



## NATIONAL ACCESS FORUM 2024

### SPEAKERS, PRESENTERS, AND PANELLISTS

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#### OPENING ADDRESS



**Keith Moynes** is Assistant Secretary at the Department of Further and Higher Education, Research, Innovation and Science (DFHERIS) and is responsible for higher education policy and reform, funding, governance and quality, access policy, student support and equality, diversity and inclusion. Keith was formerly Head of Research and innovation policy, capital programmes, European Social Fund, Northern Ireland and international affairs.

#### NATIONAL ACCESS PLAN 2022 - 2028: HEA OVERVIEW OF PROGRESS TO DATE



**Dr Louise Callinan** is Head of Access Policy with the Higher Education Authority (HEA), responsible for leading and monitoring the implementation of the National Access Plan 2022-2028. She has held various roles within the HEA, most recently as Head of Research and Research Policy, and as Director of the Irish Research Council, the national funding agency for research across all disciplines. Prior to this, she was responsible for managing the higher education landscape reform process including the creation of technological universities and the associated national funding streams, and the implementation of the System Performance Framework.

#### MENTORING & ROLE MODELLING LIGHTNING TALKS

##### MODERATOR



**Edel O' Donnell:** My name is Edel O'Donnell. I am the Mincéir-Traveller programme Co-ordinator based in the University of Limerick. Prior to taking up this post I worked as the Destination College Assistant Co-ordinator. Before my time on the PATH programme, I worked for a Community Development company with a focus on ensuring equality of education.

## PANELLISTS



**Ronan Cox:** I am the Cranmore Education Mentor as part of the Path 3 WNW Connect Project. The Education Mentor is a joint initiative between ATU Sligo and the Cranmore Regeneration Project which began in 2019. I recently took up the Role in November 2023 to continue, and build on, the excellent work achieved by Dr. Celia Keenaghan in the community. My role involves one to one mentoring, delivering a Strengths Path programme and coordinating a Community Mentoring Advocacy programme. Although I am relatively new to this role I have over 10- years' experience mentoring early school leavers to assist them in realising and achieving their educational and employment goals. I am looking forward speaking at the national forum and hearing from mentors and mentees about the different experiences and challenges that they have encountered.



**Kirsten Lowe** is the ATU Connect Programme Coordinator with the Atlantic Technological University (ATU) covering the Galway and Mayo campuses. Before joining ATU in 2022, Kirsten worked with Foróige as a youth worker, coordinating the Big Brother Big Sister programme. In 2019, she set up Foróige's Third Level Mentoring programme with GMIT (now ATU Galway Mayo) and expanded the programme to 4 other colleges between 2021-2022. In her current role she works with schools, further education colleges and communities to run a variety of initiatives and supports to help individuals gain access to, and succeed in, higher education.

## PARTICIPANTS



**Margarita Baturova** is currently a 3rd-year Business and Politics student at Trinity College. She is from County Meath and is 20 years old. She qualified for the HEAR scheme for College. She is a Trinity Access Programme Ambassador where she mentors students on various initiatives like 'Bridge to College.' She is also on the Shared Island Youth Forum. She will be representing the Community Mentoring programme on the panel.



**Moji Mokotso** is an International Protection Applicant, a leader of the Change Makers CleanUp group, self-organised by the participants of the Change-makers Mentoring Programme, Maynooth University. A musician and an anti-drug activist from Lesotho.



**Natalie Chi Kei Ung:** My name is Natalie Ung. I'm 19 years old. I'm from Waterford. I studied at St. Angela's Secondary School Waterford. I'm studying medicine. I came into Trinity via the HEAR route.



**Kefilwe Nawa** is a recipient of the University of Sanctuary Scholarship at Maynooth University and currently in the 1<sup>st</sup> Year of Bachelor of Arts, Law, and Criminology. Kefilwe, who is an International Protection Applicant, was a mentor for the Changemakers Programme.

**Seamus MacDubhlais** came to TCD through the FET route, having attended Pearse College of Further Education. He recently mentored in Coláiste Eoin in Finglas where he was once a student.

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## UNDERSTANDING THE BARRIERS TO PARTICIPATION FOR CARE EXPERIENCED STUDENTS

### CHAIR



**Olive Byrne** is Head of Access at University College Cork. She is an accomplished Access practitioner with over 20 years of experience in the area of widening participation in Higher Education.

### PRESENTER



**Aideen Sheehan** joined the Central Statistics Office as a statistician in 2022 in the CSO's Statistical Systems Coordination Unit, where she is currently working on the second phase of the Children in Care frontier series report. She previously worked as a researcher with the Institute of Public Health and in TILDA, and prior to that she worked as a journalist and correspondent with the Irish Independent. She has an MSc in Applied Social Research from TCD.

### PANELLISTS



**Dr Sadhbh Whelan** joined the Department of Children, Equality, Disability, Integration and Youth in February 2018, prior to that she was working as an independent research consultant. In the early part of her career, Sadhbh worked as a practitioner in frontline services, in the areas of child protection and homelessness. Latterly she worked as a researcher mostly in university-based research centres where she worked on research studies and evaluations relating to the needs of children and families and services provided. Sadhbh's doctoral thesis was on child protection and welfare reporting.



**Dr Fiachra Ó Suilleabháin** is a tenured College Lecturer/Assistant Professor and Vice-Head of School (Strategic Data and Communication) in the School of Applied Social Studies, University College Cork. He is a professionally qualified, CORU registered Social Worker and Principal Investigator for SOAR Project research and evaluation.



**Tara Madden** is Education Project Manager of EPIC – Empowering People in Care. EPIC’s mission is to champion the rights of care-experienced children and young people, ensure their voices inform the policy and practice that affects their lives, and cultivate a care aware society. The aim of the Education Project is to raise awareness of the situation of children with experience of the care system in schools; to highlight the potential for education to make a positive difference in the experiences of children in care; to build the capacity and knowledge of teachers to support children in care and to increase collaboration between professionals in the care and education sectors.



**Sheila McGovern** is Project Co-Ordinator of the PATH 3, South Cluster SOAR Project and has worked in the area of access for seventeen years. Previously she worked as a Development Worker with the Traveller Visibility Group Cork and as a Care Assistant in both family support and homeless residential services.



**Jamie Adams:** I am Jamie Adams, 25 and a member of the CEEP, I am a Dad of 2 and have spent 19 years in state care. I am a strong advocate for people in care and will fight to improve the care system and society's perception of people in care. I am a strong believer that our basic needs of self-actualisation, self-esteem, love and belonging, safety and security and physiological needs must be met to progress in other areas of our lives.



**Keren O'Leary** is currently a youth worker in Dublin’s South Inner City, having graduated recently with a Masters in community and youth work from Maynooth University in 2023. She is a member of the Care Experience’s Project Care Experience Expert Panel which oversee and advise government on the long-term research into the care system and the experiences of young people and adults in and after care.