



College of Psychiatrists  
of Ireland

Wisdom • Learning • Compassion

ANNUAL REPORT 2017

# REFOCUS

RECOVERY EXPERIENCE FORUM OF CARERS & USERS OF SERVICES

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## Foreword



It gives me great pleasure to introduce the 2017 REFOCUS report. The REFOCUS committee has now been in existence for 6 years, and it continues to go from strength to strength. Many of the original members, including myself, are still very much involved.

We are all pleased to welcome new members, including Psychiatrists, all of whom help shape the work of REFOCUS. Committee members continue to support the work of the College in presenting at Summer Schools, College Conferences, Med Fest, the Spike Milligan Public Speaking competition, induction for trainees, and in commenting on College papers and perspectives.

In 2017 there have been a number of new initiatives. In March, REFOCUS members were invited to take part in Mind Reading 'Mental Health and the Written Word' – a one day conference on Literature and Mental Health. The presentation attracted great interest and gave rise to an ongoing collaboration with an Irish academic at King's College Hospital, London.



I wish to thank everyone on the committee for all the support while I was Joint-Chair and to the College staff, as well as Anne Jeffers. It is exciting that the group were involved with the Mind Reading Event and really enjoyed it. We recruited new

members to the group, as well as psychiatrists, which enriched the group and facilitated engaging debate. A new initiative of involving Refocus in the Accreditation Process shows that the College is committed to the REFOCUS group. Thank you to the sub group for all their hard work on the Monetary Impact Project and for the work put into the Minutes Audit. Through REFOCUS we can demonstrate and speak at conferences and seminars

Over the years the Management team in the College have been aware of the large volume of work that REFOCUS members undertake and how responsibly each member takes their role on REFOCUS. During 2017 REFOCUS members were formally invited to join site inspection teams for accreditation of psychiatry training. Members are looking forward to receiving training on the accreditation process and joining College members on site inspection visits. This is an honour and responsibility that REFOCUS members value and respect.

Our aim for 2017 was to ensure we had equal numbers of psychiatrists, people who have used the services and family members of people who have used the services. We now have 7 psychiatrists as members of REFOCUS, and 8 in each of the other two groups. We meet for a full day four times a year. These days, along with all other work of REFOCUS, are arranged, supported and facilitated by Mary Hayes and Andrea Ryder, College External Affairs Department, and I would like to thank them both for their Trojan work in ensuring the success of the REFOCUS project.

In the following pages you can read of the work of REFOCUS over 2017 and if you feel you would like to join with us in this work, or if you have other ideas on how the College can utilise this service user and family member expertise, please come and join us.

**Dr Anne Jeffers**  
Joint-Chair

on the everyday experiences of those who use the services and their families and carers.

I am looking forward to the future as a committee member, and to continue to contribute to the committee. I also wish REFOCUS continued success and hope it will expand over the next few years. I also wish the new Joint-Chair the best of luck.

Thank You,

**Ms Kara Madden**  
Joint-Chair

## Introduction

This report encompasses the work of REFOCUS throughout 2017. It follows on from the Committee's Annual Reports of 2015 and 2016, 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

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.

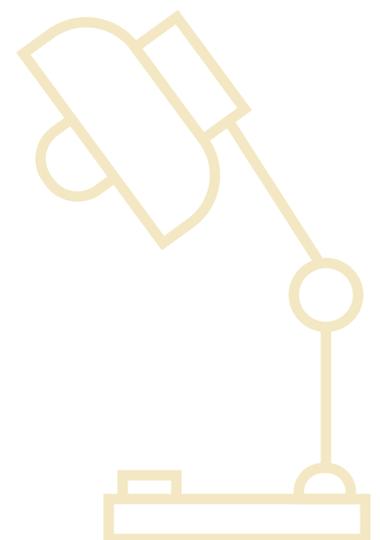


*REFOCUS Meeting, May 2017*

REFOCUS is a forum where the views of people with experience of using the Mental Health Services, and family members and carers of those who have used the services, aim to inform and influence all aspects of College business particularly the training experience of young future psychiatrists and identifying ways to improve the mental health services with psychiatrist members. This ties in with the College mission to promote excellence in the practice of psychiatry including advocating for better 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 what concerned the group, which 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 illnesses 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

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 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. Having a mix of those with experience of the services, their family members and carers, and psychiatrists on the committee allows the group to accurately reflect the actual life situations of all parties involved when someone is unwell. It also contributes to rich and meaningful discussion and subsequent activities to support the aims of REFOCUS. The committee now has 8 people with experience of the Mental Health Services, 8 Carers/Family Members of those who use the services, and 7 Psychiatrists.

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

REFOCUS welcomed new members Dr Marie Oppeboen, Ms Laura Louise Condell, Ms Julie Cleere, Dr William Flannery, Ms Ciara Gillespie, and Dr Mia McLaughlin who joined in 2017.

## Governance and Housekeeping



*CPsychI Communications, Policy and External Affairs Manager, Andrea Ryder presenting to REFOCUS committee on College External Affairs and Communications, at the REFOCUS meeting in March*

### Terms of Reference

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.

The minutes of every meeting are recorded and presented by the Joint-Chairs to the Director of Communications & Public Education.

### Standing Orders

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 group meetings that take place per year.

### Buddy System

Often REFOCUS meetings entail difficult discussion on sensitive and personal topics. In 2017 the committee decided to establish a ‘buddy system’ of support so committee members can access help from their peers following these types of discussions. Two people from the committee volunteer at the beginning of each meeting to be available for other committee members to speak to if needed.

*“The committee has many strengths, the greatest one being respect and a capacity to listen to one another.”*

## Presentations made to REFOCUS

From its inception, the forum felt that it would be helpful if psychiatrists, including trainee psychiatrists from the College membership, and other stakeholders presented to the committee about various psychiatric specialties and/or services in Ireland. The aim of this is to inform and educate REFOCUS members about the psychiatry profession, how psychiatrists operate within the system, mental health teams and so forth. As a result, we have had a number of very useful and informative talks.

### March 2017

Andrea Ryder, Communications, Policy and External Affairs Manager from the CPsychI External Affairs and Policy (EAP) Department, presented on the EAP department and its objectives; set up; committees; how it works and with whom it works; media interaction; policy areas; and relationships with external bodies. Following this, REFOCUS members discussed how psychiatry and psychiatrists are portrayed in the media.

### May 2017

Dr William Flannery, College Vice-President (welcomed as a new member of the committee) presented on addictions, dual diagnosis and harm reduction. He spoke on the advantages and disadvantages of the planned supervised injection site in Dublin, and on comorbid psychiatric and psychoactive substance misuse. Dr Flannery is the National Clinical Lead for the National Clinical Care Programme on Dual Diagnosis.



*National Clinical Lead for the National Clinical Care Programme on Dual Diagnosis, Dr William Flannery, presenting to the committee on Dual Diagnosis, May 2017*

### September 2017

Following invitation from the Trainee Committee for REFOCUS to be involved in the accreditation process Dr Aoibhinn Lynch (CPsychI Chief Examiner) presented on the process of assessing sites where psychiatry trainees train and the importance of this process for retaining and supporting trainees.

### December 2017

Andrea Ryder presented an update on EAP Department activities including College President, Dr John Hillery's appearance on RTE's Primetime to discuss 'Carers in Crisis'.

*“Each meeting for me always has something that I had an interest in, I always come away feeling the day was worthwhile.”*

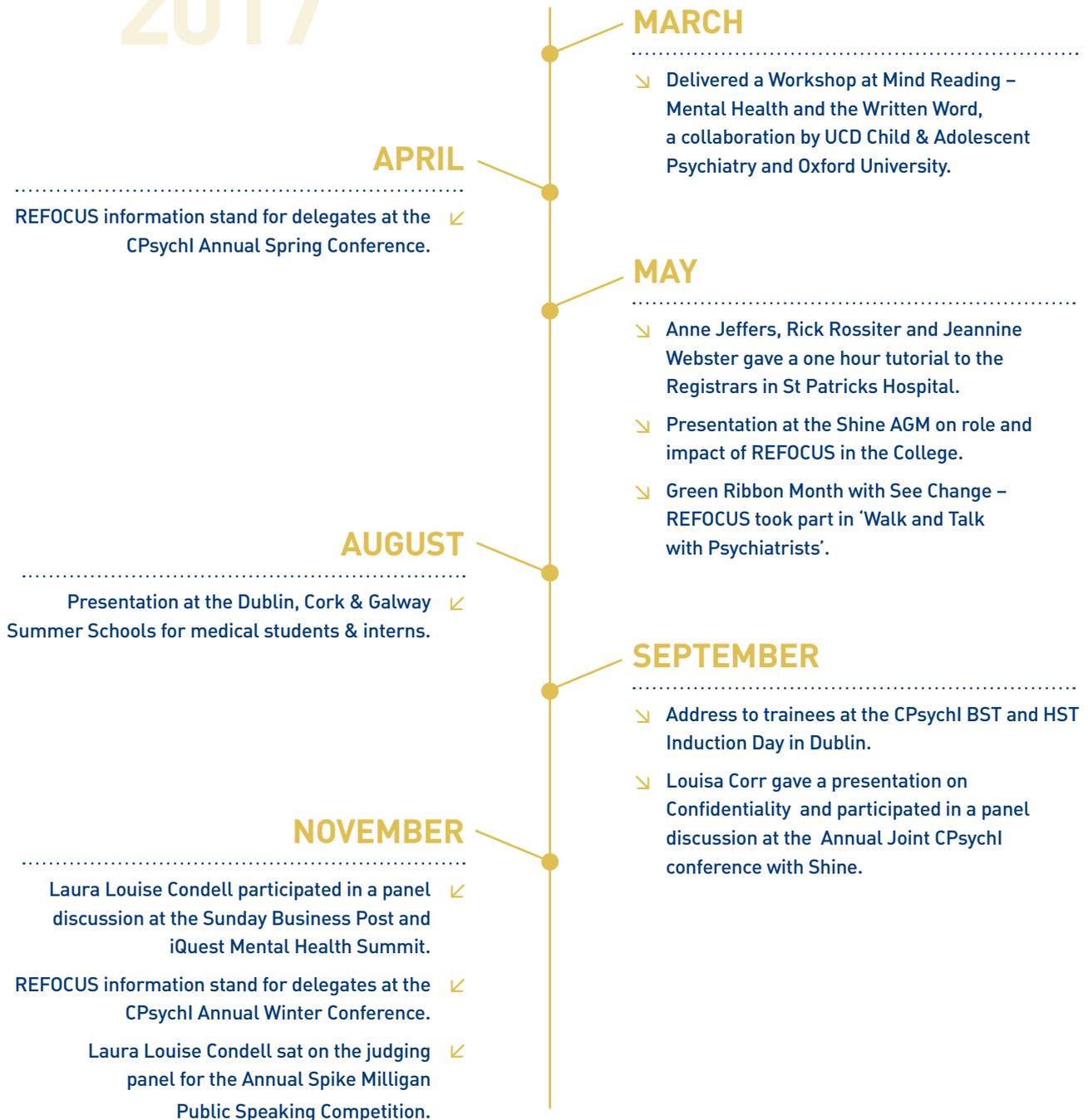
*“There is a need for work with those on the fringes of society, such as the homeless, those who can't afford care and in particular those with dual diagnosis.”*



## 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. REFOCUS members delivered the following:

# 2017



## Presentations made by members of REFOCUS

### Mind Reading - Mental Health and the Written Word

This collaboration between UCD Child & Adolescent Psychiatry and Oxford University formed a one-day programme of talks and workshops seeking to locate and explore productive interactions between literature and mental health. In the highest attended workshop of the day (chaired by Anne Jeffers) Christine McCabe, Brian McNulty, Rick Rossiter and Julie Healy read from their own and others literature and explored how literature and the writing of memoirs has supported their Recovery in living with mental illness and supporting someone with a mental illness..



*REFOCUS at the Mind Reading Conference 2017, dlr LexIcon, Dun Laoghaire (l-r: Christine McCabe, Mary Hayes, Dr Anne Jeffers, Rick Rossiter, Julie Healy, Brian McNulty, Andrea Ryder)*

### Presentation to Registrars in St Patricks Hospital

Anne Jeffers, Rick Rossiter and Jeannine Webster presented a one hour tutorial to the Registrars in St Patricks Hospital using personal narratives and encouraging awareness of the needs of psychiatrists themselves.

### Shine AGM

Rick Rossiter, Kara Madden and Anne Jeffers spoke at the Shine AGM on the role and impact of REFOCUS in the College.

### Sunday Business Post and iQuest Mental Health Summit

Laura Louise Condell spoke on a panel at the Sunday Business Post and iQuest Mental Health Summit to discuss implementing mental healthcare policy with Dr John Hillery (CPsychI President), Anne O'Connor (HSE), Shari McDaid (Mental Health Reform), Roisin Shorthall TD and chaired by Maria Molloy (Mental Health Ireland). Brian McNulty, George Bridges, and Julie Healy also attended.

*Sunday Business Post and iQuest Mental Health Summit l-r Mary Hayes CPsychI, Laura Louise Condell REFOCUS, Andrea Ryder CPsychI, Brian McNulty REFOCUS, Julie Healy REFOCUS.*  
*Photo credit Maura Hickey.*

*As one member puts it - "For me, memoir writing has been a cathartic and an emotional experience. It helped me to reflect on my learning and identify important stages in my recovery process. Reflecting on my experiences has also helped to consolidate my recovery."*

*Sunday Business Post and iQuest Mental Health Summit l-r Laura Louise Condell REFOCUS, Dr John Hillery CPsychI President, Anne O'Connor HSE.*

*Photo credit Maura Hickey*



*“There should be  
nothing about me  
without me.”*





*REFOCUS deliver a workshop at the Mind Reading 'Mental Health and the Written Word' 2017*

## 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 committee has and will involve the College membership through the processes and pathway for any College paper.

REFOCUS worked on two papers in 2017:

### **'Spirituality and its place in Mental Health Practice - Raising Awareness and Being Mindful of Bias'**

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. This paper was circulated to College faculties for feedback. This project is ongoing..

### **'Family Dynamics - Ensuring Psychiatrists and Mental Health Teams address 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. This draft paper was brought to Council for discussion. This project is ongoing.

### **Psychiatric Diagnosis**

The committee discussed writing a paper or perspective on psychiatric diagnosis, in particular to question the robustness of diagnoses, the length a diagnosis is valid for, diagnosis review and also whether there should be a mechanism to formally state whether a person no longer has a diagnosis. This project is ongoing.



## REFOCUS Projects

### Audit of REFOCUS Meetings

Committee Joint-Chair, Anne Jeffers carried out a survey on how REFOCUS meetings are run. All committee members anonymously filled out a questionnaire and the findings have helped inform and improve REFOCUS meetings moving forward. Overall there is a very high level of satisfaction with the meetings. People identified the need for more diverse membership, tighter chairing of meetings and greater support for members after the meetings. The Buddy System was therefore established, and diversity was taken into consideration during recruitment of new committee members.

### Summarising 5 years of minutes

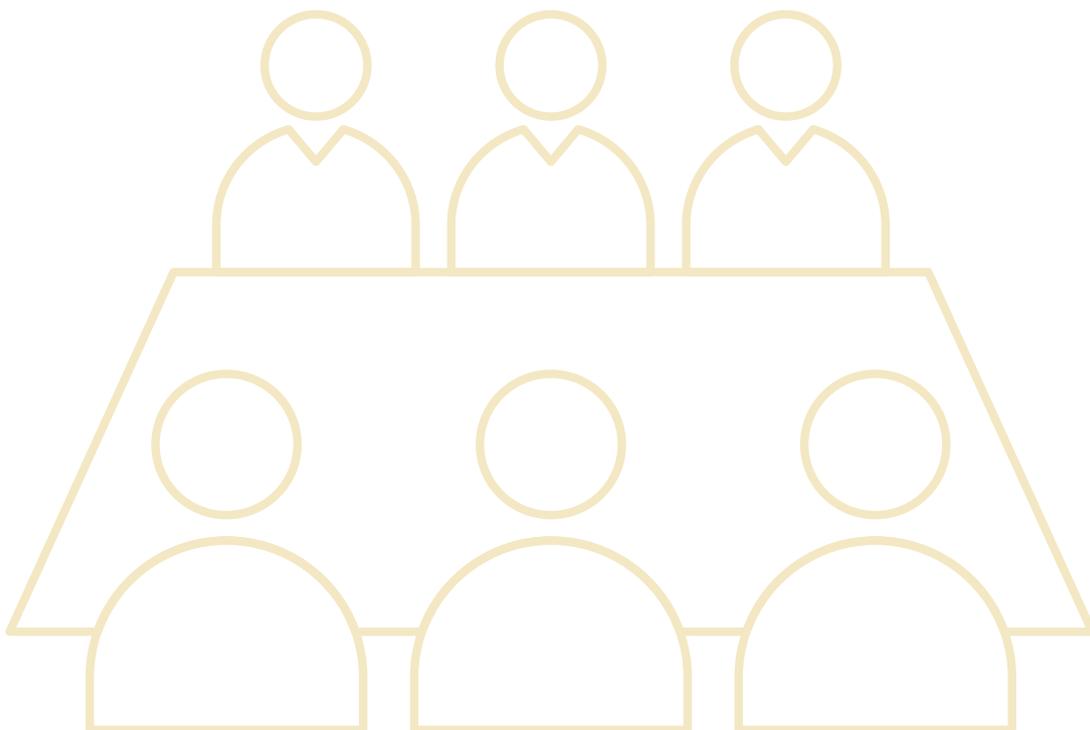
Christine McCabe began working on summarising all the minutes from REFOCUS meetings since the committee's inception. The aim of this project is to review and summarise the main achievements of REFOCUS activities to date, and to consider what the future aims of the Group are and how they can be best achieved. This project is ongoing.

### Monetary Impact Project

A subcommittee was formed to examine the monetary impact of living with a mental illness or caring for someone with a mental illness. The subcommittee identified housing, education and employment as the main issues to be examined and identified key stakeholders in these areas. The aim of the project is to gain information from these key stakeholders, to bring back to trainees and working psychiatrists to aid signposting for particular recovery/discharge needs. This project is ongoing.

*“You can be really financially struggling but not homeless so you are forgotten about, for example you lose your disability payment when you are on the cusp by a couple of euro. All of these stresses can cause/add to a mental illness.”*

*- Laura Louise Condell,  
Monetary Impact Project  
subcommittee member*





*“Trainees  
need to get  
the message of  
hope and see  
that people do  
recover and  
do get on with  
their lives.”*

## REFOCUS involvement in College activities

REFOCUS members were involved in a number of College activities throughout 2017:

*“Stigma in Irish society is still a massive problem despite more campaigns around mental health and issues. Positive outcomes and service initiatives are rarely or never highlighted in the media; it’s harmful for vulnerable people and families to constantly see only negative representations of the services.”*

### College Annual Conferences

In April, Rick Rossiter and Tony Blackmore attended the College Annual Spring Conference 2017 in the Lyrath Hotel, Kilkenny which was themed ‘Psychiatry in the Digital Age’. In November, Kara Madden, Julie Healy, Christine McCabe and Rick Rossiter attended the College Annual Winter Conference 2017 in the Dunboyne Castle Hotel, Meath which was themed ‘Psychosis, Somatization & Society’. At both conferences REFOCUS members hosted a REFOCUS information stand which provided an excellent opportunity for committee members to speak to psychiatrists about REFOCUS papers, reports, and leaflets, and informed delegates why and how REFOCUS could be of interest and help to them professionally.



*(l-r) Dr Anne Jeffers, Tony Blackmore and Rick Rossiter speak to Conference delegates at the REFOCUS information stand, CPsychI Spring Conference, Kilkenny.*



*Rick Rossiter speaking at the Annual ‘Walk and Talk’ with See Change for Green Ribbon Month.*

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

Following its hugely successful launch in 2015, 2017 saw the third annual ‘Walk and Talk with Psychiatrists’ in partnership with See Change where REFOCUSer Rick Rossiter spoke from his own experience of living with mental health difficulties. The event was attended by both medical professionals and the general public. The event received lots of media coverage; Dr Roisin Plunkett, Trainee Committee chair, and Rick spoke to Mary Wilson on RTE Radio One’s DriveTime prior to the event to explain its aims and garner support.

## CPsychI Trainee Induction for Basic Specialist & Higher Specialist Trainees

In September 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. 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.



*Julie Healy addressing BSTs and HSTs at the Trainee Induction Day in September*

## Joint CPsychI and Shine Conference

REFOCUS member Louisa Corr provided her unique perspective at the Joint CPsychI and Shine Conference in September in Waterford. The conference was split into two themes: *Family Involvement and Confidentiality*; and *Family Involvement in Care – The way forward*. Louisa presented on issues relating to confidentiality for the family member. Many conference delegates found Louisa's presentation to be most relevant and powerful. She also sat on a panel chaired by Dr Miriam Kennedy (EAP Director), to discuss Confidentiality and the benefits of information sharing for families, carers, service users and members of the MDT.

*“Families are an additional resource, not a burden. If the family understands the illness and recovery path it can help the patient.”*

*Louisa Corr participates in a panel discussion at the Joint CPsychI and Shine conference in Waterford. (l-r: Dr Miriam Kennedy, Prof Patricia Casey, Louisa Corr)*

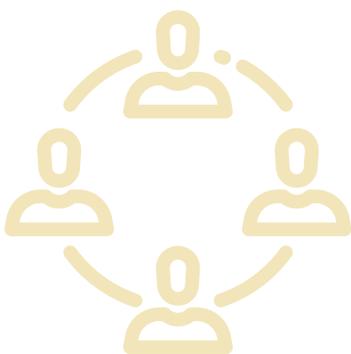


### College Annual Spike Milligan Public Speaking Competition for Medical Students

Laura Louise Condell 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, UCC & QUB spoke on the topic: *'In this era of post-truth politics, it's easy to cherry-pick data and come to whatever conclusion you desire'*. Following some tough competition and debate, medical students, Jennifer Kearns and Amy Worrall, from Trinity College Dublin, won the competition.



*Laura Louise Condell acts as a judge for the Spike Milligan Public Speaking Competition (l-r back row: Prof Anthony McCarthy, Dr Caoimhe Clarke, Dr John Hillery, Laura Louise Condell, front row: TCD winners Amy Worrall and Jennifer Kearns)*



### Human Right & Ethics Committee – Code of Ethics

The HR&E Committee began work on a code of ethics for psychiatry, as requested by the Medical Council. There was extensive consultation with College members in drafting these 12 principles and views were also sought from REFOCUS members .

### Irish Journal of Psychological Medicine (IJPM)

Laura Louise Condell volunteered to be the REFOCUS representative on the IJPM Editorial Board following invitation from Dr John Lyne (Editor-in-Chief) to fill the position left vacant by retired REFOCUS member Ciaran Crummey.

## Involvement of REFOCUS members with Trainee Committee

REFOCUS saw great developments in 2017 with ever increasing engagement with the Postgraduate Trainee (PGT) Committee.

### Summer Schools

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

Louisa Corr and Brian McNulty presented at the Galway Summer School, Kara Madden and Diarmaid Ring at the Cork Summer School, and Julie Healy and Rick Rossiter at the Dublin Summer School. They all spoke on their own experiences of mental health difficulties, 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.



*Louisa Corr and Brian McNulty address medical students and interns at the Summer School in Galway*

### Think Tank

George Bridges continued work as REFOCUS representative on the Trainee committee and assisted in the Trainee e-newsletter Think Tank until December when Rick Rossiter took over this position. In collaboration with Dr Therese O'Carroll (trainee and new Editor of Think Tank) George interviewed Mrs P.W. about her experiences as a mother who has suffered from depression, and the impact it has had on her life and that of her family.

### Inclusion in Accreditation Visits

REFOCUS members were formally invited to join site inspection teams for accreditation of training. It is important that the trainees are aware of the central role those who use the services and their family members have in ensuring the training is fit for purpose. Members are looking forward to receiving training on the accreditation process and joining College members on site inspection visits. This is an honour and responsibility that REFOCUS members value and respect.

*“This process is very important to ensure the College retains trainees, supports them, and produces the best trainees possible.”*



## Conclusion

2017 has been a very successful and productive year for REFOCUS. The group has continued to represent the College at external events. The committee thanks Kara Madden, who retired from the position of Joint Chair at the December meeting, for her hard work and dedication to the REFOCUS committee. It is important also to recognise the contribution of Andrea Ryder, and Mary Hayes, key members of the College team who kept the group running as well as new Director of Communications & Public Education Dr Miriam Kennedy, and College President Dr John Hillery, for their support.

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

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.



## REFOCUS Members 2017

Dr Anne Jeffers (Joint Chair), Kara Madden (Joint Chair), Angela Dooley, Jeannine Webster, Laura Louise Condell, Christine McCabe, Diarmaid Ring, Julie Healy, Kevin Jones, Louisa Corr, Rick Rossiter, Tony Blackmore, George Bridges, Julie Cleere, Ciara Gillespie, Brian McNulty, Eileen McCluskey, Dr Clodagh Power, Dr Verena Keane, Dr William Flannery, Dr Marina Bowe, Dr Mia McLaughlin, Dr Marie Oppeboen.

Andrea Ryder (Communications, Policy & External Affairs Manager),  
Mary Hayes (Communications and Policy Officer)



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