

The effects of the Digital Age on our children and young people

The rise in addiction to modern day technology and unhealthy food and its effects on children and families was the main focus of a recent conference in Craigavon Civic Centre held on 20 October 2016.

The Toxic Childhood Conference hosted by the Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), Children in Northern Ireland (CiNI) and Armagh, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council identified how the increased use of digital technology and poor food choices can affect moods and create challenging situations in homes.

The conference brought together 160 professionals from community, voluntary and statutory agencies to help provide more support to staff and families dealing with these issues.



Photograph Caption:

*Back Row - From left to right; Paul Morgan, Chair of CYPSP Southern Outcomes Group, Gerry McErlane, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust, Jason Gonzalez, The Happy Warrior
Front Row – From left to right: Bridin McKenna, Life Therapies Clinic, Dr Glenda Walsh, Stranmillis College, Pauline Leeson, Children in Northern Ireland and Julie Bolton, CYPSP*

Gerry McErlane, Senior Cognitive Behavioural Psychotherapist in Adult Mental Health, Belfast Health and Social Care Trust said, "Our children and our own physical and psychological wellbeing is all our responsibility. Parents, children,

extended family, peers and professionals have a requirement to invest in recognising the unhelpful patterns of thinking and behaving that contribute to and maintain the stress of everyday life and moreover to address 'what doesn't work'. To this end, we should consider re-evaluating our "personal values" and utilise these as a means to re-engage each other in a more meaningful way and reciprocally manage the stress of our daily lives."

Delegates were provided with guidance and practical tools which included Mindfulness training and the use of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy techniques for managing stress, to help improve the lives of those they work with.



Photograph Caption:
Members of the CYPSP Craigavon Locality Planning Group

Councillor Jonathan Buckley (Vice-Chair of Armagh City, Banbridge and Craigavon Borough Council's Leisure and Community Services Committee) gave the closing remarks at the conference, "In our society, modern benefits such as technology and convenience food can really help make our lives easier, but we need to be aware of how quickly we can become reliant on them. Children and young people are particularly at risk of overusing and becoming addicted to modern conveniences, so this conference is vital in addressing this issue so that we can help parents and children make better choices."

The Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership (CYPSP), led by the Health and Social Care Board, is a multi-agency partnership that includes the leadership of key statutory agencies and community and voluntary organisations that have a responsibility for improving the lives of children and young people in Northern Ireland.

Presentations and Contact Information from the Toxic Childhood Conference

All presentations from conference are now available on the CYPSP website under news and events <http://www.cypsp.org/news/>

Jason Gonzalez Mindfulness NI; 'Embrace Technology but Be Its Master" and "What Tech Does to You', <http://www.thehappywarrior.co.uk/blog>

Contact Details of the four guest speakers:

Bridin McKenna, Life Therapies Clinic - bridin@life-therapies.com

Glenda Walsh, Stranmillis College - g.walsh@stran.ac.uk

Jason Gonzalez, The Happy Warrior - jason@thehappywarrior.co.uk

Gerry McErlane, Belfast Health & Social Care Trust - mcerlanegerard@yahoo.co.uk

For more information about the conference see:

CYPSP Southern Outcomes Group - <http://www.cypsp.org/outcomes-groups/southern-outcomes-group/>

CYPSP Craigavon Locality Planning Group - <http://www.cypsp.org/locality-planning-groups/craigavon-locality-planning-group/>

For further information about locality planning in the southern area contact:

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