A professional early childhood workforce for a peaceful, shared and sustainable Northern Ireland

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This presentation will explore some of the historical policy developments that have shaped the current Early childhood workforce in Northern Ireland and will propose the radical structural reform that is required to prepare a professional workforce that is competent to meet the current and emerging needs and rights of young children, their families and communities.

In particular the presentation will examine the ongoing relevance of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the significance of the 2030 Sustainable Development Goals, the European Quality Framework and the possibility of a new Early Childhood Strategy for Northern Ireland.

The presentation will make the case for a Transformation Fund that would support the reform of all aspects of the early childhood workforce including regulators, managers, leaders and front line staff so as to prepare the workforce to meet the demands of an early childhood service from conception to 12 years. The presentation will also highlight the particular early childhood workforce competencies required in a post conflict, divided society.

Biography: Dr. Siobhan Fitzpatrick has worked in the early childhood sector for 40 years. She has recently retired from a 30 year leadership role as Chief Executive Officer in Early Years - The Organisation for Young Children. She is currently the Chair of the International Network on Peace Buiding with Young Children and an Executive Member of the Early Childhood Peace Consortia led by UNICEF and Yale. She is a senior co-author of the recent publication “The Contributions of Early Childhood Development Services to Promoting Sustainable Peace and Development” She was awarded a CBE in the Queens Honours in 2010 for services to early childhood and community development.