

LAUNCH PROGRAMME

Facing Reality:

Addressing the role of pornography in the pandemic of violence against women and girls

THURSDAY 17TH OCTOBER 2024

11AM – 12.30PM

- **Welcome** – Ailbhe Smyth, Chair of Women’s Aid
- **Research Presentation** – Ruth Breslin, Director, The Sexual Exploitation Research and Policy Institute
- **Why now is the time to act** – Sarah Benson, CEO, Women’s Aid
- **Tackling pornography to create equality for all and thriving communities** – Denise Charlton, CEO, Community Foundation Ireland
- **The importance of working with young people to prevent harm and creating healthy sexuality** – Eoghan Cleary, educator, author and campaigner

#FacingReality

#DiscussEducateBust

Speaker Profiles



Ailbhe Smyth

Ailbhe Smyth is a long-time campaigner on feminist, LGBT and other social issues. Most recently, she played a leading role in the marriage equality referendum campaign in 2015 and was Co-Director of the Together for Yes campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment. She was the founding head of Women's Studies at UCD where she lectured for many years.



Ruth Breslin

Ruth Breslin is Director of The SERP Institute. Ruth has over twenty-five years of research experience in both NGO and academic settings. She has an MSc in Social Research Methods (Social Policy) from the London School of Economics and Political Science. The focus of Ruth's work has been efforts to tackle and prevent violence against women and girls, and she has developed particular expertise in research and policy development on issues of commercial sexual exploitation. Ruth is regularly called upon to input into the development of evidence-based policy, legislation and practice in this regard, in both Ireland and internationally. Ruth joined SERP in 2018 and is lead or co-author of all of SERP's studies. Ruth is now leading the development of The SERP Institute and the delivery of its strategic plan.



Sarah Benson

Sarah Benson is the current Chief Executive Officer of Women's Aid, Ireland. Women's Aid are a national organisation working to prevent and address the impact of domestic violence and abuse. They do this by advocating, influencing, training, and campaigning for effective responses to reduce the scale and impacts of domestic abuse on women and children in Ireland, and by providing high quality, specialised, integrated, support services. For nine years prior to this role, Sarah was the Chief Executive Officer with Ruhama, an Irish NGO working nationally with women and people affected by prostitution including victims of sex trafficking. In addition Sarah has previous experience as Manager of the National Domestic Violence Helpline and extensive work in the community and voluntary sector both in Ireland and abroad, working particularly with marginalized ethnic minority women and youth. Sarah is a former Chairperson of C.A.P. International (2014-2019), Member and Vice Chairperson of the Board of the National Women's Council of Ireland (2013-2020), and a former member of the Board of The Wheel (2020-2024). Sarah is currently a Ministerial nominee to the Board of the Courts Service of Ireland and to the Board of Cuan*.

*Sarah is an individual appointee to these Boards and does not represent the views of these bodies in her public appearances unless this is expressly indicated.



Denise Charlton

Leading human rights, equality and social justice campaigner Denise Charlton has a deep understanding of our sector and the positive impact of strategic giving. Committed to policies which grow philanthropy and its impact, Denise was appointed Chief Executive in July 2020. She has previously served as CEO of the Immigrant Council of Ireland and Women's Aid.



Eoghan Cleary

Eoghan Cleary currently works as a secondary school teacher and assistant principal at Temple Carrig Secondary School where he has taught for the last eight years. He has over ten years previous experience as a youth worker, working in the most marginalised communities in the east inner cities of both Dublin and Galway. He serves on the Board of Directors of the Dublin Rape Crisis Centre and has studied in UCD, NUIG and TCD, completing master's degrees in Drama and Theatre Studies, International Human Rights Law, and Education.

Eoghan writes as a columnist for TheJournal.ie, he continues to campaign for the protection of children and adolescents, particularly with regards the ownership of smart devices by children and the subsequent related need for robust legislation as well as digital-media, gender-based-violence and porn-literacy-based education programmes; in this regard he has recently established the Gen Free campaign to lobby government on this issue. He is the co-author of the My Wellbeing Journey series of textbooks for the new SPHE Curriculum at both Junior and Senior Cycle and is currently completing a further master's degree in Humanistic and Integrative Psychotherapy with the aim of specialising in the area of child and adolescent psychotherapy.