

Positive Choices Conference

Queen's University Belfast
12th of April 2024



DEVELOPING AND ENHANCING THE ROLE OF THE RNLD AND RNID TO MEET THE CHALLENGES OF THE FUTURE

Professor Michael Brown



Michael Brown is Professor of Nursing and Director of Graduate Studies in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University, Belfast. Prior to taking up his current role he held a joint clinical academic role as a Consultant Nurse in NHS Lothian and Professor of Health and Social Care at Edinburgh Napier University. A researcher and educator, he has published over 120 papers, reports and book chapters in the academic literature. He is the Principle Investigator of the RESIDE, Relationship and Sexuality Education study. He is also Principal Fellow of the Higher Education Academy and a Fellow of the Royal College of Nursing. He is currently Chair of the Royal College Nursing Learning Disability Committee.

Professor Donna Fitzsimons



Donna Fitzsimons is Professor and Head of the School of Nursing and Midwifery and a member of Senate at Queen's University, Belfast. She is an experienced clinical academic and is currently a Board member of the European Society of Cardiology and is co-chair of their Advocacy Committee. She is a founding member of the Global Leadership Forum for Cardiovascular Nursing and she had previously led Patient Involvement activities and pioneered the establishment of the ESC Patient Forum. She holds an Editorial Board position on the European Journal of Cardiovascular Nursing and British Journal of Cardiac Nursing. At a regional level she is Co-Clinical Lead for the Cardiovascular Clinical Research Network and Scientific Advisory Group Member of Northern Ireland Chest Heart and Stroke Association. Donna has a history of successful research grant acquisition, is widely published and is regularly invited to present at international congresses. She has contributed to the development of several ESC Clinical Guidelines and is a strong advocate of evidence-based practice and patient involvement. Her research interests in Cardiology include prevention, patient engagement and palliative and supportive care

Ms Maria McIlgorm



Maria McIlgorm was appointed Chief Nursing Officer for the Department of Health in March 2022. Maria has worked across a range of acute and community settings within Health and Social care in England and Scotland and has gained extensive leadership, management and strategic experience.

As Chief Nursing Officer, Maria leads the nursing, midwifery and allied health professionals' contribution to the development and implementation of health and social care policy in NI. Her team provides advice on adult and children's acute services, mental health, elderly care, learning and physical disabilities, public health, community health, primary care, midwifery, and international issues.

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Dr Éilish Burke



Éilish Burke, an Associate Professor at Trinity College Dublin, specialises in Ageing and Intellectual Disability, also serving as the Associate Director of the Trinity Centre for Ageing and Intellectual Disability. A registered general and intellectual disability nurse, she joined the Intellectual Disability Supplement to the Irish Longitudinal Study on Ageing (IDS-TILDA) in 2010, managing the project from 2011 to 2017. Her research focuses on osteoporosis, inclusive healthcare screening, and promoting research involvement for individuals with intellectual disability. A collaborative grant recipient (HRB, EIT, IRC), she pioneered accessible health assessments in IDS-TILDA and transformed it into the MOOC 'Improving Health Assessment among People with Intellectual Disability,' engaging over 7400 learners. Dr. Burke designed 'Get Wise about your Health,' an online health promotion program, and led the development of 'Glancing Back Planning Forward,' aiding end-of-life planning. Her work has influenced the 'Missing Billion' strategy for inclusive global health systems. Honoured with the IARSLCE Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Award, she contributes extensively through publications, advisory committees, and as a committed educator, having created the successful Masters in Ageing Health and Wellbeing among People with Intellectual Disability program, operational for 5 years.

Mr Craig Bell



Craig Bell is a Learning Disability Nurse and Queens Nurse in NHS Forth Valley, Scotland. He currently manages a community crisis and forensic linked service called 'The Additional Support Team'. Craig played an instrumental role in developing 'Think COULD', a forensic project which created a video that has been used to inform and promote the needs of people with learning disabilities within police custody, whilst also ensuring individuals with learning disabilities have fair access to criminal justice services.

MiXiT



MiXiT are an inclusive theatre company and a local drama group with an international reputation. MiXiT have travelled all over the country and Europe performing Theatre for Change. We also create and perform Musical/Pop performances in our well-equipped Base in County Durham. MiXiT is led by parents John and Lawraine Hails whose daughter Charlotte inspired their work. The whole company has an ethos led by their beliefs that people with disabilities should be seen as people first. We're passionate about people with disabilities reaching their potential, being well supported to lead good lives and having opportunities like everyone else.

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Knockevin Senior School Pupils



Knockevin is a three-site special school located across three towns in County Down. Early Years Centre is in Dundrum, Junior and Multi-sensory Departments in Downpatrick and Senior pupils based at Knockevin Senior School in Castlewellan. At Knockevin Senior School, they aim to provide for pupils with a supportive environment where each and every young person will have the opportunity to experience a holistic education that meets their needs. As a Rights Respecting School, pupils have an innate ability to learn and their school aim is to nurture and develop this ability, while recognising that pupils have differing learning styles. In the Senior School, a strong focus is placed on preparing Knockevin students for the next step in their journey, helping them to develop life skills, prepare for transition and become equipped to make a positive contribution to society.

Dr Freda McCormick



Freda McCormick is a Research Fellow in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, Queen's University, Belfast, and has been the researcher on the RESIDE project. In previous projects Freda has supported the development of the Regional HSC Hospital Passport for people with learning disabilities and adapted an Australian project for adults with learning disabilities to participate in community groups to suit the UK context. Her research interests also include LGBTQ+ health in nursing and midwifery education programmes, and later life learning. Before entering the world of research after being awarded her Doctorate of Education, Freda was in Human Resource Management.

Mr Mark Mulholland



Mark Mulholland is the father of four children the eldest of whom is a young man M with severe learning disabilities, autism, and epilepsy. Raising a child like M can bring with it its own challenges but these are far outweighed by the love and joy which M brings into his family life. As a non-verbal child Mark has felt compelled as M has got older to try and share M's real-life experiences with those who work in the field of learning disabilities, to try and raise awareness, compassion and empathy among those of us who have the responsibility and power to improve the quality of life for those with learning disabilities, by trying to see the world from the perspective of those with learning disabilities.

Mark also has a unique insight into the role of Learning Disability Nurses. M has been a patient in the regional children's hospital for severe learning disability for the last 5.5 years, 3.5 years as a delayed discharge patient, during this time Mark is in daily contact with nursing staff several times a day to work together to provide M with the greatest level of care and best quality of life possible.

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Makasong



Makasong are a Community Choir and consist of young people who have additional needs and their families. We started in 2019 and were meeting face-to-face but, when Covid came, we met on a weekly basis online. We became each other's support network and when we lost one of the Mums, we pulled together to ensure that her daughter still attends. We are a MakaFamily! We have an eclectic taste and perform songs from the 60s (The Monkees, Tina Turner, The Mamas and Papas), the 70s (Abba, Queen, Kiss), the 80s (Buck Fizz, Flying Pickets, The Proclaimers), the 90s (Oasis), 2000s (Take That, Five, S Club 7), 2010s (Foo Fighters) 2020s (Sam Ryder, Miley Cyrus). We also love songs from musicals and Disney films (too many to name!).

Mr Sam Abdulla



Sam Abdulla is a Registered nurse in Learning Disabilities, with a clinical background in working with children and young people with complex health needs and life shortening conditions, and latterly as a community Learning Disabilities nurse for adults and children. Sam is a lecturer and researcher in Learning Disabilities nursing at ENU and has recently completed a 5-year term as the programme lead for the pre-registration nursing programme (Learning Disabilities). He has been involved with several inclusive research projects that included people with LD as citizen researchers. Sam is undertaking a professional doctorate programme, a grounded theory study of the factors that affect professional identity development and the impact of these in post registration employment choices in Learning Disabilities nursing.

Ms Katherine Vaux



Kathryn Vaux is a Registered Nurse in Learning Disabilities in Northern Ireland. She currently works within a children's disability team as a Community Learning Disability Nurse. Since qualifying Kathryn has completed several CPD courses, including a stand-alone module 'Understanding and helping people who use alcohol and drugs'. Kathryn was awarded the Patricia Napier Scholarship and is currently completing a MSc in Advanced Professional Practice (Intellectual Disabilities Pathway) at Queen's University Belfast, with the hope of progressing into leadership roles in the future to help shape and improve Learning Disabilities services within Northern Ireland.

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Ms Siobhan Rogan



Siobhan Brogan is Assistant Director for Mental Health and Learning Disability in the Public Health Agency for Northern Ireland. Prior to moving to the Public Health Agency, Siobhan held dual roles working as a Professional Nursing Advisor for Mental Health and Learning Disability in The Department of Health in Northern Ireland, and a clinical role as an Advanced Practitioner in an Intellectual Disability Child and Adolescent Mental Health Service. Siobhan is an RNLD and has undertaken post graduate study in Behaviour Analysis to MSc level at The Tizard Centre, University of Kent, and at Ulster University. Siobhan is also a non-medical prescriber and a British Institute of Learning Disabilities (BILD) Associate Consultant. Siobhan is the Northern Ireland representative on the UK Learning Disability Professional Senate and a member of the Restraint Reduction Network Steering Group. Siobhan has contributed to several regional pieces of work in Northern Ireland including the Mental Health Strategy for Northern Ireland; the Strategic Model for Learning Disability, and The Muckamore Abbey Hospital Departmental Assurance Group. In 2020/21 Siobhan led a review of Registered Nursing for Learning Disabilities on behalf of the Chief Nursing Officer. This review informed the development of the NIPEC Regional Strategic Workforce Development Group which drafted the Equity of Access and Outcome report. Siobhan was the 2017 RCN Northern Ireland Nurse of the Year.

Ms Claire Stewart



Claire Thompson is a third-year nursing student studying learning disability nursing in Queens university. Claire lives in Northern Ireland and had a passion for all things Disney, Makaton and family. Claire is the founder of Makaton Mondays which is a social media page (@makatonmondays) that's main aim is to try and promote the awareness of Makaton use especially within healthcare. Claire tries to get anyone, and everyone involved with this! From local sporting heroes, to Westend stars, to royalty and to her poor husband! From these efforts Claire has been awarded 8 awards and is a finalist for 3 Student Nursing Time Awards due to her work as a student nurse trying to promote inclusion. Claire's driving force and passion comes from her incredible Auntie June who sadly passed away when Claire was 12. Auntie June had a learning disability and was such a joy to everyone who she met. Claire wants everyone like her Auntie June to know they are the joy in this world. Claire continually will fight to be the service users' microphone, to amplify their incredible voice they have whether that's verbal or nonverbal.

Ms Louise O' Neill



Louise O' Neill is from the seaside Town of Ballycastle. Louise is a third year Learning Disability Student Nurse in Queen's University Belfast. Louise's journey towards Nursing has been a long one. Her background includes previously completing a Sports Studies Degree spending her placement year in New Zealand working in a Physical Education Department coaching Football and Basketball with the prospect of being a Physical Education teacher. Having worked in Swimming Pools for several years Louise decided on a change of career and all roads then led to Learning Disability Nursing as she has a family member who has a Learning Disability and knew she could make a difference. When not in University, Louise enjoys playing Sports and watching Sports. She enjoys spending time at the beach and enjoy outdoor activities and once completed the Belfast Marathon Team Relay for Autism Northern Ireland. Louise also enjoys travelling and sightseeing and finishes by saying "I hope you enjoy your time at the Positive Choices Conference with us at Queen's University".

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Ms Molly Flanagan



Molly Flanagan is a third-year student learning disability nurse at Queen's University Belfast. Molly is from a small village in Fermanagh called Derrylin. A big part of Molly's and family's life is Gaelic Football. It plays a central role in her community which provides opportunities for people of all ages and backgrounds to come together as one. From a young age Molly always wanted to be a nurse after helping to care for her uncle. When applying to Queen's University she saw the option for learning disability nursing. Molly didn't have much knowledge on people with learning disabilities or learning disability nursing which led her to research the local facilities for people with learning disabilities. Molly found loads of organisations and services that are available to people with learning disabilities and this inspired her as she wanted to be involved and part of the change of this population.

Mr Aaron Smyth



Aaron Smyth is a 3rd year Learning Disability student nurse at Queen's University Belfast. Aaron is a chatty person and loves having fun with his friends. Aaron loves movies and all things sports. Aaron's favourite sport is football, and he loves the team Liverpool. Aaron is a big animal lover, and his favourite animal is a dog. Aaron loves going out in the car for an adventure and doesn't really mind where the road takes him. Aaron can be a shy person but when it is something that he believes in he is the first person to speak out. Aaron is excited for the Positive Choices conference and to meet all the fantastic people that will be there.

Dr Lynne Marsh



Lynne Marsh is Senior Lecturer in Queen's University Belfast, Northern Ireland. As a Registered Nurse in Learning Disabilities, Lynne worked clinically across a variety of nursing settings supporting children and adults with intellectual disabilities and their families. She is currently Year lead for the Professional Nursing studies programme. She holds responsibilities for teaching and learning, research and administration demonstrating a strong commitment to nurse education, practice, research and leadership. As a researcher and educator, Lynne has published numerous papers, reports and book chapters in the academic literature. She is Co-Investigator of the RESIDE, Relationship and Sexuality Education study and is a Senior Fellow of the Higher Education Academy. Prior to her post in Queen's, Lynne was College Lecturer in the School of Nursing and Midwifery, University College Cork where she held a range of teaching, research and administration roles over a 12-year period.