

SPEAKER PROFILES

Dr Deborah Ghate, Director of the Centre for Effective Services

From 2007-2008 Deborah was Principal Research Officer at the Thomas Coram Research Unit, Institute of Education, University of London. Deborah has directed and published a number of studies on parenting and family support, including a major study of parenting in poor communities across Great Britain, a study of how fathers access family support services, and a major report for the UK government reviewing the international English medium literature on 'what works' in parenting support. She has written and lectured widely in Europe and elsewhere on research and evaluation methods and the application of research in real-world contexts, as well as on substantive areas of interest including parenting, services for families and children, and what works in supporting families.

Alison Loughlin, Regional Manager, Parenting Forum NI

Alison has been employed as the Regional Manager for the Parenting Forum NI for over seven years, a project based within the Parents Advice Centre. She completed an MSC in Voluntary Sector Management and holds two CIPD Diplomas in Personnel, Management and Training. Over the past sixteen years she has been employed in the voluntary and community sectors by Relate NI as Education and Training Manager and Prince's Trust Volunteers as Project Manager. Through this work she has gained extensive experience and knowledge of working with parents, children and young people. She is currently a Trustee of Parenting UK and a panel member of Life Long Learning UK. She has have been directly involved in the implementation of National Occupational Standards and Qualification on Working with Parents and the Europarents project for the exchange of information on best practice models in twelve other countries.

John Duffy, Chair of Eastern Childcare Partnership

Margaret Fawcett, Independent Social Worker, Therapist and Family Therapist in Training

Margaret is an independent Social Worker with a long-standing professional interest in the needs of children when parents separate. She has previously worked as a family mediator and as a counsellor with young people. From 1988 – 2001 she taught in the School of Social Work QUB where she undertook a DHSS (NI) funded research study 'What hurts? What helps?' which explored the needs and services for young people from divorcing families. In her current role she continues to undertake consultancy work in this area – writing, researching, and teaching – as well as practising in Belfast as an independent social worker/therapist/family therapist in training with children, young people and families dealing with separation and loss.

Marie Cavanagh, Director, Gingerbread Northern Ireland

Marie is Director of Gingerbread Northern Ireland, the lead agency working with and for one parent families in Northern Ireland.

She has led the organisation as Director for the last 14 years and has been instrumental in the development of a broad range of advice, information, training and childcare services delivered by Gingerbread to lone parents through Northern Ireland. Throughout this time Marie has ensured that Gingerbread contributed significantly to the development of government policy on issues relevant to lone parents and collaborated with the statutory and NGO sectors in the development of appropriate services.

As Director of Gingerbread she leads a team of 20 staff, co-facilitates and represents the organisation on the European Network of One Parent Families and the Britain and Ireland Forum of One Parent Family organisations. Marie is a member of the Government/Voluntary

Sector Joint Forum, on the Board of the Northern Ireland Anti-Poverty Network, Children in Northern Ireland, NICVA, the Lower Ormeau Residents Action Group and the Lower Ormeau and Markets Community Forum and represents Gingerbread on a number of advisory and working groups.

Catherine Moore, Operations Manager, Employers for Childcare

Catherine is Operations Manager with Employers For Childcare, which is both a charity and a social enterprise. The aim of Employers For Childcare is to “make it easier for parents with dependent children to get into work and to stay in work”. As a working mother herself, and having previously worked for a large international children’s charity whose priority was to end child poverty in Northern Ireland, Catherine fully understands the difficulties working parents experience in the labour market.

Bernadette Mc Aliskey, Coordinator, S.T.E.P

Since her time as an MP in the late 60s and early 70s, Bernadette has devoted herself to the building of a successful community infrastructure in her local area of South Tyrone. She has been a keen community activist on a number of subjects including Equal Opportunities, Womens’ issues, Discrimination and more recently Racial Equality. As Co-ordinator of South Tyrone Empowerment Programme (S.T.E.P.) since 1997, she has assumed management of the organisation’s four distinct but inherently linked Departments – Community Development, Tutor-led Training, Interpreter Services and Migrant Workers Support Services. Despite the demands on her time and resources with S.T.E.P. Bernadette still maintains an active role in a number of Community and Voluntary sector organisations in the area. Speaking on her work, Bernadette says: *“There are probably not many people in any employment sector who could honestly say that they feel fortunate to go to their work every morning to do something they enjoy doing - and get paid for it. The work I do with S.T.E.P. is the type of work I have been doing most of my life so I am delighted that organisations like S.T.E.P. exist so that valuable community work can continue”*

Una Mc Aliskey, Development Manager, Mencap NI

Una is the Development Manager of Mencap in Northern Ireland. In this role she is responsible for managing all aspects of the change process necessary to bring about the future development of Segal House Nursery, including relocation to more suitable accommodation and creating an early childhood development centre which would be used by agencies providing play, care, education, therapies and family support. Una has worked with both children and adults with a learning disability and works very closely with past and present families of the Nursery. She is a graduate of University of Ulster and the Premiere Management Programme.

Tommy Doherty, Western Health and Social Services

Tommy Doherty, works in the field of children's services information in the area covered by the legacy Western Health and Social Services Board. The work involves both establishing and maintaining information systems and reporting on a range of data to support needs assessment in respect of families and vulnerable children.

Valerie Maxwell, Southern Health and Social Services

Valerie Maxwell covers the legacy Southern Health and Social Services Board area and provides a range of statistical data to inform planning for children's services. Valerie has established a number of information systems including a tool for measuring need among the traveller community.