

## INTERVIEW WITH INCOMING PSI PRESIDENT, DR ANNE KEHOE



*The IP Editorial Team is delighted to introduce Anne, who takes on the role of President of the Psychological Society of Ireland for 2023*

### **Anne, can you tell us a little about yourself for those members who may not know you?**

I grew up in Dublin 15 and am the eldest of three. I now live not far from where I grew up with my husband, Sean, our two small boys and our cat. I studied psychology at Maynooth University for my undergraduate degree. I finished my degree with some help from SUSI and decided to do a PhD, also in Maynooth, which focussed on exploring therapeutic ways to cope with pain. During this time, I worked as a relief social care worker in the Daughters of Charity – this was a job I kept for over 10 years and it definitely influenced me to choose a more applied psychology path. Following several assistant psychologist posts and numerous doctorate applications, my luck prevailed, and I was offered a place at Queen's University Belfast to study clinical psychology. My first job after clinical training was in child and adolescent mental health services (CAMHS) covering the Lisburn & Ards region, and it was this job that taught me the value of good teamwork. Following the arrival of our first baby and our move back south, I took post in CAMHS covering Blanchardstown and Castleknock. During the pandemic I moved into a role providing psychological support to staff across the children's hospitals. I am also very lucky to be able to call myself an adjunct associate professor at University College Dublin (UCD) having worked with the fantastic Doctorate in Clinical Psychology team there.

### **How did you come to be involved in PSI and what roles have you played within the Society so far?**

I first joined the PSI 15 years ago in 2007. Later, while I was working in CAMHS, I was railroaded by one Mark Smyth, whom I had literally just met for the first time before a department meeting. Mark asked me if I was a PSI member and eventually convinced me to join the PSI's Communications and Events Committee. I decided to give it a try and have been on that committee for four years since! During this time, I have learned so much about the importance of the messages we as a profession give to the public and wider society. As such, it is an honour to follow in the footsteps of so many great PSI presidents across the years and continue their work. I have also served on the PSI Division of Clinical Psychology Committee for several years, including serving as Secretary. I have been a founding committee member of the PSI Special Interest Group in Perinatal and Infant Mental Health.

### **What aspects of your involvement in PSI have you found most interesting to date?**

Having my own little ones at home and seeing the true value of supports, I answered Dr Aoife Menton's call to start the Special Interest Group in Perinatal & Infant Mental Health, which was particularly inspiring while I was living it too. My mum was an original feminist and I know she would have been proud of me for being part of this group within the PSI, especially during the Repeal of the 8th Amendment. I felt it was important, having seen the impact on my friends' care, that we stood up and were counted on such a key issue for Irish women. I have also thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to advocate and represent the Society's members recently in presenting to the Oireachtas Subcommittee on Mental Health.

### **Have you any specific goals for your time as President of the PSI?**

There is lots on the horizon for 2023 to continue to progress the key issues impacting members. PSI will publish its updated strategic vision, laying out the key priorities in line with our values. Regarding the extremely long-awaited work of CORU, the PSI is happy and willing to work with CORU in planning for professional regulation in a way that holds the highest standards of accountability for the public and that does not exclude any professionally practicing group. I wish to make continued progress on the establishment of the PSI Complaints Committee, which will aid the Society in upholding the highest standards for members. The PSI was delighted to see the inclusion of a health and social care profession (HSCP) role within the Department of Health and will continue to advocate for the creation of a Chief HSCP Officer Role. I also look forward to supporting the work of PSI's International Liaison Officer, allowing for a greater presence on the international stage.

### **What do you think are some of the opportunities for the Society in the next 12 months and how will you approach them?**

While we are beginning to see progress with the recent allocation of €750,000 toward the funding of counselling psychology trainees, PSI will continue to highlight the inequity of funding as a barrier to the work force. PSI's involvement with the response to the conflict in the Ukraine will continue, particularly as the Society joins with Trinity College Dublin in planning and offering supports to those fleeing the war. The fight will continue to improve access to the DARE Scheme, specifically in allowing qualified chartered psychologists to support those applying who have mental health difficulties. PSI will also continue to work together with the Heads of Psychology Services in Ireland (HPSI) to advance issues of mutual interest and strengthen the ties between our organisations. Regarding diversity and inclusion, PSI will continue to advocate for many minority and marginalised groups. As a profession, psychology has ongoing and historical issues with diversity as we do not reflect the diversity of the populations we serve. Real change is needed on this front to examine these factors and listen to those who have been disadvantaged so that the impact of this can be reduced and rectified.

### **To finish, do you have any other message for the readers?**

When I was originally nominated for the role of President, I did not feel like the most presidential person! Perhaps it was being a busy working mum of two little boys – I had a different type of person in my mind for the role. I thought long and hard about it and all it entails and concluded that perhaps my position could be a strength as I share many typical life and psychology career experiences with so many other psychologists. What better reason to take on the role and advocate for those on this journey and in the profession? I hope that as members, if there is anything that you feel is important to you that you will reach out at any time and know that it will be heard, and that there is space to get involved, join a committee, special interest group, working group or PSI Council.

Anne Kehoe  
PSI President-Elect

