Organisation: Clarecare

Presenter: Jacinta Swann, Eleanor Comber and Helen Walsh

Conference theme to which the presentation is aligned: Participation of Children and Parents in Family Support

Title: How parents of children in care can contribute to their children’s lives - the development of the Clarecare Advocacy Service for parents of children in care.

The main role of the Clarecare Advocacy service for parents of children in care is to increase parents’ participation in the care process and to promote positive communication for the well-being of children.

This presentation will trace the development of the Clarecare Advocacy service for parents of children in care as a response to parents expressed need for a support service. It will highlight how parents of children in care can contribute to their children’s well-being and identify what supports help parents contribute to the care process in a meaningful way. Parents’ views and experiences are central to this presentation and it reflects what they want practitioners and academics to hear.

The key elements of the service are that it is voluntary and that we are not part of the decision making process. We work on three levels: individual support, monthly group and at a systems level engaging with local and regional social work services on how to improve communication.

The Clarecare Advocacy service is part of a wide range of family support services in Clarecare, including home based, and group parenting support and an Aftercare service for young people leaving care. Clarecare has supported parents through the stages of the care process in different ways and the organisation has a unique story to tell which we hope will influence work practices with parents of children in care.

This presentation will challenge perceptions of why children come into care and give the parents’ perspective on the experience of engaging with the care system and how to improve it. Parents may not be able to care for their children full time, yet most want to support and help them as best they can. These parents have a unique contribution to make towards completing the jigsaw of their children’s lives.