in our village. When she came to my house she brought some chocolates and some flowers. Chocolates for my son, flowers for my wife.

Now I did not know the woman but she informed me that she was the niece of the old man whose house my son plays near. She advised that over the course of the severe winter of 2010 that she had been aware of a local family who made sure her elderly uncle was okay, bringing him hot meals, clearing his path of snow and bringing in his coal. The woman did not know who it was that had acted so kindly towards her uncle and it was only recently that she had found out, so she wanted to say thank you.

CIRCULAR KINDNESS

Now let's not get too gooey here, my family were just looking out for an elder in the community in a harsh winter, but look how these acts connected people. The kind actions of my son and wife came back in the kind actions of someone else, who brought gifts and thanks. My son was not known by the relative of the elder gentleman, but he is now. So kindness can create new relationships whilst it also supports and sustains existing relationships. Kindness also something that gives meaning to our lives and makes the lives of others more hopeful and satisfying, (Long,2007). As reported by Hamilton,(2010), "Mother Teresa was reported as saying we cannot do great things in this world, just small things with great kindness" p1.

Kindness Feels Good

When you carry out acts of kindness you get a wonderful feeling inside. It is as though something inside your body responds and says, yes, this is how I ought to feel. (Harold Kushner)

It is often reported by people that they feel good about themselves when they have acted kindly towards others, (Hamilton, 2010). Luks (1991) refers to this feeling as "helper's high" a physical release of Oxytocin. Oxytocin is the body's pleasure hormone and the release of this chemical is the reaction from the body which motivates people to act in kind, generous and altruistic ways.

Altruism is the principle or practice of concern for the welfare of others. Like kindness altruism is reciprocal, it is what Martin Brokenleg refers to as generosity for the good of all. Reciprocal generosity has been a tenet of human evolution where taking care of all was at the heart of the survival of all. Kind acts were essential as families and communities relied on all to survive and thrive. Being kind to other made it more likely that people would be kind to you. Kind acts therefore bring kind acts.

Kindness has been taught as virtuous in all the major religions on earth, which ties in with notions of charity, compassion, generosity and even welfare support. Though I'm not particularly religious, kindness resonates with me as similar to the Jewish notion of mitzvah or the Good Samaritan in Christian teaching; that the world is essentially built on kindness. As noted by the Dalai Lama "... compassion [kindness] is not religious business. It is not luxury, it is essential for our own peace and mental stability... it is essential for human survival".

A NEGLECTED INTERVENTION

Kindness can become its own motive. We are made kind by being kind. (Eric Hoffer)

I have worked with troubled children for 26 years. In my work I have been trained to counsel, to intervene in crisis, work with troubled relationships and to protect children. Many of these interventions are effective and I'm sure have assisted and supported many families and troubled individuals over the years. Over the many years I have practiced I have discovered that some of the most effective work I have ever done is when I have connected with a youngster and created trust. The creation of that trust has often opened the door to meeting the child's needs in many other ways and been the vehicle for change in the youngsters functioning.

As Garfat (2011) reports "one of the most important shifts which has occurred in our thinking about helping and healing is the shift from simply reacting to behaviour to responding to needs" p.1. Making relationships and meeting needs often starts with small acts of kindness. So why on earth, in the field of social care where human relations and relationships are so important; where these interactions are researched and written up widely, has

the importance of kindness relatively gone un-noticed?

Maybe kindness has been thought to have been too vague a concept to tie down; maybe it has been thought to be something we all know about anyway so commonplace that it needs no comment. Long (2007) however, talks about kindness as a neglected area of care practice. Recognising the importance of the subject he reports: “staff kindness has an important therapeutic value... and has been neglected or disregarded in reclaiming troubled students”. Long advises that “just as sunlight is the source of energy that maintains organic life, kindness is the source of energy that maintains and gives meaning to humanity, p.1.”

PUTTING KINDNESS ON THE CARE MAP

Kindness is in our power, even when fondness is not. (Samuel Johnson)

Putting kindness at the heart of what we do in social care may sound a bit sugary sweet, but I would assert that acts of kindness are the core of healing and development. As a residential practitioner/researcher I have grown to appreciate that kind acts have a disproportionate impact on the development of young people and staff. Kind acts are at the core of caring (Maier, 1979).

Acts of kindness are richly imbued with meaning and are hugely significant to young people who have often been starved of kindness in their lives. As August Aichorn, the Austrian psychologist (1878 - 1949) noted “... talking together and an attitude of forgiveness towards even the worst offenders seemed to us the most valuable method”. For staff caring for youngsters in difficulty, kind acts are often the stuff you are not paid to do; the stuff that is beyond the normal, the above and beyond that starts and sustains relational connection and belonging.

When staff demonstrate and model acts of human kindness often in spontaneous ways it validates that kids matter, that you were thinking about them even though you were not with them, then kindness becomes culturally evident throughout your program, (Marston, 2001). Kind acts become the “lubricant” that conveys genuine empathy and warmth. I have seen and also received many kindnesses in my care career. These acts are often thought of as instinctual, just what people do. But these instinctual acts are now being validated by advances in neuroscience.

KINDNESS AND THE BRAIN

Compassion is closely linked to kindness. In compassion we share another’s pain and wish them free of suffering. Hamilton (2010) advises that humans are actually hard wired to be kind. He points to the discovery of the “Vagus Nerve” in the brain which is responsible for the release of Oxytocin. Hamilton advises that research into the influence of Oxytocin on bonding is beginning to show us that we are “wired to show kindness, to show selfless acts to co-operate share and trust”, p.6.

Advances in neuroscience now challenge the notion that humans are inherently egocentric and selfish. Neuroscience may actually prove that humans are more predisposed to give and also receive kindness. As we discover more and more about how human brains work; what is becoming clearer is that kindness may have greater utility in human well-being than previously thought and may be more effective than many traditional drugs or therapies. I would argue that we now need to consider kindness as a therapeutic intervention in its own right.

I will leave the last words in this article to Lao-Tse:

Kindness in words creates confidence.

Kindness in thinking creates profundity.

Kindness in giving creates love.

So let’s be kind out there.

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“WITH YOUR MIND IN MIND”

DAVID PITHERS

Looking after children has become increasingly concerned with their emotional development and compensating for difficult and damaging experiences. The replacement of behaviour control and prescriptive strategies by sensitive understanding and an emphasis on personal choice, and the ability to choose, can only be welcomed. The concern about education and academic development has not, regrettably, led to similar success. There are, of course, a variety of reasons for this. The children often come from backgrounds which are hostile or indifferent to schools and schooling and ascribe low value to regular education, although it must be said that they learn in other ways. One of the other issues that is often acknowledged and as frequently ignored is that the children may have little room in their lives for learning, so preoccupied are they with surviving, enduring, and beginning to cope with the emotional damage that has been imposed on them. The periodic attempts to address the educational needs of hurt and disadvantaged children have not been notably successful and the liberating effects of learning still seem to pass them by. This is no less than tragic and efforts to rectify this situation must still be encouraged.

However, there is another area of personal development which, whilst related to the other two, may be easier to rectify but is seldom even noticed, it is intellectual ability. Those who work with children who are looked after have long been aware that they are exceptionally ‘bright’, adept at argument, and perceptive in understanding the flaws in others who try, often unsuccessfully, to take them on. Often this is seen as ‘oppositional’ behaviour that is resistant to ‘reason’ and is deliberately ignored or repressed. Often the anger and protest that is mobilized in this way encounters only limp cliché. One of the most exasperating examples of this is when dealing with claims of unfairness. The familiar retort to this is ‘life’s unfair’. The next question of why life is unfair, whether this is inevitable or pre-ordained, is seldom asked. What is lacking is argument and analysis, or even conversation. Recently with one of the younger children I was helping to look after and who was declaiming against an alleged unfairness I pointed out that one of the greatest philosophers of the modern era, John Rawls, made fairness the most fundamental characteristic of his monumental theory of justice. She became interested and, incidentally, suspended her stopping on the issue. I explained that his argument was founded on the concept of the ‘original position’ which argued that if we could go back to the beginning in the formation of an ethical system that we would choose for others what we would wish for ourselves, and that would inevitably mean fairness. Her response was, ‘There never was an [adjective deleted] original position’. Good point! We argued it for three hours and it became one of the best discussions I have had on the difference between retributive and distributive justice. It probably did not change anything except perhaps to suggest an ability to think critically. When that remarkable thinker Gramsci said that everybody is a philosopher he was not just asserting that we can all think but that we can all think creatively, imaginatively, and critically.

For a time, in the dotage of my career, I briefly held the title of ‘resident philosopher’ in a child-care organization. The children were fascinated by this and took the opportunity to argue and dispute, or else to talk about belief and opinion. Sometimes these conversations were difficult and may have appeared to dignify repugnant positions by paying attention to them. When racist, sexist, football, and other discriminatory statements are made it is usually the more ‘liberal’ of us who are the quickest to repress them as not to be spoken. But that is unlikely to change anything. Of course engaging in argument and discussion may not change anything either, dogmatic views can be very intransigent, but it respects the person to take their ideas seriously even if they are reprehensible.

To be held responsible for one’s ideas, beliefs, opinions, and principles and subject them to argument is distinctively human and is therefore subject to development. Children love to argue and they often become articulate and clear when they have something to argue about. If we genuinely accept the principle of diversity, and often we are liberal in principle and rigid in practice, helping children to develop their capacity for thought and expression is to contribute to their humanity. I was once arguing with a child about equality and socialism when he said ‘Yes, ok, but you still can’t solve the cabbage problem.’ This was new to me. He said, ‘If you go to any town, village, or hamlet in this country and they have a shop it is more than likely that you can buy a cabbage, If you tried to do this by central planning it would be a nightmare and you would end up with a cabbage famine like they did in the Soviet Union.’ He held a number of extreme right wing views that were opposed to mine. He did not change my mind or I his, but whenever I try to defend socialism at the back of my mind I am thinking about the cabbage problem. He was not usually very articulate and was still having problems with reading and writing but he put me on the back foot, and enjoyed his success [an experience with which he was unfamiliar].

When I was a university teacher of philosophy I was seldom defeated in argument by my students. Of course there are structural, institutional, and other reasons for this as well as intellectual ones. However, I could be argued into the ground by the children I looked after who could use their penetrating and disconcerting logic. Adults are not all that keen to acknowledge that they could be wrong and have far more difficulty with argument. An organization I worked for would assert a commitment to diversity and then insist that everybody should 'sing from the same song-sheet'. That is not to say that diversity should have no limits but this was a strait-jacket.

Children who have been emotionally hurt or neglected often have to survive in an internal world of chaos, confusion, anger, resentment and fear. We try to help them deal with this through compensatory relationships and understanding. This is more effective than we sometimes think. I would simply like to add to it the intellectual search for meaning and for making sense of experience. My partner has a notice in the sitting room that says, 'Don't go to bed angry, stay up and fight!' This is one principle that we do live up to.

In a famous Peanuts cartoon Charlie Brown is having one of his pyrrhic arguments with Lucy when she suddenly turns and hits him, from his recumbent position, comes a plaintive 'Why?' To which she replies, 'You were beginning to make sense'.

David Pithers *Child Care Consultant*

David Pithers has worked with children for 50 years and also has media and publishing experience. He lives in England.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

As a social care worker, I would like to see more pressure put on organisations that employ staff who work with vulnerable people to ensure that their employees have a social care degree as an essential requirement and not just as a desirable requirement. In my experience, this is still ongoing practice for many employers within social care. I also see a loop hole for organisations employing people as "facilitators", "care workers", "project workers" etc. who work with vulnerable people but yet they are essentially doing the job of a social care worker but are not called that. They are on a lower pay scale which of course saves money for these social care providers but it also reduces the standard of social care provision because the majority of these employees do not hold a third level degree and if they do, it is more than often not a social care degree. Ultimately, the service users suffer who are not getting an adequate service which is what they deserve. This can lead to a lack professionalism and accountability. In my experience, training provided by organisations is often inadequate and is used to tick the box to make the organisation appear accountable. Ongoing professional training and development is important but without having a common base to start from (i.e. a social care qualification), this can be a challenge. To my mind and from my experience, a one day training course here and there cannot be a substitute for studying social care at third level.

I have left two jobs working with vulnerable adults. In one of them I was employed as a social care worker working with colleagues also employed as social care workers but without a (social care) degree. I received no supervision, nor did people know what that was. I wondered why I even went to college. The other job I left because of lack of quality supervision and lack of professionalism of my colleagues, none of which had a social care degree, let alone a degree in a related discipline. I was not employed as a social care worker as this was not an essential requirement for this particular organisation that provides services for 50,000 people with an intellectual disability. Again I wondered why I went to college. I saw social care students come into my former places of work, not receiving quality supervision. One of my colleagues with no third level qualification commented on how "some students think they know it all" and that they would soon find out "that their ideas will never work in here". This has not been my experience of students as they often bring in fresh ideas and new approaches, and I have been a student on placement once, too. I fear that many social care providers will lose out on good and fit to practice staff because they do not look for qualified social care workers, all it seems to save money, and all at the cost of service users.

Having been brought up in Germany, where the social care profession is well known and respected and valued for what it is, I hope this will happen in Ireland in due course.

Anne Hynes

(BA ordinary from St. Patrick's Carlow College (2005), and currently studying for BA honours at DKIT)

NEW “CHILD & FAMILY” AGENCY

The deadline (January 1st 2013) set for the new Child & Family Support agency to begin operations has passed. The government has not yet indicated when this will happen as legislative changes have to be put in place and the movement of a service with over four thousand staff from the HSE was bound to be problematic in certain areas. April 1st this year is a date that has been mentioned so it's a matter of waiting to see what happens. One other detail is that the actual name of the new body has not yet been confirmed. It is a fair assumption that Children+ Family+ Service(s) will feature but whether “Support” will be included or not remains to be seen.

SOCIAL CARE IRELAND UPDATE

The new nine person executive had its first full meeting in early December. There was agreement that preparatory work in terms of getting the groundwork done and the new executive in place had been achieved. A further meeting will take place on March 1st next which will plan for the period up to the end of 2014. This will be a period which will really test the ability of the new umbrella body for IASCW, IASCE and IASCM to build on what has been already achieved and leave a legacy that is workable and effective. Your ideas on what that legacy should be or on any other areas you consider important are welcome at info@socialcareireland.ie

REGISTRATION

The editorial noted that CORU's intention to enable the process of establishing the social care board within CORU was not realised. It is hoped that this process will begin in 2013 after which there will be much to be done in an area that will be complex and intensive.

It has been previously mentioned in CURAM and the newsletter that representatives of the bodies in line for registration meet four times a year to share ideas and anticipate problems that may arise based on what each of the bodies may have experienced.

It has been decided to move forward with this ad hoc group and hold discussions regarding the establishment of a Professional Bodies' Alliance (PBA). Such an alliance would strengthen the position of individual professions in negotiations on issues common to all, including but not restricted to issues relating to statutory registration. Discussions are ongoing with regard to particular issues that may arise for certain professions were such an alliance to be formed.

Two members of Social care Ireland met with CORU in early December regarding the CPD aspect of registration. CPD will be an integral part of life around registration. When registered it will be an ongoing requirement to indicate what CPD has been completed and a minimum level of activity will be necessary. There will be a large focus on reflective practice in CPD. It will be the responsibility of the professional bodies to audit the CPD courses. There are a variety of CPD models and registrants will be responsible for seeking out which suits their particular professional needs.

CORU will be giving further details around CPD later this year.

Much to be done on all aspects of registration and we will keep you appraised as time goes on.

If you think all this is taking too long let us just to put the registration process in context. Here is an extract from a letter dated –don't adjust your glasses - *November 2nd 1988* from the office of the Minister for Health to the association relating to registration.

I am directed by the Minister for Health to refer to previous correspondence concerning the question of legislation to provide for the registration of designated professional groups.

I now enclose a consultative document outlining the general background to this issue and posing a number of questions which the Minister is anxious should be responded to by the groups and interests affected. Because of his desire to progress this matter, I am to ask you to make a response by 25th November, 1988. The written response can be supplemented in the course of discussions thereafter, but it is the Minister's intention to bring proposals to the Government before the end of December, if possible.

Which brings to mind the Will Rogers quip: “I don't make jokes. I just watch the government and report the facts.”

Curam's cover for this edition was prompted by the above extract from 1988 when it appears the matter of registration was “under active consideration”. With appreciation to Pauline Bracken.

VOTES AT 17?

In early December 2012 the Constitutional Convention, set up by the government to examine issues of constitutional importance and relevance, met for the first time. Fifty politicians from North and South and fifty representatives of the public make up the convention. It will consider eight issues among them the reduction of the voting age to seventeen years.

In 2010, when this idea was first mooted the IASCW considered this at executive level and issued a press release taking issue with the suggestion. At that time the question of the reduction applying to children aged sixteen was in the news. At that time no member of the association responded to the press release which was contained in the CURAM edition of Summer 2010.

What follows is an amended form of that press release and the basic points made then are just as relevant now. The executives of the IASCE and IASCM will consult with their members on this to ascertain if opposition to the proposal will be one that Social Care Ireland is taking or if the IASCW will oppose it on its own. It is obviously hoped that the other two bodies will be of the same view as the IASCW.

The submission to the Constitution Convention had to be submitted by January 11, 2013.

Have you a view on this or has your view changed since 2010?

If so let us know at iascw@hotmail.com or nh99@eircom.net

NO TO VOTES AT 17

Members of our Association work with, among others, marginalised and deprived children.

The needs of these children, exemplified in some recent tragic cases, are very far removed from whether they have the right to vote at 17, or not.

The work of our members is very often around restoring, where possible, some semblance of the experience of childhood to those up to the age of 18 for whom childhood has been fractured or cruelly stolen.

The campaign to extend the voting age to 17 does not appear to recognise that reality.

We say that, aware of the fact that many 17 year olds may fortunately not be in that fragile category and indeed may be very keen and interested in politics.

However, in law, they are all still children until they are 18. There is a growing body of opinion which suggests that the concept of childhood is seen by many as extending beyond 18 and that, neurologically, young people have not arrived at adulthood by that age.

For these reasons our executive (IASCW) has decided to oppose this move.

We have decided it on the basis of points already made.

We have also decided to oppose it on another very fundamental premise.

Such a move contradicts and upturns the view, so often expressed by child advocacy groups (IASCW included), that children should be allowed to be children and live out their childhood. That is a major belief, principle and conviction of our organisation and we can only assume it is also for all groups interested in child welfare.

We believe this more especially now as we live in a modern, globalised and media driven world - a world which is quickly and indeed quietly eroding the concept of childhood.

Extending voting rights to 17 year olds may be well intentioned, but it is a flawed suggestion. What it contributes to is a rush and a hurry into the "adultification" of children.

Such a move is not borne out of the needs, the safety and the uniqueness of young people. Such a move finds its roots in a different adult political reality and gain. Such a move does not put the young growing child first. It is a judgement made by adults with adulthood in mind.

Around sixty submissions on this issue were received by the Constitutional Convention. Of that sixty, two have been chosen for elaboration to the members of the Convention. The IASCW is one and a representative group from the executive will address the convention on Saturday January 26th, 2013. For elaboration / clarification contact 087-9708426.

STORMONT CHILD ABUSE INQUIRY TO DATE FROM 1922

A Stormont inquiry into institutional abuse will now investigate abuse claims from as far back as 1922.

The inquiry, headed by the former High Court Judge Sir Anthony Hart, is to examine claims of abuse at children's homes, care institutions and borstals. Initially it was due to only examine cases between 1945 and 1995. In a statement, First Minister Peter Robinson said that the change was to ensure the inquiry "meets the needs of victims and survivors".

The extension of the terms of reference means the inquiry can now decide if there were systemic failings by the state, or institutions, in their duties towards children under 18; for whom they provided residential care between 1922 and 1995. The inquiry itself will not get its full powers until the assembly passes the necessary legislation. It is currently at the committee stage. The legislation should be in place after Christmas and the inquiry is expected to report three years after starting.

An acknowledgment forum was established at the start of October and a registration process for victims started. The inquiry was announced in December 2010. It followed the damning Ryan Report here which uncovered decades of endemic abuse in some religious institutions.

PROTECTING CHILDREN IN THE DIGITAL WORLD ***EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT RESOLUTION, NOVEMBER 2012***

Young Europeans spend up to 40 hours a week in front of the television. They are online 88 minutes a day (2 hours for 15/16 year olds), starting on average at 9 years of age, but in some very precocious cases, even before they start schooling and reading.

The first issue to address is still that of the digital divide which in the current economic situation threatens all the least protected groups, including minors, with a negative impact on their economic, social and cultural future. Access to the digital world and to command of its language needs support which only an educational alliance between family, school and society can offer.

This report draws on the replies of the Member States to the survey envisaged in point 6 of Recommendation 2006/956/EC and addresses, in a comprehensive overview, an issue which, in just a few years, has profoundly changed the life of minors in the European Union.

Internet is young people's companion, often more than the family, school and friends. Among 9 to 16 year-olds, young people use computers for school work and to play (100 %) and also to see video clips (86 %), to play with others, to download videos and music and to exchange P2P files (56 %) and, finally, file sharing, visiting chatrooms, blogs and virtual worlds (23 %). 44 % of young users highlight the positive opportunities offered by the Internet, which they say they are very satisfied by. 38 % of young people aged 9 to 12 and 77 % aged 15 to 16 are registered on a social network. In their profile, 16 % use a fictitious profile and 27 % of 9 to 12 year-olds declare an older age than their real one. Websurfing tends to be increasingly individual, as 49 % of young people go online from their bedroom, 33 % by mobile telephone or digital pad, 87 % from home and 63 % from school. 50 % of young people aged 11 to 16 state that they find it easier to express themselves online rather than face to face.

Inexperienced and naive web surfers, among whom we may include minors, when their navigation lacks awareness, protection and control, face various risks, such as for example the violation of privacy, the commercial or other use of their profiles, health dangers, dependence phenomena, and a distorted relationship with reality and their own identity.

Harmful online content, with strong connotations of violence, discrimination, sexism, racism, with features that are such as to be unsuitable for minors, can diminish, in unprepared users, the perception of the offense to human dignity and facilitate among minors the use of the Internet with intentions that are more or less knowingly harmful of personal dignity (sexting) and that of others (cyber bullying). 55 % of young people state that they perceive the risk arising from the Internet, 12 % of 9 to 12 year-olds state that they have been upset, mainly by bullying (40 %) and by sexual content and approaches (25 %). In particular, online bullying seems to be an extension of that in real life, and contributes to extension of the phenomenon and to the generation of reciprocal behaviour.

Parents and educators often display unease and difficulty in accompanying young people in the positive exploration of the digital world and remain on the margins of their 'virtual lives', which sometimes can be the cause or consequence of dissatisfaction in real life. Parental control, by means of standard signals or access requiring a credit card and PIN, has proven to be a useful tool for broadcasting and broadband systems linked to audiovisual media services, but unsuitable and only partially effective on the Internet and on electronic communication networks, given the endless diversification of services, suppliers and their global dissemination.

The school system is adjusting to the digital world, adopting hardware, programmes and working methods that have become operative in 23 countries in the Union, at a pace and in a way which generally are insufficient to keep up with the changes which the technology has caused in the life of young people. The school is called on to train minors in the practical and critical use of digital technologies and the Internet, in relational situations, both with adults and in their peer group, defending cultural diversity which is connected to openness to the world. This training allows young people to master digital skills which are recognised as among the eight 'essential skills' needed for those living in a knowledge-based society.

Society shares this responsibility with schools and must be aware of the social and economic advantages of critical, active and safe use of digital media by minors, compared to use which creates dependency, conformity and anxiety, passivity and aggression.

At differing speeds Member States continue to promote overcoming the digital divide and participation in the digital world of minors, through policies to access the Internet, govern its content, respect privacy and digital identity and introduce basic programming as an optional teaching module in primary and middle schools.

Young people themselves, schools, and academics and society as a whole are showing increasing awareness of the quality standards that must be required for content for minors, regardless of its means of dissemination, whether analogue or digital, online or offline, and the instrument used (television, computer, telephone, digital pad). Hardware and content producers and their associations generally join in this shared goal, albeit in defence of their business. In particular, in application of the Audiovisual Media Services Directive, some years ago public radio, TV and multiplatform services, directly and through the European Union, started to exchange good practice and monitoring tools for programmes for minors and, despite this, even where the editorial responsibility is clear such as in TV programmes, the range of quality programmes on offer for this age range is often limited.

The EU and the Member States have produced laws and encouraged self-regulation, which was necessary considering that this phenomenon cuts across many social areas that cannot be addressed solely from a legal viewpoint. Thus, with EU financing, valid instruments have been created, above all the Safer Internet Programme, which is well established in all the countries of the Union, and which until 2013 will guarantee coordination, which has been positively assessed in the interim report.

In the draft report three elements are highlighted in terms of protecting minors in the digital era:

- access to and education on media and new media,
- protection, distinguishing combating illegal content from combating unsuitable content and conduct, protecting privacy and the right of reply,
- digital citizenship.

Initially, a framework of rights and governance is proposed to end the fragmentation of legislative provisions and indications to protect minors in the digital world which today are present in the field of human rights, privacy, combating sexual abuse, audiovisual media services and ecommerce. Article 24 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union argues that policies for children are holistic: therefore, a broad framework directive is needed to summarise and regulate the whole subject area as well as multilevel governance to seek a harmonised approach in Member States and encourage stronger coordination between them and the EU.

Aware of the cultural and legal differences among Member States, on the basis of which it is hard to establish a boundary between content and conduct to be penalised and those 'grey' areas, we propose distinguishing illegal content, such as soliciting (recognised as a crime in the Council of Europe Convention of the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse but not yet adopted and ratified by all Member States), child pornography, the violation of privacy, online gambling, commercial fraud, from conduct which can have serious consequences, such as cyber bullying and sexting and unsuitable conduct for the age, such as inappropriate advertising, violence, sex etc., which can generate fear and anxiety.

In addition, some issues with the current framework must be addressed:

It is necessary to ensure continuity for the Safer Internet Programme, and, in any case, guarantee that the responsibility for protecting minors against cybercrimes is held by the police, in an increasingly efficient and cooperative form at European level. It is necessary to encourage action to combat online crime against minors, which has been successfully adopted by some Member States, which implements information exchange with Internet service providers and Email service providers.

Self-regulation has proven to be a useful path, but has demonstrated limits that must be corrected in the case of conflicts of interest.

It is necessary for Member States to agree to protect minors in the digital world also by promoting complete mastery of its forms, which is essential for full and active citizenship, to offer European citizens the chance of benefitting from the cultural and economic dimension of all types of media connected to digital technology and to contribute to the realisation of the Lisbon goals, favouring the emergence of a knowledge-based economy and stimulating competition.

DANNY ELLIS CONCERT REVIEW

TONY MOORE

It was mild evening in late September as we wandered in to take our seats at the Village Arts Centre, in the north Cork village of Kilworth. We were there at the invitation of our illustrious Curam editor to catch the performance of Danny Ellis, Irish émigré to America in the early 1970's, following 8 years spent in Artane Christian Brothers Industrial School. His experiences of those brutal years were to mark him for life.

Danny had dabbled with singing and writing ditties from an early age and found his way into the Artane Boys Band for the later part of his confinement. On his release in 1963 aged sixteen, his musical talent on the trombone fared well with the Dixieland and Showband scene of Ireland of the 1960s. He lived in digs, often on the road with a variety of Showbands. While learning his craft on the trombone he also began to get small singing parts. Now a serious musician making money, life seemed good. However, troubled with emptiness and dissatisfaction he left for America in 1973.

A few years ago, while singing ad lib at the piano, "in vacant and in pensive mood" his defences down, the painful memories of loss and abandonment tumbled out. This led to crafting lyrics and music onto many memories of deprivation and abuse, but also colourful and courageous tales of boyhood mischief and survival.

The structure of the concert was Danny sharing these memories of his early childhood and the 8 years of his experiences in a "correctional school" or orphanage. All of this is done through the 15 songs of his CD, "800 Voices". There is a classic beginning to his experiences of a loving mother who poured her heart into the songs she sang, pledged she would be back for him by Christmas, but ultimately never did return. The 1950s was not a safe place to be a child in the Industrial School system. Now his "body and soul belonged to the Bold Christian Brothers", with their "sticks and boots and straps to beat the devil out of you". The inmates knew fear and humiliation. The repression of sexuality is manifest as he recalls how they were watched when urinating, "any more than 3 shakes is a mortal sin on your soul"

There were also joyous times, like the first time he heard Tommy Bonnor sing the solo Kyrie at Sunday mass. Moved to tears by the beauty and defiance of Tommy's voice, it reignited his connection with music and sowed the seed that ultimately was his survival and source of solace and joy in a harsh and brutal regime. Lyrically and melodically, this was the strongest song of the evening. After 45 years Danny got back in contact with Tommy following Goggle contact through Tommy's son!

The middle section of the concert covered some lighter songs of the cut and thrust of survival and fun in the adolescent world of Dublin working class and poorer lads. Many were there for delinquency, others due to family deprivation and poverty. With hindsight he makes light of the prevailing culture of fighting and thieving, cards and conkers, lying and storytelling, and the devastating realisation that his mother is not coming back. Then came the memorable day when one of the Christian Brothers introduced him to the trombone. "All sorrow and loss was blown into the bottom of that trombone". This was akin to a religious experience and seemed to mark where Danny's sense or awareness of spirituality began. He soon became part of the Artane Boys Band. Within the School, this was a privileged place "where music fixed me".

The work and chores of the boys, the antics in dorms, the runaways and the dreaded and feared Boot Room are subjects of other songs, all delivered in effortless storytelling style with engaging melodies, accompanied by Danny on guitar. The songs on CD are fused and driven by riffs of Irish traditional music.

The tempo becomes more upbeat as we reach the final quarter of the concert as the narrative covers the Artane Boys Band trip to Boston and New York, where his father came to see him. He then spent some time with his Dad and discovered Rock and Roll. He sings of his new found transistor radio and the influence of the Beatles and other music of the time.

What the concert has over the CD, apart from the power and poignancy of the live performance, is his further explanations and elaborations on the experiences expressed in the song. Sometimes bleakly funny, sometimes sad, always interesting and ultimately dedicated to abandoned children everywhere. After "Anglo- the musical" I hear the plans for "Artane – the musical" are well advanced, what a strange world we live in.

It was a most enjoyable evening of song and storytelling in the intimate theatre setting of an old Church of Ireland on the village square. For readers living or visiting in the Kilworth area check out future concerts in this unique setting.

Tony Moore is Director of Smyly Trust Services, Dublin.

See also Book Review by Sarah Goldrick "The Boy at the Gate" (page 17)

Residential Social Care Workers, Would you like to participate in research?

As part of my Doctorate in Childhood Studies in Queens University Belfast, I am researching residential social care workers' views on what constitutes effective relationship-based practice in residential care.

As a lecturer in social care and a former social care worker, I have noted the dearth of research in Ireland on relationship-based practice necessitating a reliance on studies undertaken in Northern Ireland and U.K. Therefore, this study aims to examine social care workers' views on what constitutes effective relationship-based practice in residential care in an Irish context.

Your contribution will add to the knowledge and understanding about relationship-based practice in residential care. The findings of the study may also highlight the importance of specific skills, values and knowledge that may help develop and inform the future development and professionalization of the social care profession.

If you wish to participate in this study, you will be required to attend an interview at an agreed location and at an agreed suitable time on a single occasion for a maximum of forty five minutes.

If you require any further information or wish to participate in this study please contact

Teresa Brown 086-6030131 tbrown@ait.ie

CARE LEAVERS IRELAND OFFICIALLY LAUNCHED

Leaving care is a scary moment in the life of young people who may not have the support of a family. They really need our help.

The official launch of Care Leavers Ireland took place on October 8th last. Minister Frances Fitzgerald addressed those attending as did Gordon Jeyes, CEO Designate of the new Child and Family Service Agency.

Brian Crowley, of TTM Healthcare, who founded Care Leavers Ireland a number of years ago, asked those attending to "consider taking an active role in supporting CLI. There is so, so much that that be done with a small donation- all the admin costs are absorbed by TTM...and every single cent that comes in to the charity goes out to the careleavers in the form of a specific grant."

As part of the launch, EPIC also outlined its programme. Jennifer Gargan CEO, Brenda Kneafsey and a number of young people involved with Epic also spoke.

For further information on Care Leavers Ireland see its website www.careleaversireland.com

Email is info@careleaversireland.com Phone 087-2027760 Address: Block C, Apex Business Centre, Sandyford, Dublin 18.

IJASS

One of the benefits of being a member of the IASCSW is that you receive a copy of IJASS (Irish Journal of Applied Social Studies) when it is published. The copy you got with this edition of CURAM is a special edition on Child Abuse Reports. 2013 will see another special edition on Criminology in Ireland. This will be in addition to a vol.13 (2013) which will also appear this year. You will receive a copy of each on publication.

PATHWAYS

MAURICE FENTON

Pathways is a new resource for care leavers developed in consultation with care leavers in Ireland over a five-year period. The need for a comprehensive guide for care leavers covering both preparation for leaving care and aftercare was first identified by Maurice Fenton back in 2008. Maurice, through his work with care leavers in the private, statutory and voluntary sectors since 1994 and his role in the Irish Network of Aftercare Workers, realised that Irish care leavers were being prepared for leaving care and supported in aftercare differently throughout the country. Furthermore, materials from other countries were sometimes being used to facilitate this preparation and that an Irish guide written by Irish professionals and care leavers in partnership would afford both a standardised tool for preparation and also a valuable reference resource for those who have left care.

Maurice founded Empower Ireland to develop this guide and address issues associated with leaving care in Ireland. He approached Neil Forsyth in Focus Ireland and Jennifer Gargan in EPIC to explore working in partnership to develop the guide. A strong partnership was born between the three bodies. Consultation with young people commenced within 2009 and focus groups with young people both in care and aftercare were facilitated together with two young people being appointed to the editorial panel for the guide.

Along the way, many others contributed to the development of the guide and many changes have taken place in social care. Doubtless there have been significant positive developments with regard to care leavers but ultimately the fact remains that whilst young people aged up to 18 have a right to a defined service from the State, those who turn 18 have no such right. Our work with young people is underpinned by principles such as social justice and respect yet we do not grant some of the most vulnerable members of our society the security of a right to a service when they leave our “corporate care”. This, at a time in their lives when they most need security and support to enable them to develop towards independence, just as we understand all young people now require, often into their mid to late 20s, in 21st century Ireland. The case for change is made all the more compelling when we consider how the States closest to us deal with their care leavers by affording them the right to a prescribed service. Also, the reality, which we now know from neuroscience, that brain development is ongoing into the 20s and the redefinition of childhood by academics and scientists makes clear that young adults cannot be deemed to be capable of independence at all times and in all circumstances immediately on turning 18.

Our current permissive legislation has produced a service acknowledged by the HSE as fragmentary and is clearly no longer fit for purpose. Legislatively prescribed aftercare services would both mean a coherent and equitable service and a service which empowers some of our most vulnerable and marginalised members of society.

The drive to achieve legislative change continues and it is hoped by all involved in the compiling of Pathways that it is a further example of the positive developments that are happening for care leavers here in recent years. There will be an official launch of Pathways in January 2013 and thereafter the guide will be hosted on the website of Focus Ireland, EPIC and Empower Ireland. Prior to this we are making the guide available by request to all young people in care aged 16 and over and also to all those who support these young people. There is no charge for the guide but postage costs prohibit distribution by individual request. It is hoped to have stocks of the guide held in regional locations and available for collection from these hubs and work is ongoing on developing this structure. In the meantime copies can be collected in Dublin from Focus Ireland’s office in High Street by prior arrangement. Requests can be addressed to maurice@empowerireland.com and he will arrange for the appropriate amount of copies to be available for collection.

Feedback is welcome from those using the guide and we will continue to develop the guide in future editions. Comments can be addressed to maurice@empowerireland.com.

Maurice Fenton is the founder of Empower Ireland and is Director of Services for Rainbow Community Services.

IASCW WEBSITE

The IASCW website (www.iascw.ie) is about to go through a much needed revamp to bring it in line with new developments in IT, social networks etc. Some of the current material on it is outdated and an update on the association’s history will be on the revamped site as well as up to date postings of CURAM & The Link.

You might have some ideas for links, advertising, etc. on the new site.

If you have, submit them to iascw@hotmail.com

THE BOY AT THE GATE BY DANNY ELLIS (TRANSWORLD IRELAND 2012)

REVIEW BY SARAH GOLDRICK

This is the life story of Danny Ellis.

The start of the book is of his lifestyle in his home in America. He is just an ordinary man it seems who has a forgotten life about which he rarely talked. The opening chapters paint a picture of regret and resilience. As he fights against his memories of his time in Artane sneaking into his songs, he is brought through music to a place he thought he had left decades ago.

He is brought back to his memories of his childhood. He fights not to remember but his past is catching him and his mind is racing as memories come flooding back to him. However, his wife is always aware of his racing mind. This book is generally easy to read at all times. Whilst reading it I felt that I was participating in Danny's memory. As a reader I felt involved, you can feel his emotion not only as an adult but you can clearly feel "the child" aspect to the memory. The love he has for his mother even as opinions of others try to change his is clear. You can also see the early love and admiration for his father and all his siblings. The flats where Danny, his mother and siblings live whilst his father is working away is a close community where everybody knows each others business.

As a social care student I thoroughly enjoyed reading this book. However in parts it became difficult but at all times it was interesting. I was full of suspense waiting for the following chapters. I think this book really holds the reader's attention with its humour and feeling of truth. Ellis really portrays it as it was. On many occasions reading the book I was brought to tears and felt involved in the story and had a connection with the author. At times I laughed a lot at the scenes of him being like any young child full of life and mischief. He shows the strong bond he had with his sisters that regardless of the situation he is always playing the caring big brother.

He acknowledges the articles and reports which were published with allegations of abuse in Artane by the Christian Brothers. He clearly states that he was not sexually abused while there.

Like lots of Dublin children he always has a fear of Artane and the reputation it had of a place where children were supposed to be cared for by the Christian Brothers.

My mother grew up in Portmarnock and remembers the boys and the brothers going to the beach. She has also told me of the discipline that she remembers by the way the boys walked in a military fashion she also commented that it put the fear of God into any child once Artane Industrial School was mentioned.

"The Boy at the Gate" is not only a memoir of his childhood but his path to becoming a successful musician. When everything seemed lost, with a space in his heart once filled by his mother gone, he found music. He learned many life lessons in survival, went on to stay out of trouble and made many friends. He not only enjoyed music, he embraced it to such an extent that it saved him while he was in Artane. A Brother O'Connor was one of the Brothers whom he fondly remembers as encouraging and helping him with the passion he had for his music. The book is emotional and moving especially when reality hits that his mother did leave him in Artane for Christmas when he still didn't want to believe it. He thought she would be there for Christmas, out of hospital, to get her "Man of the house" home. It is ever so moving and deeply upsetting.

I think the book is structured beautifully and is one I would recommend to any social care student.

Sarah Goldrick is a 3rd year Social Care student at Carlow College (St. Patrick's).

***SOCIAL CARE IRELAND
ANNUAL CONFERENCE 2013
STRAND HOTEL, LIMERICK.
CHANGE - CHALLENGE - OPPORTUNITY?
MARCH 20TH & 21ST, 2013
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'CANADA' BY RICHARD FORD **BLOOMSBURY PUBLISHING 2012**

REVIEW BY RICHIE HAYES

“First, I’ll tell you about the robbery our parents committed. Then about the murders which happened later”. So begins Richard Ford’s magnificent tale of an adolescent boy’s sudden departure from a small Montana town to the care of a shady hotel keeper in outback Canada.

This is Pulitzer Prize-winning Richard Ford’s seventh novel and the story is recalled by retired schoolteacher Dell Parsons. His tale begins in 1956 when 15 year-old Dell moves with his parents and twin sister Berner to Great Falls Montana so that his father Bev can continue an illicit cattle-dealing business with a gang of local Indians. Young Dell is a geeky type who loves chess and keeping bees while his taller more worldly sister Berner seems destined for boys, booze and the road. Their loving father is a happy-go-lucky schemer with an imposing physical presence, a sharp contrast to his small introverted and bespectacled wife Neeva. Neeva’s upbringing in a conservative Jewish intellectual family is a world away from that of her husband’s fly-by-night schemes, and as she languishing in love, she will soon rue the day she ever met him.

It isn’t long before his shady dealings come to the attention of the authorities (an inevitable conclusion Dell observes ‘but no one had access to commonsense’). When he ends up owing the Indian rustlers twenty thousand dollars Bev, with the assistance of his acquiescent wife, concocts a hare-brained and disastrous plan to rob a Dakota bank in broad daylight, an event that propels forever their lives in barely overlapping trajectories.

So with their parents in jail and the children’s authorities all but at the door, Berner does a runner to California while Dell is whisked away across the border by a family friend to the dubious care of one Arthur Remlinger, a somewhat sinister hotel keeper in Saskatchewan, Canada. “I’d all but said goodbye to my childhood on the strength of their terrible fall”.

Canada is most emphatically a book of two halves. The harrowing story of the Parsons and what happens when tragedy befalls an ordinary family, slowly fades into the background. This gives way to even more tragic and more violent events as Dell gets a hard lesson in life amid the eerie and unfamiliar landscape of Canada. It is the mastery of the author, however, that these two separate stories are magically pulled together in the final chapters when Dell meets his dying sister.

The story line is classic Ford: the plot is as laid-back as a Montana mid-afternoon with the sudden thud of a life-changing event, reminding the reader of the fragility of our lives. The descriptions of landscapes are, like Ford’s characterizations, rich and evocative. But the real triumph of the novel is the manner in which the voice of Dell Parsons oscillates between that of a lost young teenager and a surprisingly well-adjusted older man, at once both innocent and wise, never blaming (“the longer I delay characterizing my father as a born criminal the more accurate the story will be”), but simply searching through the fragments of memory to piece together what made him who he is and why things were the way they were.

Richie Hayes is a regular reviewer for CURAM. He is a social care worker in St. Joseph’s, Ferryhouse, Clonmel.

IASCW AGM 2013

We ask members to note that according to the constitution notification of the annual conference is notification of the AGM of the association.

The AGM will take place at 5.45 p.m. in the **STRAND HOTEL, LIMERICK.**
On **WEDNESDAY, MARCH 20TH, 2013.**

Motions for the AGM, which the proposer may speak on for not more than three minutes, should be seconded and submitted by 12 noon on March 20th to the IASCW secretary, Michelle Reade by hand or email michelle.reade@hse.ie

Note that the AGM and motions for discussion are only open to fully paid up members of the association.

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