

Chaired by Paul Morgan
20th October 2016

#TOXIC16

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CiNI
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CYPSP
Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership

**Armagh City
Banbridge
& Craigavon
Borough Council**



Dr Glenda Margaret Walsh

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Stranmillis College

A large, dark grey silhouette of a child's head in profile, facing left. Inside the head, the text 'TOXIC CHILD HOOD' is written in large, white, sans-serif capital letters. The letter 'O' in 'TOXIC' is replaced by a blue gear. The letter 'O' in 'HOOD' is replaced by a yellow gear. Below 'TOXIC CHILD HOOD', the word 'CONFERENCE' is written in green, sans-serif capital letters, and 'October 2016' is written in a smaller green font below it.

TOXIC CHILD HOOD

CONFERENCE
October 2016

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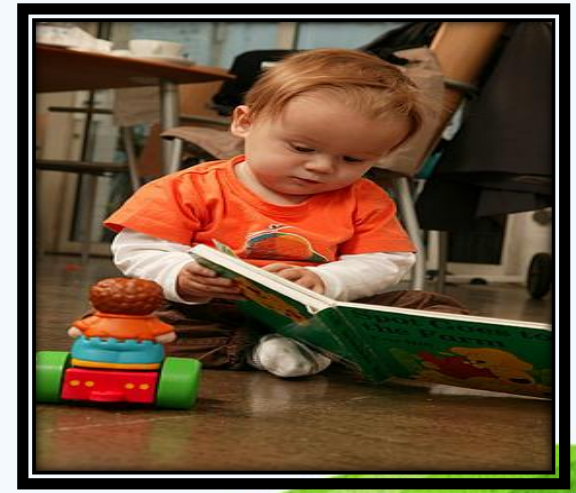
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What is Happening to Childhood in the 21st Century?

Dr Glenda Walsh
Toxic Childhood Conference
20th October 2016,
Craigavon Civic Centre



Focus of Presentation



- To address the importance of getting things right in the early years



- To report on the present state of childhood in the 21st Century
- To consider how it is presently under attack



- To evaluate what can be done to improve the situation

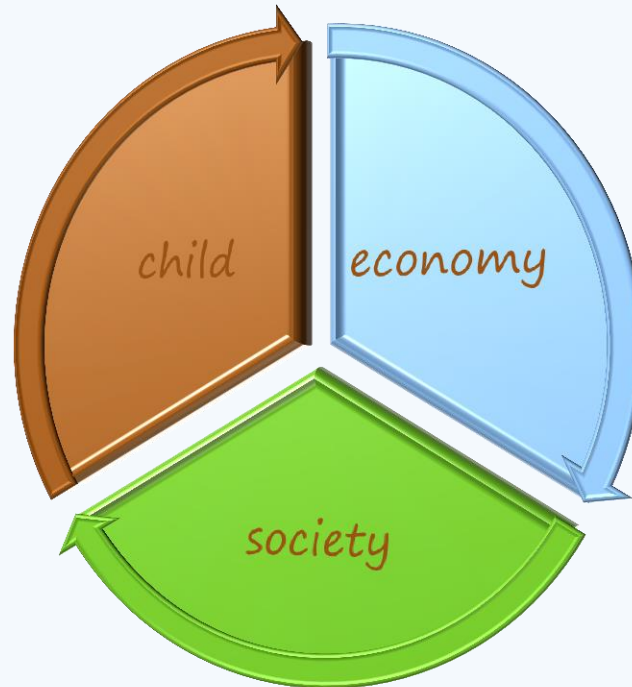
Background and Context



- Working with young children:
- a privileged profession

What I have learned on my journey?

The importance of getting it right in the early years for:



What does the research say?

The rate of return to investment in education is much higher for children aged 0-5 than at a later stage (Heckman and Rout, 2013).

Early education for low income and ethnic minority children can contribute importantly to combating educational disadvantages if certain criteria are met (Pascal and Bertram, 2013).

Educational attainment at 15 years is higher for children who attended pre-primary education and highest in countries with high-quality, inclusive early education systems supported by high levels of public investment (OECD, 2011).

The critical importance of the early childhood in laying the foundations for future learning (Nores and Barnett, 2010 and Camilli et al, (2010).

Current state of childhood: Under attack

It is like this giant elephant in all our living rooms, the fact that children's development is being drastically affected by the kind of world they are brought up in Palmer (2007).

Commercialism



- Market Forces forcing children to dress and behave in certain ways – ‘junk play’;
- Boundaries between childhood and adulthood are becoming blurred.



“Are Kids Growing Up too Fast?”

Children are being shortchanged. We hurry them toward independence before they are emotionally ready. Speeding children into adulthood not only makes this world unsafe for them, but it is also a national tragedy with serious consequences. Television, the nation’s leading baby-sitter, contributes to this (Salk, 1991).

Technological Explosion



- Children's brains are only developing and therefore cannot adjust to the effects of rapid technological change


Neo-liberal ideas

- Efficiency
- Productivity
- Competitiveness

In a fast-moving, hyper-competitive culture, today's children are expected to cope with an ever-earlier start to formal schoolwork and an overly academic test-driven primary curriculum (P Leach – childcare expert)



**A TEACHER IN FINLAND EXPLAINS WHY
HER COUNTRY'S SCHOOL SYSTEM IS THE
BEST IN THE WORLD:**



**"WE PAY TEACHERS LIKE DOCTORS, STUDENTS ENJOY
OVER AN HOUR OF RECESS, AND THERE'S NO
MANDATORY TESTING--THE OPPOSITE OF WHAT
AMERICA DOES."**

Junk Food



- Negative effect on school performance and learning
- Increased risk of diabetes and obesity
- Lack of energy and focus
- Poor self-esteem, leading to depression

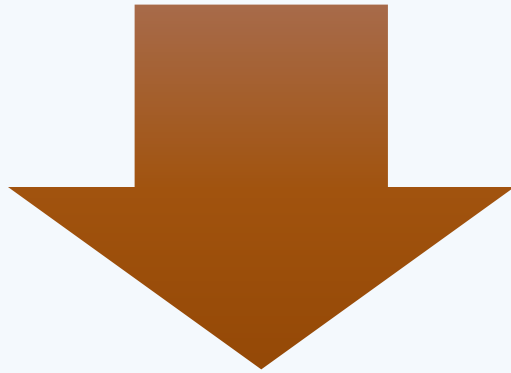
‘The true measure of a nation’s standing is how well it attends to its children – their health and safety, their material security, their education and socialization, and their sense of being loved, valued and included in the families and societies into which they are born’



**Child poverty in perspective:
An overview of child well-being in rich countries
UNICEF 2007**



Participation versus Protection



Over Participation

Obtrusive

Controlling

Surveillance



Over-protection

Passivity

Vulnerability

Deficiency



What can we do?

- *Get back to basics and invest in what really matters:*



What children need?

Care and
support

Curiosity,
risk-taking
and
Adventure

Imagination
and
Creativity

Choice,
Control
and
Guidance

Play with
friends and
family

Feel
valued,
and
respected

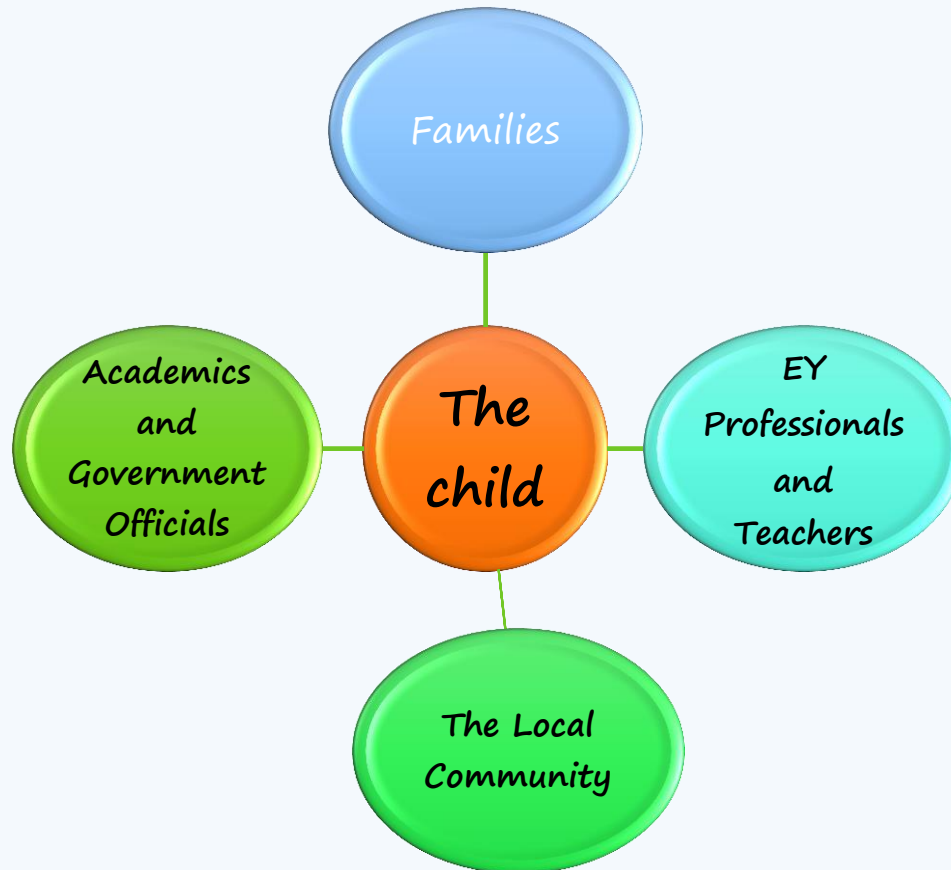
Motivation
and
Challenge

Fun and
Excitement



“The children of the world are innocent, vulnerable and dependent. They are also curious, active and full of hope. Their time should be one of joy and peace, of playing, learning and growing. Their future should be shaped in harmony and co-operation. Their lives should mature as they broaden their perspectives and gain new experiences” UN Convention

We need more joined up thinking and better collaboration



The Way Forward???



Thank you for listening
from our children and
young people!



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