

‘Childcare’ - Business or Profession?

Speakers

Professor Helen Penn

Helen Penn was previously Assistant Director for Education in Strathclyde Region, and developed its integrated Pre-Fives programme. She has worked at the London University Institute of Education and was Professor of Early Childhood at the University of East London (UEL), and co-Director of the International Centre for the Mixed Economy of Care (ICMEC). She is now Professor Emeritus at UEL. Her recent research has been about the private childcare market in the UK and internationally. She has worked for many international organizations including the EU, OECD, UNICEF and UNESCO. Her latest books are *Understanding Early Childhood: Issues and Controversies* (Open University Press 2014) and (co-edited with Eva Lloyd) *Childcare Markets: Do They Deliver an Equitable Service?* (Policy Press 2013).

Ciairín de Buis

Ciairín de Buis is Director of Start Strong, an advocacy organisation campaigning to improve early childhood care and education policies in Ireland. Start Strong is a coalition of organisations and individuals with over 60 supporter organisations. Ciairín works with the board on the strategic direction and approach of Start Strong. She is a member of the *Better Outcomes Brighter Futures* Advisory Council. Prior to joining Start Strong, Ciairín managed a number of community based services for people with disabilities. She has studied law, criminology and political science. Ciairín is a member of the Parole Board.

Toby Wolfe

Toby Wolfe is the Policy and Research Officer at Start Strong. He was a member of the Expert Advisory Group on Ireland's National Early Years Strategy, established by the Minister for Children and Youth Affairs. He has been the Co-Chair of Eurochild's thematic working group on early years education and care since 2011. Prior to joining Start Strong in 2009, he worked at Pobal for five years. His background is in economics and social policy analysis. He has worked in Ireland, Germany and the UK.

Professor Nóirín Hayes

Professor Nóirín Hayes is a developmental psychologist. She is Visiting Professor at the School of Education, Trinity College Dublin and maintains her affiliation to the Dublin Institute of Technology, through the Centre for Social and Educational Research. Her specialist field is child development and learning, with particular interest in early childhood development, educational wellbeing, pedagogy, and children's rights. She has also been involved in shaping early years policy developments in Ireland. She has served on a number of government working groups, commissions and advisory groups most recently the National Early Years Strategy Expert Advisory Group. Professor Hayes is a founder member of the Children's Rights Alliance, and a member of the boards of Start Strong and of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment.



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Brian Lee

Brian Lee is Director of Quality Assurance in Tusla – the Child and Family Agency. In this role he is responsible for the Early Years Inspectorate and other functions such as the Alternative Care Inspectorate, internal quality and risk systems, performance reporting, parliamentary affairs and FOI. Brian joined Tusla from HCI where he was Director of Operations where he delivered regulatory support and quality management system in health and social care services. Other roles Brian held was; National Programme Manager in the HSE for women and children’s services and Inspector and Quality Standards Project Manager in the Health Information and Quality Authority (HIQA). Brian was also appointed chair of a Dublin nursing home in 2014. Brian holds MBA and a Graduate Diploma in Risk Management and Quality from UCD as well as an honours degree in biomedical sciences.

Gary Ó Donnchadha

Gary Ó Donnchadha is Deputy Chief Inspector in the Department of Education and Skills. His responsibilities include managing the annual inspection programme for schools and supporting advisory and policy work. Gary works closely with the Chief Inspector and the Inspectorate’s management group on developing inspection in primary and post-primary schools and on quality assurance policy including school self-evaluation. Before joining the Inspectorate, in 1998, Gary was a primary teacher in Cork and also served as an education officer with the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). Gary is a member of the board of TUSLA, the new Child and Family Agency.

Margaret Rogers

Dr. Margaret Rogers is the National Manager for Better Start; National Early Years Quality Development. Forbairt Cáilíocht Luathblianta Náisiúnta. The early years quality support programme will be about working on-site with services to support quality improvement. Dr Margaret Rogers has worked in the community and voluntary sector for over 25 years. She was previously Head of Visitation, Youth and Member Development with the Society of St Vincent de Paul. Prior to that she held a variety of posts with Barnardos, and has worked as child, youth and vulnerable adult welfare adviser, as well as an early years and organisational development consultant, researcher, trainer and professional supervisor with a range of voluntary and public sector organisations.

