

PRESS RELEASE

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LEADING INTERNATIONAL PARENTING EXPERT IN BELFAST

TO OFFER ADVICE ON POSITIVE PARENTING

- Positive parenting : good behaviour and how to encourage it -

One of the world's leading parenting experts, Dr Penelope Leach, will visit Belfast on Wednesday 15 October 2014 to offer local parents and childcare practitioners advice and guidance on positive parenting. The free event takes place from 7.00pm to 9.00pm at Stormont Hotel, Belfast.

Dr Leach has worked with children and families for more than 25 years and extensively researched areas such as antenatal education, birth practices, behavioural issues and child care. Her best-known book 'Your Baby and Child: From Birth to Age Five', first published in 1977, has sold over two million copies to date and been translated into 28 languages. The most recent version was published in 2010.

Dr Leach also wrote the Lifetime Television series "Your Baby and Child with Penelope Leach," which won a CableAce award and was nominated for an Emmy. In 2011 she published "The Essential First Year", and most recently a book concerning children whose parents are separating or divorcing called "Family Breakdown: Helping Children Hang On To Both Their Parents".

The Belfast event is being organised by Children are Unbeatable! (CAU!) Alliance, a UK Alliance promoting children's right to be protected from all corporal punishment; Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI); and supported by Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY).

Carmel McKinney, Vice Chair, Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland, discusses how Dr Penelope Leach's expertise can benefit others:

"Offering parents a choice of positive parenting techniques takes us a step closer to the protection of children from physical punishment. Positive discipline focuses on good behaviour and how to encourage it. For parents it's more to do with understanding than with obedience. I am delighted that the Safeguarding Board has provided the opportunity to explore the possibilities of positive parenting with families in Northern Ireland".

Pauline Leeson, Chairperson, Children are Unbeatable! (CAU!) Alliance in Northern Ireland adds: "We are delighted that Dr Leach, one of the world's most respected developmental child psychologists, has agreed to be the keynote speaker at this event. Her work aims to bridge the gulf between theory and family reality and this approach is particularly beneficial to local parents who are seeking positive parenting suggestions to real family situations."

Speaking in advance of the event Dr Leach comments: "The Children are Unbeatable! (CAU!) Alliance has two central aims, it seeks to achieve full legal protection from physical punishment within the law and promotes positive parenting techniques.

"Research in the last ten years or so has given us a new understanding of aspects of child development, especially brain development, and this has put positive parenting into a new context that I want to share with parents and practitioners."

Dr Leach adds: “Everybody knows that how parents treat young children is likely to affect their behaviour: that’s obvious. But not many mothers and fathers realise that how they parent their children affects something much more basic than their behaviour today: it affects the development of their brain and therefore the way they develop and the kind of person they become all through their life. And that’s not obvious at all.”

Patricia Lewsley-Mooney, Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) said: “Children don’t come with an instruction manual. As Commissioner and importantly as a Parent, I know how difficult a job raising children can be. Positive parenting is about giving families a tool kit of methods to support safe growth and development and alternatives to physical chastisement.”

Bethany Taggart, on behalf of the NICCY Youth Panel, will be introducing a video on young people’s views on physical punishment at the event prior to Penelope’s presentation. Bethany explains: “We wanted the videos we produced to reinforce the importance of positive parenting by highlighting the damaging impact of physical punishment on children and their families. We believe our voices *must* be heard on this issue.”

Admission to the event is free but advance booking is necessary. If you would like to attend, please contact Lynsey Dempster on 028 90401290 or email lynsey@ci-ni.org.uk

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For all media enquiries please contact Janet McKay, PR Consultant, T: 07968 817514 or E: janet@janetmckaypr.com

Notes to Editor:

- **Dr Penelope Leach is a research psychologist, specialising in child development, a passionate advocate for parents, as well as being a mother of two and grandmother of six. She is a Fellow of the British Psychological Society, a visiting professor at the University of Winchester and an Honorary Senior Research Fellow at the Tavistock Clinic (London) and the Centre for the Study of Children, Families and Social Issues, Birkbeck (University of London). She is a Director of The Mindful Policy Group.**
- **The Children Are Unbeatable! (CAU) Alliance campaigns for the UK to satisfy human rights obligations by modernising the law on assault to afford children the same protection as adults. The Alliance was established in 1998 and is now the broadest campaign coalition ever assembled on a children’s issue, bringing together more than 400 organisations and many more individuals.**
- **The Safeguarding Board for Northern Ireland (SBNI) was established in 2012 and is the key organisation for ensuring that children and young people in NI are kept safe. For further information go to <http://www.safeguardingni.org/>**
- **Northern Ireland Commissioner for Children and Young People (NICCY) Patricia Lewsley-Mooney has been Commissioner for Children and Young People from January, 2007.**

A former MLA and district councillor, Mrs Lewsley-Mooney had a long track record working for children and young people before becoming Commissioner. She chaired the

All-Party Assembly Group on Children and Young People and brought and led efforts through the Assembly to put Area Child Protection Committees on a statutory basis.

A community advice worker prior to becoming involved in politics, the Commissioner was a co-founder of Shopmobility in Belfast and introduced the post of the first Disability /Equal Opportunity Officer in local Government. Mrs Lewsley-Mooney is married with five children and six grandchildren.