



**College of Psychiatrists  
of Ireland**

Wisdom • Learning • Compassion



## **REFOCUS Annual Report 2016**

Recovery Experience Forum of Carers and Users of Services

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## Foreword

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Firstly, I feel honoured and privileged to be part of the REFOCUS Committee, and grateful for the experience it has brought to my own life. I wish to thank everyone on the committee for being part of the process of developing REFOCUS and to the College for giving us the time and space to do this. Giving our perspective on issues faced in our lives has strengthened the group as a whole. Apart from the friendships formed and the papers that REFOCUS has produced, we are delighted to receive recognition both from the College and from the services outside the College.

We are always looking forward to the future and what we, as a committee, can contribute. Through REFOCUS papers we can demonstrate and speak at conferences and seminars on the everyday experiences of those who use the services and their families and carers. The meetings have been enlightening and the commitment of the group is evident in the growing knowledge within the committee and the College. It is fantastic to be able to share our perspective with members of the College, trainees, service providers and volunteer services in order to meet our aim as a committee. To see REFOCUS expand over the next few years would be my greatest wish.

**Ms. Kara Madden – Joint Chair**



In 2016, as REFOCUS committee joint chair, I was delighted to be invited to become a full Council member of the College. As a Council member I have had an opportunity to update other Council members and Management of the work of REFOCUS. It also means that REFOCUS now has a voice at the decision making table of the College. This has been a major advance, and it is tribute to the respect REFOCUS and its work has gained within the College.

Each year I comment on how strong, hardworking and inspirational this committee is. As a committee we are continually looking to improve, and to that end in 2016 we have added new members including 2 more psychiatrists. We have agreed that the next advance for REFOCUS is to become a committee made up of equal numbers of service users, family members and psychiatrists. We are actively recruiting new members and by the end of 2017 we hope to have 24 members made up from the three groups.

You will see from the report that REFOCUS members have been busy throughout 2016, with presentations at conferences, summer schools and as invited experts to many groups. We are just about to produce two more perspective papers and are looking forward to a busy time in 2017.

I would like to thank all the members for their hard work over the year, and for the wonderful insights they have given to me over the years.

**Dr Anne Jeffers – Joint Chair**

## Introduction

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This report encompasses the work of REFOCUS throughout 2016. It follows on from the Committee's first Annual Report of 2015, and the REFOCUS Inaugural Report 2011-2014. REFOCUS has continued to thrive through its dynamic group discussion, well-structured meetings and interaction in various ways both within and outside the College. The Committee is considered to be an invaluable resource within the College as is evident in this report.

## REFOCUS

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REFOCUS stands for Recovery Experience Forum of Carers and Users of the Services, reflecting the strong belief of the forum in the wellness and Recovery philosophy.

REFOCUS is a forum where the views of people with experience of mental health problems, and family members and carers of those with mental health problems, aim to inform and influence all aspects of College business particularly the training experience of young future psychiatrists. This ties in with the College mission to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry including advocating for improved mental health services. REFOCUS was modelled on a similar forum established by the Royal College of Psychiatrists in the United Kingdom – SURF Service User Recovery Forum.

The name REFOCUS reflects the view that what concerned the group was the need to inform the College and its various committees and training programmes, not only about the experience of those who use the Mental Health services in Ireland and their family members/carers, but also to provide suggestions for change and improvement. The idea of “refocusing” seemed to capture this objective perfectly.

*“Whilst the stigma has reduced for those with anxiety and depression, it still remains for other mental illnesses. Other serious diseases such as schizophrenia are just bypassed. Everyone is different and there has to be a space for this difference to be acknowledged.”*

## Membership of REFOCUS

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The group originally comprised of 10 people with experience of the Mental Health services and 10 Carers/Family Members of those who use the services, as well as Joint Chair and Consultant Psychiatrist Dr Anne Jeffers. In 2016 it was decided that the group and the College would benefit from the inclusion of psychiatrists; both trainee psychiatrists and consultant psychiatrists. The mix of the forum is to be 8 people with experience of the Mental Health services, 8 Carers/Family Members of those who use the services, and 8 Psychiatrists; all of which will reflect the actual life situations of parties involved when someone is unwell and also will contribute to rich and meaningful discussion and subsequent activities to support the aims of REFOCUS.

The Committee would like to thank John Kidney and Ciaran Crummey who both retired from the group in 2016, for their valued dedication and contribution to REFOCUS from the beginning. The Committee also welcomed a new Joint Chair Kara Madden, following Liam Hennessy's retirement. Liam's contribution to REFOCUS, from its inception as a member to his position as joint chair has been invaluable to the progress of REFOCUS and we wish him well in his new role as HSE Head of Mental Health Engagement. Kara has also been with REFOCUS from its inception and as joint chair will help maintain the consistency and experience so fruitful for the group. REFOCUS welcomed new members Mr Rick Rossiter, Dr Marina Bowe, and Dr Verena Keane who joined in September.

*“For me the highlight of 2016 was our decision to invite psychiatrists to become partners of REFOCUS rather than simply presenters at our meetings. No doubt we will continue to learn and complement each other as we share our perspectives and develop worthwhile insights into the value to psychiatry and the future delivery of services.”*

## Governance and Housekeeping

REFOCUS has continued using and reviewing the terms of reference established by the group. The group has also held firm on its early decision that all members of the forum would participate on an equal basis and there would be no sub group dividing members into those who use the services and family members/carers. This is especially important as the membership mix has changed to include 8 service users, 8 family members/carers and 8 psychiatrists. The minutes of every meeting are recorded and presented by the Joint Chairs to the Director of Communications & Public Education.

In 2016 the Committee established Standing Orders to ensure and encourage orderly and effective conduct of meetings with the aim of maximising the output from the limited number of meetings and sub meetings that take place per year.



**REFOCUS Committee meeting, 8th September, 2016, Dublin**

## Presentations made to REFOCUS

From its inception, the forum felt that it would be helpful if psychiatrists, including trainee psychiatrists from the College membership, presented to the group about various psychiatric specialties and/or services in Ireland today with the aim of informing and educating REFOCUS members about the profession, how psychiatrists operate within the system, mental health teams and so forth. 2016 included other presentations around postgraduate training and the Recovery ethos in the HSE.

As a result, we have had a number of very useful and informative talks.

### February 2016

Liz Kavanagh and Kevin Costello from the CPsychI Postgraduate Training (PGT) Department, presented on the PGT department, how it operates and how the curriculum for trainees works.

Following this REFOCUS members carried out a review of the College Curriculum from the point of view of someone who uses the services and their carers/family, and provided feedback to the PGT department.

### May 2016

Michael Ryan from Advanced Recovery in Ireland (ARI) presented on ARI's work and the concept of Recovery. Michael also described his own journey of Recovery and how it led him to his current role in ARI.

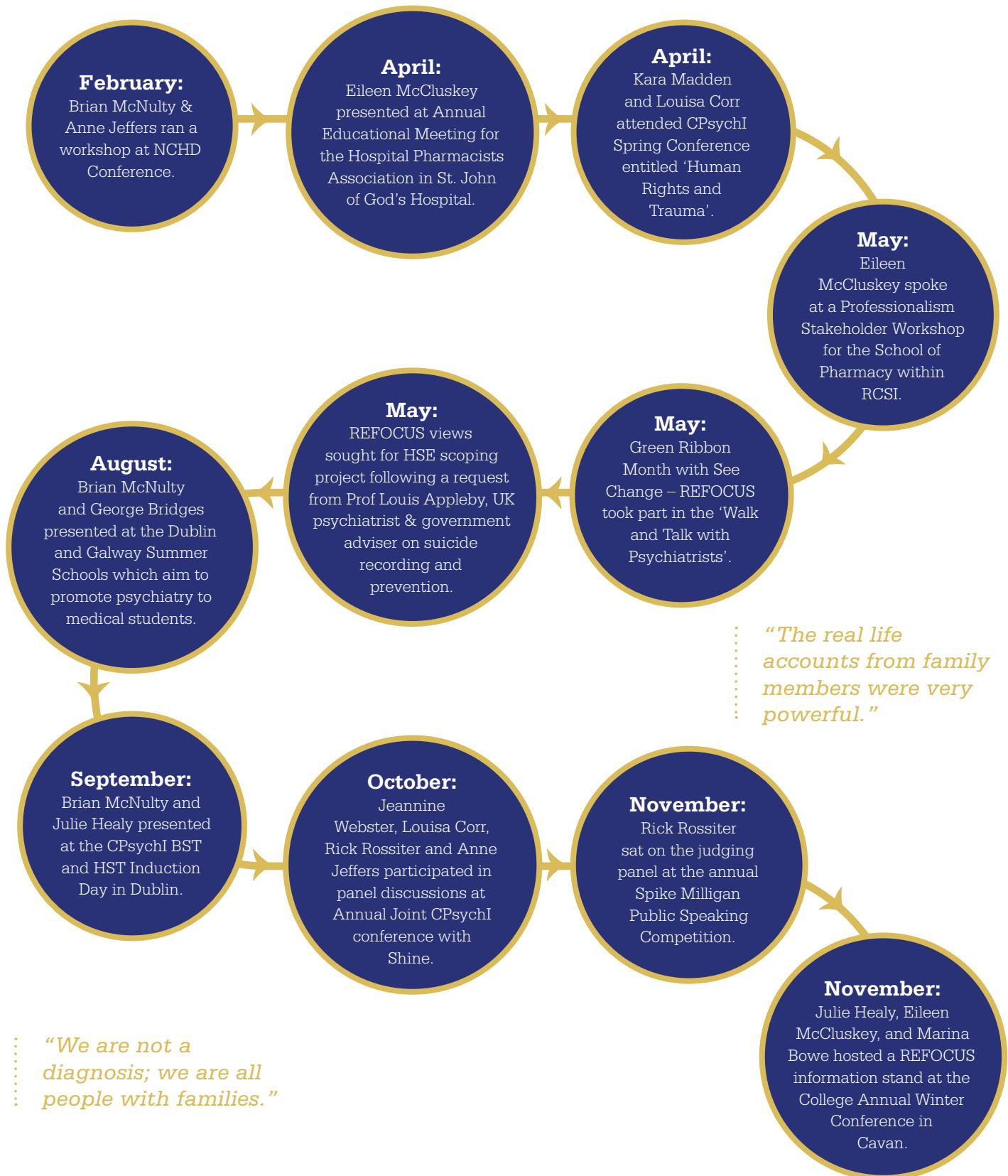
*"It was great to see that the professionals will give a hearing to family members in relation to the patient."*

As a result of this presentation REFOCUS plans to work more closely with ARI in the future with the aim of promoting the philosophy of Recovery.

*"The real power of REFOCUS is having the persons own narrative, but also having an awareness of the needs of the psychiatrists themselves."*

## Presentations made by members of REFOCUS

REFOCUS members presented their own work and experience at a number of events throughout the year, most notably at College conferences.



## Hospital Pharmacists Association

Following a request from Dolores Keating, Head of Pharmacy in Saint John of God's Hospital, Eileen McCluskey presented a workshop at the Annual Educational Meeting for the Hospital Pharmacists Association as a person with experience of the services.

The workshop explored the *interconnection between mental health and physical health*. It also aimed to make pharmacists aware of the phenomenon of diagnostic overshadowing which occurs when symptoms of physical illness are attributed to the the person's mental illness.

## RCSI School of Pharmacy

As a result of the well-received presentation by Eileen at the Annual Educational Meeting for the Hospital Pharmacists Association (see above) REFOCUS were invited to speak at a *Professionalism Stakeholder Workshop* for the School of Pharmacy within RCSI. Eileen took part in a workshop, facilitated by Prof Kieran Murphy and supported by Aurea Conroy, to revise the working definition of pharmacy professionalism. Eileen provided the perspective of someone who uses the services in the discussions.

## HSE Scoping Project - national inquiry on suicide and homicide

REFOCUS member views were also sought on a HSE scoping project following a request from Prof Louis Appleby, a UK psychiatrist and government adviser on suicide recording and prevention. The aim of the request was to assess the possibility of setting up a national inquiry on suicide and homicide within the Republic of Ireland, similar to that of the UK.

## CPsychI Trainee Induction - for Basic Specialist and Higher Specialist Trainees

Brian McNulty, Julie Healy and Anne Jeffers all spoke at the annual induction for psychiatry trainees, following a request from Prof Greg Swanwick, Dean of Education.

*"Mental illnesses need to be accepted as illnesses that can be treated."*

Julie spoke about her 30 years' experience as a family member of someone with bipolar disorder. Brian also shared his extensive experience of using the mental health services and highlighted the importance of active listening and hearing for psychiatrists.



Brian McNulty addressing psychiatry trainees at CPsychI Induction Day, Dublin



Dr Anne Jeffers addressing psychiatry trainees at CPsychI Induction Day, Dublin

*"This is a massive uphill battle, sometimes we need to be helped up the hill; sometimes we need a nudge forward. Non-judgmental communication is so important."*



Julie Healy addressing psychiatry trainees at CPsychI Induction Day, Dublin

## Papers written by REFOCUS

Papers are borne out of in depth discussion at the REFOCUS quarterly meetings on areas and issues to highlight to trainees and consultants and in doing so raise awareness of their importance to those who use the services, and their family members/carers. As with all papers that REFOCUS has produced, the forum has and will involve the College membership through the processes and pathway for any College paper.

*"There should be nothing about me without me."*



**Facilitating Mutual Understanding**

The purpose of REFOCUS is to work with College psychiatric members to gain mutual insight and understanding. REFOCUSing the conversation with the aim of improving the services for all. This has been and will be achieved by:

- Presentations from College members and specialists - experience of psychiatrists training and how they work.
- Joint presentations with psychiatrists at conferences.
- Involvement on trainee committee working groups and the "Tank" eNewsletter.
- Papers written with trainees in mind but useful for all psychiatrists.
- Papers developed in partnership with psychiatrists.
- Attending and/or participating in College conferences and events such as Spike Milligan - both for insight and input.
- Regular focus groups with psychiatrists.

**Your learning, Our learning, Shared learning**

Through shared learning much has been and can be achieved:

- Learning about psychiatry and psychiatrists through presentations from members.
- Participation in educational events for other stakeholders/ professional organisations.
- Contribution to research.
- Sharing lived experience.
- Papers developed through focus groups and extensive discussion with members:
  - Who Cares?
  - Understanding ECT
  - On the One Road to Recovery.
- Participation in postgraduate training and recruitment activities:
  - OSCE exams
  - Summer Schools
  - Med Fest Panel
  - NCHD Conference

**Keeping the conversation going**

More can be achieved by combined focus groups, discussion, idea generating and re-affirming of what works well.

- Engage more psychiatrists to join us - we are currently recruiting
- Induction and other platforms for trainees - nationally, regionally, locally
- Meet with faculties, committees, work groups
- Explore ways to improve communication
- Join with psychiatrists in advocating for better resources
- Have input into Clinical programmes & College papers

*"Working with REFOCUS members over the last 5 years, I have learned to listen more. REFOCUS members have all been through major personal crisis, and over time they have developed a resilience and understanding that offers invaluable insights for psychiatrists."*

Psychiatrist

*"Being a member of REFOCUS over the last 5 years has helped me understand psychiatrists so much better. I did not realize they had so much training in psychotherapy. It would be great if they were resourced enough to better use this training."*

REFOCUS member

### REFOCUS Toolkit which was handed out at CPsychI Winter Conference 2016 and circulated to Postgraduate Trainees

### REFOCUS worked on two papers in 2016:

#### **"Spirituality in Psychiatry"**

This paper aims to highlight how some people's spiritual experiences should be regarded with an open mind by mental health professionals when assessing someone and/or devising their treatment plan.

#### **"Family Dynamics"**

The experience of REFOCUS members is that mental health services do not address family dynamics when a member of the family becomes unwell. REFOCUS believes this prevents full recovery for all. Through discussion with people who have experienced mental illness, family members of those with mental illness, and psychiatrists, this paper aims to identify what happens when family dynamics are ignored, and makes suggestions on what can be done to correct this.

The group hope to complete the papers and gain Council approval in 2017.

### REFOCUS Toolkit

REFOCUS formed a sub group to brainstorm ideas on how best to encourage psychiatrists to work with REFOCUS. They subsequently developed a toolkit leaflet for psychiatrists and trainee psychiatrists to inform them of the work of REFOCUS and how it could benefit them as healthcare professionals.

The leaflet highlights the skills and expertise of REFOCUS and how they can collaborate with and present to psychiatrists to provide the insight of those with experience of the services, and their family members/carers in promoting best practice. The toolkit was circulated to the Tutors and Deaneries and was handed out at the CPsychI Winter Conference at the REFOCUS stand.

## REFOCUS involvement in College activities

REFOCUS members have been involved in a number of College activities throughout the year.

### **Green Ribbon Month (May) – ‘Walk and Talk with Psychiatrists’**

Following its hugely successful launch in 2015, 2016 saw the second ‘Walk and Talk with Psychiatrists’ in partnership with See Change which involved a number of REFOCUS members. The event was attended by both medical professionals and the general public. The event received great media coverage particularly on thejournal.ie and joe.ie.



**REFOCUS members at the 2016 Walk & Talk with See Change for Green Ribbon Month**



**Laura Louise Condell speaking at the 2016 Walk and Talk with See Change for Green Ribbon Month**

### **College Annual Conferences**

In April, Kara Madden and Louisa Corr attended the College Annual Spring Conference 2016 in Carton House Hotel, Kilkenny which was themed ‘Human Rights and Trauma’.

Julie Healy, Eileen McCluskey, and Marina Bowe hosted a REFOCUS information stand at the College Annual Winter Conference 2016 in Cavan on 10-11 November. The stand provided an excellent opportunity for the group to speak to psychiatrists about REFOCUS papers, reports, and leaflets and particularly informing delegates why and how REFOCUS could be of interest and help to them professionally. A photo of the REFOCUS stand was subsequently published in the Medical Independent as part of the coverage of the conference.



**REFOCUS members Dr Marina Bowe, Ms Julie Healy, and Ms Eileen McCluskey at the REFOCUS stand at the Annual Winter Conference 2016**

### **Joint CPsychI and Shine Conference**

REFOCUS provided their unique perspective at the Joint CPsychI and Shine Conference in October in Galway. The conference was split into two themes: *Family Involvement and Confidentiality*; and *Family Involvement in Care – The way forward*. Rick Rossiter and Jeannine Webster took part in an interactive panel discussion entitled *Experience of a Family Member* alongside CPsychI President, Dr Ruth Loane. They also sat on a panel to discuss the **Assisted Decision Making (Capacity) Act 2015** and its application in mental health. REFOCUS Joint Chair Anne Jeffers and member Louisa Corr participated in a panel discussion which explored the future of family involvement in care. REFOCUS and the conference overall received lots of positive feedback from delegates.



**Joint Conference with Shine (L-R) Kevin Jones (REFOCUS/Shine), Liam Hennessy (REFOCUS Joint Chair), Anne Jeffers (REFOCUS Joint Chair), Shaun O'Keefe, Louisa Corr (REFOCUS)**



**Joint Conference with Shine (L-R) Freda Holly (Shine), Ruth Loane (CPsychI President), Rick Rossiter (REFOCUS), Jeannine Webster (REFOCUS)**

## College Annual Spike Milligan Public Speaking Competition for Medical Students

Rick Rossiter and Marina Bowe sat on the judging panel at the annual Spike Milligan Public Speaking Competition in November, where teams of two from the medical schools in UL, NUIG, TCD, RCSI & QUB spoke on the topic of: *"All Changed, Changed Utterly"* (Yeats, Easter 1916): 1916-2016 Mental Illness and Recovery – All the Children of the Nation Treated Equally Now?

The event was covered on the Irish Medical Times website in the lead up to and following the event.

*"There is something unique and not unique about people's stories because everyone has mental health. Often, the first step in helping someone is realising the life they lead."*



**Rick Rossiter speaking, as a judge, at the Spike Milligan Public Speaking Competition**

Rick said of the event:

*"The performances and insight into the topic shattered my image of trainee doctors, they were always intelligent, hardworking and carried great ambitions. Now I know that they have so much more on offer, compassion, empathy and above all, a need to understand more about those that they will care for in the future."*

## Involvement of REFOCUS members with Trainee Committee

REFOCUS saw great developments in 2016 with ever increasing engagement with the Postgraduate Training (PGT) Committee.

### CPsychI NCHD Conference

In February Brian McNulty and Anne Jeffers ran a workshop at the CPsychI NCHD Conference titled *"The Two Sides of Managing Bipolar Disorder – a Psychiatrist and Psychotherapist Discuss."* Many of the Trainees in attendance indicated that the REFOCUS workshop was the highlight of their day:

*"The afternoon session by REFOCUS was engaging and thought-provoking, I really enjoyed it."*

*"All presenters were well prepared and the material was delivered in a professional and engaging manner."*

## Summer Schools

The Postgraduate Training Committee runs Summer Schools in universities each year with the aim of encouraging medical students to begin considering psychiatry as their speciality.

George Bridges and Brian McNulty presented at the Dublin Summer School and Galway Summer School respectively, on their own recovery, and the importance of family in aiding recovery.

These presentations were very well received with many students stating that the REFOCUS presentation was the highlight of the day, and praised the inclusion of someone with experience of the services.

## Think Tank

George Bridges in collaboration with Dr Clodagh Power (trainee) also worked on a series of articles for the Trainee e-newsletter ***Think Tank***. The first article was in the form of an interview about attitudes in the workplace to someone with a mental illness - it was also published on the College blog.

This has proved to be a mutually beneficial relationship with Dr Power regularly attending a number of REFOCUS meetings.

## Conclusion

2016 has been a very successful and productive year for REFOCUS. The group has continued to represent the College at external events. It is important to recognise the contribution of Andrea Ryder, Micheál Clesham and Mary Hayes, key members of the College team who kept the group running as well as Director of Communications & Public Education Dr John Hillery for his continued support.

REFOCUS thank and acknowledge College Management Committee and Council for their continuing support for and belief in REFOCUS and their aims.

The Committee would also like to acknowledge the work of Micheál Clesham, who has left the College, with REFOCUS during his 3 years with the College team. We wish him well on his worldwide travels.

Finally, we must also thank Dr Anne Jeffers for her commitment to REFOCUS since its inception. Without her tireless conviction, there would be no REFOCUS to report on.



Brian McNulty addressing medical students at Summer School 2016



Refocus 4th quarterly meeting, December 2016



# College of Psychiatrists of Ireland

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## **REFOCUS Members 2016**

Dr Anne Jeffers (Joint Chair), Kara Madden (Joint Chair), Liam Hennessy (Joint Chair), Angela Dooley, Jeannine Webster, Christine McCabe, Diarmuid Ring, Ciaran Crummey, Julie Healy, Kevin Jones, Louisa Corr, Rick Rossiter, Tony Blackmore, George Bridges, John Kidney, Brian McNulty, Eileen McCluskey, Dr Clodagh Power, Dr Verena Keane, Dr Marina Bowe

Andrea Ryder (External Affairs and Policy Manager), Micheál Clesham (Communications Assistant), Mary Hayes (Communications Assistant)



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