

***Supporting best outcomes for children, young people and their families***

**Media Release**

21 October 2015

**Generation Now: Connecting Families Launched in the Western area**

The valuable contribution of early intervention and the vital connection between parent, baby and community was one of the key messages coming from the Connecting Families: Generation Now Tour which kicked off today at the Townhall in Enniskillen.

Guest Speaker at the series of the events held across the Western area, Dr Suzanne Zeedyk, founder of the organisation *connected baby* and Honorary Fellow at the University of Dundee, said: "I am delighted to be back in the Western area to support parents and frontline staff to help us get back in touch with the importance of human relationships. The science makes clear how much babies' brains are shaped by early relationships – and that that experience has a lasting impact throughout life."

"By paying closer attention to our children's emotional needs we are better placed to change children's lives – and thus to change our society too. The science of attachment helps us realise how often babies, with their incomplete brains, end up overwhelmed. The more we can tune into babies' anxieties, the more resilient our children can become."

"The level of commitment to Early Years development I have seen from the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership here in the Western area is commendable. They have organised a genuinely amazing series of events, trying to reach as many people as possible, building an understanding of this science. I am so honoured and delighted to be taking part. By working in partnership in this way, bringing together parents and front line staff, we get the chance for everyone to think deeply about what else needs to be done to foster connection for our children, their families and the wider community. Often important changes can be done for free, such as more cuddles and more laughter. These changes don't require funding; they require something that can be even harder to find – the belief that they truly matter."

The tour, made up of a series of master classes organised for parents, carers and front line practitioners, has been organised by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP). Aimed at supporting the emotional wellbeing of children, young people and their families, the lectures are taking place in Enniskillen, Omagh, Strabane, Derry/Londonderry and Limavady. Topics include The Best Start in Life for Your Child, Strengthening Attachment, and, Raising Parents Today/Families Tomorrow.

Speaking at the launch of the Connecting Families: Generation Now Tour Councillor Paul Robinson, Vice-Chairman of Fermanagh and Omagh District Council said: "Fermanagh and Omagh District Council is pleased to host the launch of the CYPSP Connecting Families: Generation Now Tour which aims to provide practical advice and support to parents, carers and front line practitioners in promoting the emotional well-being of children, young people and their families. I am delighted to welcome Dr Suzanne Zeedyk to today's launch and we very much look forward to hearing from Dr Zeedyk on her work in supporting community planning programmes in Scotland to deliver on outcomes for children and young people."

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, led by the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB), is a multi-agency partnership that includes the leadership of key statutory

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agencies and community and voluntary organisations that have a responsibility for improving the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Kieran Downey, Chair of the Western Outcomes Group from the Western Health and Social Care Trust, commented: "The aim of the CYPSP Western Outcomes Group is to ensure that through early intervention we can improve outcomes for our children and young people. By learning from the knowledge and expertise of research scientists like Dr. Suzanne Zeedyk and running events like Generation Now: Connecting Families, in collaboration with local parents and frontline staff from many different backgrounds and professions, we can collectively ensure that our planning processes and services are shaped to reflect the most up-to-date research on the development of babies and young children."

The Western Outcomes Group is tasked with implementing outcomes-based planning for the Western Trust area. Outcomes based planning involves gathering statistical information and information from communities in order to understand how well children and young people are doing in terms of certain outcomes, and then putting into place services designed to improve these outcomes. Like the CYPSP the membership of the Western Outcomes Group comprises representation from a broad range of statutory agencies and the voluntary and community sectors.

Anne Hardy, Children's Services Planning Officer at the HSCB, said: "The massive uptake of places at the Generation Now: Connecting Families master classes is testament to the commitment, within the Western Trust area, to working together to plan better for our children and young people. By engaging in learning with our local parents, families and elected representatives, we demonstrate the value we place on their vital contribution and share important information that will make our work and services more relevant and meaningful to, not only our children and young people, but the wider community also."

To stay up to date on all CYPSP recent news and events follow us on Twitter at @CYPSP or Like us on Facebook at [www.facebook.com/CYPSP](http://www.facebook.com/CYPSP). Alternatively more detailed information about the CYPSP and the Western Outcomes Group is available at [www.cypsp.org](http://www.cypsp.org).

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**Notes to Editor:**

1. For further details of the membership of the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership visit the CYPSP website at [http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/cypsp\\_members.pdf](http://www.cypsp.hscni.net/wp-content/uploads/2015/04/cypsp_members.pdf)
2. Photo Captions as follows: