

# Supporting Frontline Practice in Unprecedented Times\*

*Ag Eisteacht, SHEP and Dr Nicola O' Sullivan are stepping up to support our*

*Frontline Health Professionals*

*This is an ongoing initiative, launched on the 6<sup>th</sup> of April*

## Introduction

For many clinicians, individual, peer and group supervision is a space where they can make sense of the work and the sometimes the unmanageable and overwhelming experiences and emotions they are left with in their day to day professional practice. Usually organisational structures have systems in place to respond to practitioners on the frontline. In these unprecedented times, these systems for supporting the psychological impact of the work for frontline workers are likely to be considerably stretched. Therefore this intervention is offered by way of support to a region as they navigate these unprecedented waters. The service is free and is provided by experts in the area of individual and group supervision, reflective practice and emotional wellbeing.

In the very necessary rush of activity on the frontline now and in the coming weeks, there will be little time to reflect upon and to register the deeply painful situations that will be faced by those practitioners. Therefore making small regular individual and group reflective spaces which can hold some of these emotions and necessary anxieties is vital, because it will allow for workers to keep in touch, to practice small amounts of psychological self-care and to try to maintain a psychological safety in their work space.

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*Reflective spaces acknowledge the complexity, diversity and emotionality of situations and offers scope for more informed decisions which could help avoid defensive, routinised and ritualistic responses (Ruch, 2002).*

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This initiative Is	This initiative is not
About personal resilience, self-care and peer support	Supervision
An invitation to reflect	Line Management
An opportunity to avail of support	Clinical Oversight
A safe space to think and feel	Counselling
A chance to check in with myself	

### The following options are available:

#### Professional Learning and Support Circles; connecting and containing at the frontline – COVID- 19. (3 options – see below)

These group online reflective sessions will take place for 90 minutes every second week. They will allow for 4-6 practitioners to log on and to be supported by two experienced facilitators. One of the benefits of this reflective model is its usefulness in enhancing the capacity of the practitioner to observe and respond in sensitive ways to emotionally charged and complex situations in their work places.

#### 40 minute reflective practice space:

This offer is available for individual practitioners who wish to avail of a reflective space.

#### 30 Minute Care Space for teams or groups:

The purpose of this 30 minute Care Space is to provide a space for self-care through facilitated connection and support.

## Professional Learning & Support Circle #1

### For Any Frontline Health and Social Care Professional

Fortnightly (max 90 minutes on-line/Zoom) session for 3-4 participants: four sessions. Confidential, safe, facilitated, free, supportive, informal, friendly and easy to set up. An additional four sessions will be available. The aim of this reflective setting is to create a space for practitioners to connect with and reflect on their present work experience. The focus is on personal resilience, reflection on work experience and sense making, and peer support. The approach will be informed by **Work Discussion Group Model** (Tavistock).

Facilitator: Dr Nicola O'Sullivan & another facilitator (tbc)

Proposed time: Thursday / Friday mornings

If you are interested in this workshop, please phone or text Nicola on (087) 6197323 or email [heartofpractice@gmail.com](mailto:heartofpractice@gmail.com)

## Professional Learning & Support Circle #2

### For Newly-appointed Doctors

Fortnightly (max 90 minutes on-line/Zoom) session for 5-6 participants: four sessions. Confidential, safe, facilitated, free, supportive, informal, friendly and easy to set up. An additional four sessions will be available if the group wishes. The aim of this Learning Circle is to create a space for practitioners to connect with and reflect on their present work experience. The focus is on personal resilience, self-care and peer support. The approach will be informed by **'ABLE' Brief Intervention Model** (Ag Eisteacht).

Facilitators: Dr Maeve Hurley & Rose Crowley

Proposed time: Monday / Thursday evening

If you are interested in this workshop, please phone or text Maeve on (086) 1708092 or email [heartofpractice@gmail.com](mailto:heartofpractice@gmail.com)

## Professional Learning & Support Circle #3

### For Any Frontline Health Professional

Fortnightly (max 90 minutes on-line/Zoom) session for 5-6 participants: four sessions. (On an agreed day & time that suits everyone: probably Tuesday afternoon/evening or Friday am/afternoon). Confidential, safe, facilitated, free, supportive, informal, friendly and easy to set up. An additional four sessions will be available if the group wishes. The aim of this Learning Circle is to create a space for practitioners to connect with and reflect on their present work experience. The focus is on personal resilience, self-care and peer support. The approach will be informed by the Critical Reflection Model (Fook & Gardner, 2007).

Facilitators: Jim Sheehan, SHEP and Beatrice Barry Murphy.

Proposed Time: Tuesday afternoon/evening or Friday am/afternoon

For further information on this Professional Learning Circle phone or text Jim Sheehan on (087) 6199236 or email [jim.sheehan@socialandhealth.com](mailto:jim.sheehan@socialandhealth.com)

## 30 Minute Care Space:

### For teams or groups

This is based on the #20minCareSpace piloted in NorthBristolNHS to support the wellbeing of colleagues in an acute hospital setting. It is a structured safe space based on Andy Bradley's Compassion Circles. If a team or group of up to 10 people feel they would benefit from a once off 30 minute care space check-in, then this would give them the time and space to do so, away from their routine work environment. This check in can be used as a form of peer-support. This is a co-facilitated session.

Facilitators: Jim Sheehan, Dr Maeve Hurley or Dr Nicola O' Sullivan, as available

Proposed Time: The time that will best suit the group

For further information on this offering, phone or text Maeve on (086) 1708092 or email [heartofpractice@gmail.com](mailto:heartofpractice@gmail.com)

## 40 Minute Reflective Practice space:

### For individual practitioners

This space is available to individuals who wish to avail of a reflective space to consider the impact of the work from an emotional and psychological perspective. Underpinned by systems psychodynamic theory and principals, it has the potential to offer a tight, structured and reflective space during these challenging times.

Facilitator: Dr Nicola O'Sullivan

Proposed times: There are two available slots for this individual reflective supervision space.

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*The strength of reflective thinking lies in its ability to 'transform emotional chaos into containable anxiety and to create a time to think when so much of our experience is that there is no time to think' (Nathan, 1993; 79).*

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## Other considerations

### Pathways

If a situation arises where more in-depth psychological or emotional support is required, the team providing this service have many community connections and so if there is the requirement for such a service then the appropriate pathways can be identified.

For further information on any of the above workshops, please phone or text Jim, Maeve or Nicola on the above listed phone numbers. Alternatively you can email [heartofpractice@gmail.com](mailto:heartofpractice@gmail.com) and one of our facilitators will respond to your request. If you are unsure which workshop would work best for you, you can call or email any of the facilitators for guidance.



**Please note this is not a form of clinical support and facilitators will not be offering advice or guidance. All facilitators will be availing of supervision to support themselves during this time.**

Keep well and thank you.

## **Facilitators:**

### **Dr Maeve Hurley:**

Dr Maeve Hurley, Ag Eisteacht.

[maeve@ageisteacht.com](mailto:maeve@ageisteacht.com)

Dr Maeve Hurley is founder of Ag Eisteacht, a charity that trains frontline practitioners in health, social care, community and education to build relationships and to manage boundaries.

A former GP, Maeve has first-hand experience of recognising that relationships are a key determinant of health and wellbeing, acting as both a buffer and a risk factor in health outcomes. Her vision is to enhance practitioners' capacity to be present and attuned so that people feel understood, respected and empowered. Maeve has presented at the IFCA International Conference, the Enable Ireland Conference, Irish Attachment in Action and the Royal College of Physicians Ireland.

She also works with UCC's GP Registrar Scheme to support a relationship-centred approach to practice. Ag Eisteacht has delivered its ABLE (Adopt a relational approach, Build, Listen and Empower) brief intervention training to almost 3,000 frontline practitioners in Ireland to date across the health, education, justice and early years' sectors.



## **Dr Nicola O'Sullivan**

Dr Nicola O'Sullivan.

nicolacregan@hotmail.com

Dr Nicola O' Sullivan has worked with children and families in community and residential settings in Ireland for twenty years including as clinical manager of a parent and infant assessment and treatment service in Ireland. Dr O'Sullivan works with Caidreamh Services in Cork (\*this service is temporarily closed during the COVID-19 pandemic).

Nicola completed a Professional Doctorate in Social Care and Emotional Wellbeing at the Tavistock and Portman Trust NHS, London and published a paper based on the findings of her doctoral research with social workers. Nicola's interests include the subject of anxiety and complexity in frontline human service work, reflective practice and psycho-social research. She lectures on the topic of complexity in social work settings and parent-infant mental health and child protection on the Postgraduate Diploma in child protection and welfare at Trinity College Dublin. She provides clinical supervision to individual practitioners and teams working with children and families and she teaches on the Mental Health in the Community Certificate Course in UCC. Nicola is also external examiner for the TU in Dublin for their Social Care Programme.

## **Jim Sheehan**

Jim Sheehan, Social & Health Education Project      jim.sheehan@socialandhealth.com

Jim Sheehan has been Director of The Social and Health Education Project (SHEP) since 2009. This values-led organisation works with individuals and communities to develop capacities for positive change to enhance health and well-being and to promote social justice.

He started his working life as a secondary school teacher. In his twenties he volunteered overseas with Concern Worldwide in Somalia, Uganda and Cambodia. This work included managing education, community development and rural development programmes. This period of time working in Africa and Asia changed his life and career.



On his return to Ireland he worked for ten years as manager of a government-funded Social Inclusion Community Partnership and served on a number of boards including Pobal.

As Director of SHEP, he has a particular interest in community development approaches to promote health and well-being, as well as on creating collaborations to support transformative learning. He also oversees SHEP's international learning partnership with Sahakarmi, a community development NGO in Nepal.

Jim is a graduate of Mater Dei Institute of Education, London School of Economics and Waterford Institute of Technology.

\*Supporting Frontline Practice in Unprecedented Times is an independent collaborative initiative of Ag Eisteacht, The Social and Health Education Project (SHEP) and Dr Nicola O'Sullivan. This is the first in a series of initiatives that will explore focussed ways of supporting frontline workers. Our organisations share values and a common interest in frontline practitioner care and development. We are also holding a one-day, innovative seminar to open a conversation about the perception and realities of frontline practice on November 26<sup>th</sup>, 2020.

#### References:

- Ruch, G. (2002) Self and Social Work: Towards an integrated model of learning, *Journal of social work practice*, 14 (2), pp. 99-112
- Nathan, J. (1993) The battered social worker: a psychodynamic contribution to practice, supervision and policy, *Journal of Social work Practice*, 7 (1), pp. 73-80