

work & life

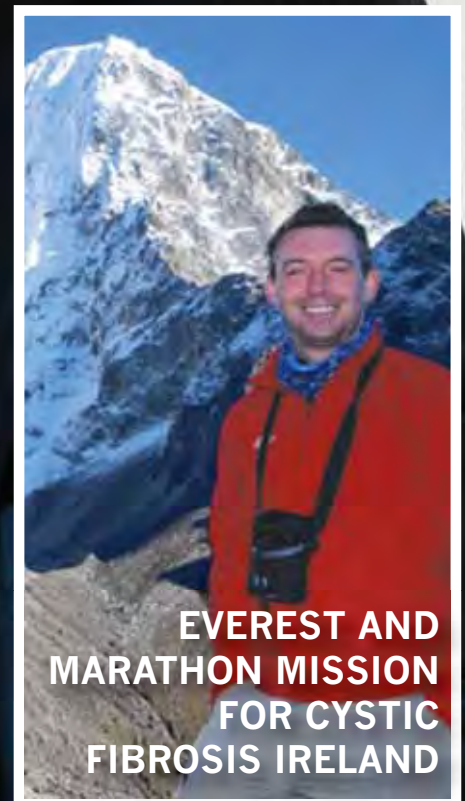
ISSUE 28 • WINTER-SPRING 2015

THE BATTLE OF IDEAS

The emergence of a new voice in the nation's economic debate.

PLUS

SOCIAL WORKERS AND FITNESS TO PRACTISE
GOOD NEIGHBOURS IN A COLD CLIMATE
RETIRED MEMBERS' NEWS



EVEREST AND
MARATHON MISSION
FOR CYSTIC
FIBROSIS IRELAND

ALSO INSIDE

MAN UP AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE. THE ORGANISERS.
BOILER SUITS. ASIAN TREK. JAKE GYLLENHAAL. AND LOTS MORE...

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Work & Life is produced by IMPACT trade union's Communications Unit and edited by Niall Shanahan.

Front cover: Dr. Tom Healy, director of the Nevin Economic Research Institute. Photo by Conor Healy. Inset pic: IMPACT cabin crew member Barry Cunningham.

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THE BIG PICTURE

Manning up against domestic violence

BAZ BLACK (pictured left) and Lynn Rosenthal, White House Advisor on Violence Against Women, facing off at the launch of SAFE Ireland’s MAN UP campaign, which highlights the positive role men can play in ending domestic violence.

SAFE Ireland, the national organisation of domestic violence services, reported that at least 8,033 women and 3,424 children received support from a domestic violence service in Ireland in 2013. Services across Ireland answered 46,137 helpline calls.

The annual figures also include 1,769 individual women and 2,699 children who were accommodated and/or received supports in an emergency refuge in 2013. The numbers looking for refuge have not varied hugely since 2011 because refuges are operating at full capacity, according to Sharon O’Halloran, CEO of SAFE Ireland.

“We cannot begin to bring these horrendous statistics down without the involvement of everyone in society, including men,” O’Halloran said about the MAN UP Campaign. “MAN UP is about asking men to stand against domestic violence, to show pride and leadership, to challenge abuse and violence and to support women and children.”

MAN UP in Ireland is supported by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the National Women’s Council of Ireland (NWCi).

See more at www.manup.ie

STRANGE WORLD

Suits you sir



there’s thousands of tweets written about them. Women are judged much more harshly and more keenly for what they do, what they say and what they wear,” he said.

Stefanovic then put the suit (dubbed the “sexism suit”) up for sale on the eBay auction site. The auction finished on 25th November, which is White ribbon Day in Australia. The sale raised almost €7,000, which Stefanovic donated to the White Ribbon campaign, the world’s largest male-led campaign to end men’s violence against women. www.whiteribbon.ie

KARL STEFANOVIC, co-presenter of the Today programme on Australia’s Nine Network, made global head-lines in November as he revealed the results of an experiment where he wore the same suit in every broadcast for a whole year.

Stefanovic carried out his sartorial experiment (which included the occasional trip to the dry cleaners) in order to prove that women’s appearances are unfairly scrutinised. He said his female colleagues were judged for their looks and their clothes, while the style choices of men on TV went unnoticed.

“No one has noticed; no one gives a s***. But women, they wear the wrong colour and they get pulled up. They say the wrong thing and



Jason Clarke Photography

INSPIRING PUBLIC SERVANTS

A life of many parts

DOROTHY STOPFORD Price occupies a quiet presence in Irish history, with a life of many interwoven strands. A member of the wealthy protestant ascendancy, she was a medic for an IRA flying column in West Cork, her Dublin home was one of the network of safehouses during the War of Independence and she gave lectures on first aid as a member of Cumann na mBan during the Irish Civil War.

Her career coincided with the advent of modern medicine, and Dorothy played a decisive role in the elimination of tuberculosis (TB) in Ireland, the third leading cause of death in Irish children for the first half of the 20th century.

Born in September 1890, her first medical post was as a dispensary doctor in Kilbrittain in County Cork. She began work in St. Ultan’s Hospital in Charlemont Street, Dublin in 1923, researching and writing about TB, with a particular focus on children. On a trip to Austria in 1931, Dorothy discovered a safe and convenient skin test (tuberculin test) to diagnose TB and brought it to Ireland.

Her research led her to a new vaccine, the BCG, being used to inoculate against TB. She established a national anti-tuberculosis league and published her book “Tuberculosis in Childhood” in Ireland and Britain in 1937. She encountered resistance from the Irish medical community and attracted objections from Archbishop Charles McQuaid because the

league was led by protestant doctors.

In 1948, Dr Noel Browne was appointed Minister for Health and provided funding for Ireland’s first BCG vaccination unit to be opened at St Ultan’s. He appointed Dorothy as the first chairperson of the Irish National BCG Committee in 1949.

Her work was crucial to ending the Irish tuberculosis epidemic in the mid-twentieth century, while history tends to give greater recognition to Dr Noel Browne and chief medical officer Dr James Deeney.



She remains something of an unsung hero for her work, though a book published in 2014, *Dorothy Stopford Price: Rebel Doctor* by Anne MacLellan, lifts the lid on her rich history and outstanding achievements. She died in January 1954 in London

THAT WAS THEN...

100 YEARS AGO

James Connolly writes in ‘The Worker’, 9th January 1915: “War or no war those slums must be swept out of existence...All the fleets and armies of the ‘alien enemy’ are not as hurtful to our lives, as poisonous to our moral development, as destructive to our social well-being as any one street of tenement houses in the slums of Dublin.”

In February, a cook at New York’s Sloane Hospital for Women infects 25 people with typhoid. Mary Mallon, originally from Cookstown, Co.Tyrone, was the first person in the US identified as an asymptomatic carrier of the pathogen associated with typhoid fever. In 1915 she is working under the assumed name of Mary Brown, having been already quarantined from 1907 to 1910. Better known as ‘Typhoid Mary’, she is quarantined until her death in 1938.

70 YEARS AGO

Most public transport comes under the control of Córas Iompair Éireann (CIE) on 1st January, 1945. Later the same month, Adolf Hitler takes residence in the Führerbunker in Berlin, as the Soviet army occupies Warsaw in Poland.

20 YEARS AGO

The last edition of The Irish Press is published on 25th May. Two days later, Pat Falvey becomes the first Irish climber to reach the summit of Mount Everest.



Your head in the right space

LAST YEAR IMPACT's Education division produced Head Space – Minding your Mental Health; a booklet for young people and their families. The original idea came from Kinsale Youth Support Service who happily agreed to allow IMPACT to reproduce it, following a suggestion from some IMPACT members. One of those was SNA South Dublin/South Leinster branch member Mary Keating.

Tell me about yourself?

I'm a special needs assistant (SNA) working in Cabinteely Community School, a second level school based in South County Dublin. I have two great grown-up children.

Where did you spend your childhood?

I grew up in Nurney, County Kildare. I like to get back there as often as I can. I remember living in the country and using flash lights when we went out at night, as there were no street lights.

What are your interests?

My main interest is hill walking and during the summer, taking long distance walking along the canals across the country. I also love set dancing, Gaelic football and gardening.

What's it like working in education today?

It can be very challenging as there is a great need for extra resources. There's lots of demand for more SNAs, especially in DEIS schools in disadvantaged areas.

Why do you think the *Head Space* booklet is so important?

Any resource that provides vital information for young people and their families, in relation to maintaining good mental health, is important. The Head Space booklet is particularly good as it's so easy to read. It gives an outline of the many difficulties encountered by young people, with contact details of the services available.

Tell me about your involvement in IMPACT

I became involved in IMPACT around 2004 when I attended an information meeting in Nerney's Court. I was interested in finding out more. I joined the South Dublin SNA branch soon after. I became secretary of the branch a few years later. When we amalgamated into The South Dublin/South Leinster branch, in 2012, I took up the position of secretary of the new branch. In October this year I became chairperson and I have just joined IMPACT's Education Divisional Executive Committee (DEC).

What's the best thing about being involved in the union?

I've met some great people and made many friends in IMPACT. The branch has really progressed and the work that is done serves the needs of members. We wanted to give something back to our members and we recognised the need for career development training for SNAs. There are very few places to go, to get in-service training, that don't cost a fortune. It's like a runaway train now, the demand is so high.

It's important to be aware of our entitlements, and to have somewhere to go for information. If a member rings, to sort them out, and if not we know we have somewhere else to get the information they need.

Why be active in a union?

It is important to be involved, without trade unions we wouldn't have the conditions we have now, particularly SNAs, but this is true of a lot of workplaces.

What do you do to relax?

Listen to music or the radio.

What are the small things that make you happy?

Meeting friends, going to a concert or a céilí.

What makes you laugh out loud?

Father Ted or Mrs Browns Boys. ►

What would your ideal holiday involve?

To head off with my hiking boots. It doesn't matter where as long as there are hills, good company and warm weather. Some of the best holidays I've had are when I have gone away on my own and met people of all ages from different countries doing the same. When you get out of the tourist areas you get to see the real country, get great food, and see things you would never see on a package holiday. If I don't get to do that it's the Willie Clancy Festival week in Miltown Malbay Co. Clare, on the first week in July every year for set dancing.

What music are you into?

I could listen to almost any type of music from pop to opera, jazz or Irish traditional. It depends on what I am doing at the time. It's rock music for housework because it gets it done quicker. I don't think I could pick a favourite. I went to see Andrea Boccelli recently and really enjoyed it.

What do you like to read?

I have just finished reading a book called *The Price of a Wife* by Anne Cunningham. It's a true story about an Australian cricketer who caused a scandal when he took on the corrupt Catholic Church in Sydney in the late 1890s early 1900s. He named a priest as co-respondent in a divorce trial with whom

his wife had an affair. I am now reading *To Rise Again at a Decent Hour* by Joshua Ferris an easy read about a dentist who has had his identity stolen online.

What's your favourite TV programme?

TV dramas like *Midsomer Murders*.

What's top of your bucket list?

A holiday to Italy or Cuba.

Do you cook, if so what is your speciality?

I do like to cook and do everything from scratch as I don't like readymade meals. I'm not a fan of takeaways so I tend to make one pot meals, like curry or stew, and freeze it. My speciality would be pork steak with apricot and pecan stuffing and a chasseur sauce. I also make a very good apple tart.

What is the worst feature of your character?

I hate waiting.

Tell me something about yourself very few people know?

I leave everything to the last minute.

What really annoys you?

People who are two-faced.

What gets you through when the going gets tough?

Going hill walking with friends, there is nothing you can do about problems when you are up on top of a mountain.

What's the best piece of advice you have ever received?

I have probably been given lots and ignored it all.

What advice would you give to your 18-year-old self?

Have fun and plenty of hobbies.

Alive or dead who would you like to have a drink with?

Freddy Mercury, of all the people I never got to see. I couldn't get to Slane and he was brilliant.

What are your pet hates?

Having my photo taken and selfish drivers.

What would you like to be remembered for?

That I did my best to be a good parent and friend.

Download a copy of *Headspace - Minding your Mental Health* at www.impact.ie

Interview by Martina O'Leary ●

Last year was a very significant one for IMPACT member Barry Cunningham. A former branch chair with the Aer Lingus Cabin Crew branch of IMPACT, Barry ran his first marathon and made the 18,000ft trek to Everest Base Camp. His inspiration? His niece, Emma, and his goal to raise funds for Cystic Fibrosis Ireland in her memory. NIAL SHANAHAN talks to Barry about Emma's legacy

EMMA KEENAN sadly passed away on the 8th May 2011, not long before her 18th birthday. It had a devastating effect on her extended family and wide circle of friends. Emma had lived with cystic fibrosis (CF) all her life. CF is an inherited chronic disease that primarily affects the lungs and digestive system of almost 1,200 children and adults in Ireland, and about 70,000 people worldwide.

Ireland has some of the most severe strains of CF and the highest incidence (per head of population) of CF in the world, with three times the rate of the US and the rest of the EU. The impact of CF varies from one person to another, and people living with CF are particularly vulnerable to infections.

Her uncle, Barry Cunningham, recalls Emma's resilience. "We were all witness to her lifelong experience of dealing with CF. She had been in and out of hospital on numerous occasions, fighting infections, but I realised later on that Emma had never complained once. NEVER."

After Emma passed away, there was a large number of visitors to the house to pay their respects. "People were coming to visit the house before her funeral. We arranged for a small collection in aid of Cystic Fibrosis

Ireland. In no time at all we'd raised over fifteen thousand euro which was totally unexpected and just blew us all away. It was an amazing tribute to Emma and a testament to the kind of person she was that she inspired such generosity" says Barry. It marked the start of a fundraising drive which gathered momentum in 2014.

Emma had been a patient at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital, Drogheda. "The hospital only has four isolation rooms. People with CF need isolation while they're being treated. It eliminates the risk of any cross contamination and it's a crucial treatment environment for infection recovery. The money we raised contributed to the purchase of a house on the grounds of the hospital, providing isolation units away from the main hospital. The medical staff can treat them there and it's a far more appropriate location for CF treatment" he says.

Emma would have turned 21 in July last year. Her sister, Edel, wanted to mark her 21st birthday in some way. Barry said the initial idea was to stage a concert or to do something at home. "But then Edel came up with the idea that she'd like to do the Dublin City marathon in memory of Emma. We developed that idea and recruited 21 family and friends to run the marathon in memory of Emma" he says.

Milestone

"On top of all that I was turning 40 in September and I didn't particularly feel like throwing a party or anything like that ►



Emma Keenan

so I decided I wanted to go away for my birthday. A friend of mine sent me information about a trek that he was doing to Everest Base Camp. The trip was scheduled to arrive at base camp on the day I was due to turn 40 so it all just seemed to fit. I signed up for that. Then I decided to open a fundraising page on my Facebook account using mycharity.ie."

Barry was, again, staggered by the immediate generosity of his friends. "It was very humbling. I had hoped I might raise about a thousand euro. There were lots of donations including a €500 donation from IMPACT's central executive. That brought my total to just over €5,000, which was fantastic" he says.

Preparation

"I trained for the trek by doing a lot of work in the gym, mostly cardio and weight training. But it's very difficult to know in advance how you're going to get on in the trek as it's all to do with the altitude and how your body copes with it" he explains.

"You could be the fittest person in the world and still struggle. It's so hard to predict how your body will cope with the reduced oxygen levels. Everest Base Camp is at an altitude of 18,000 feet."

The climax of Barry's 18 day trek took him on an early morning ascent of Kala Patthar, on the south ridge of Pumori in the Nepalese Himalayas. Kala Patthar provides the most accessible point to view Everest.

"It felt quite spiritual. It was one of those moments in life that you hope you will always remember. It was the toughest day but it will help me remember where I was the day I turned 40," he says.

Barry explains that the ascent was also very emotional. "As I walked, fighting at times to get the oxygen into my lungs, all I could think about was Emma and the people living with CF who spend their entire lives dealing with that sensation."

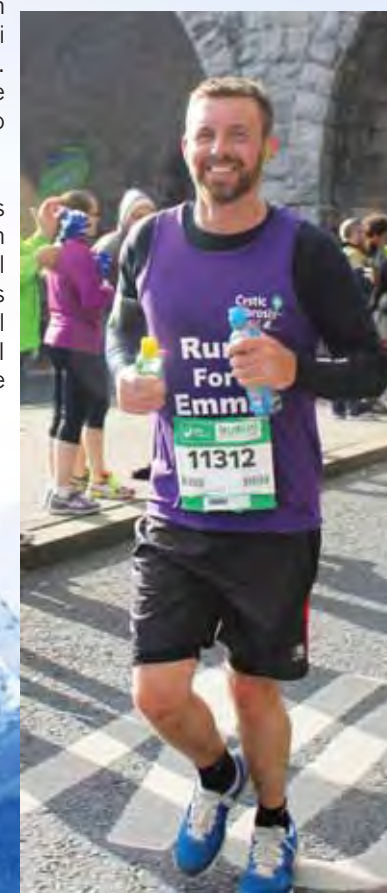
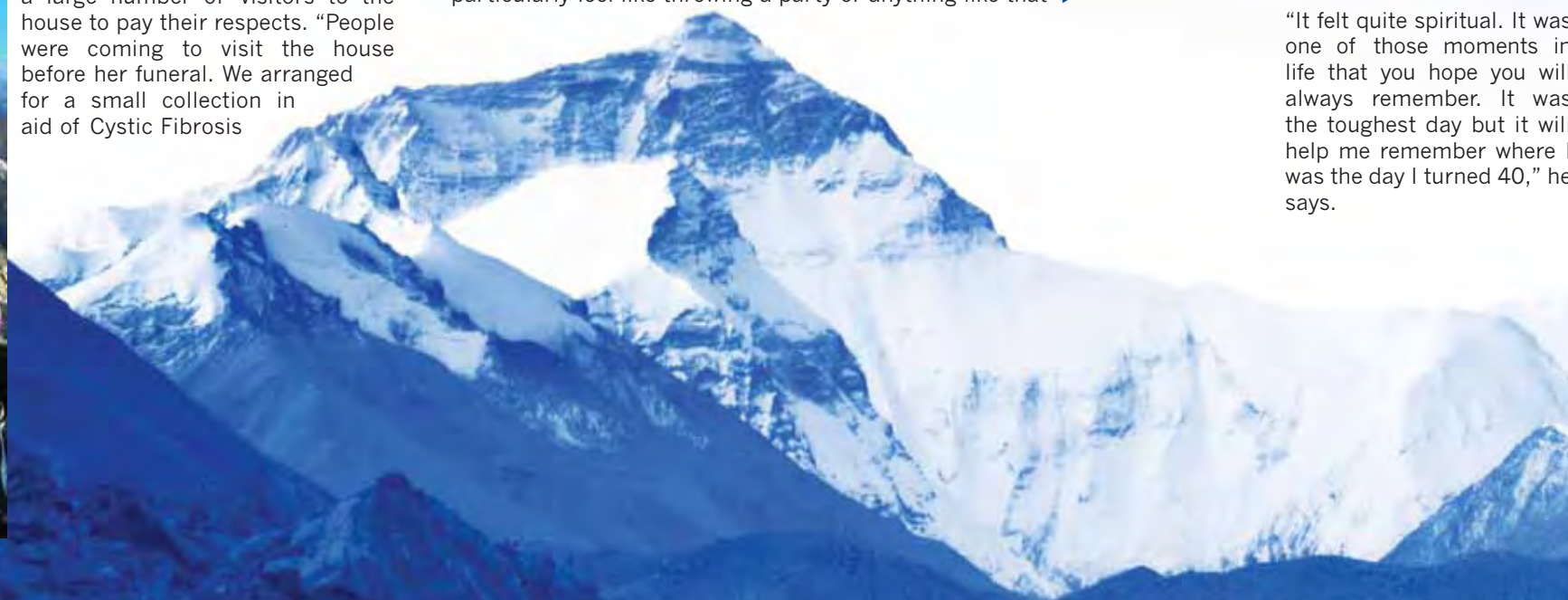
Home stretch

Returning from Everest, Barry had three weeks to go before the Dublin city marathon. "While I'd been training for the trek, the longest runs I'd completed were two 10k runs. I had never run further than that. The best advice I got was from Pat McNally, a 24-marathon veteran and one of our group. He advised me to start off slow. I kept that in my head and ran the entire distance, it was good advice.

"I finished the marathon in 4 hours 18 minutes. I was delighted. I plan to do it again this year and I'll be aiming to do it in about 3 and a half hours" he says.

The trek and marathon raised almost €20,000 for Cystic Fibrosis Ireland, and Barry says he has an appetite to keep going. "In these times of austerity we made no assumptions about what people would give, and the generosity was overwhelming. That we could raise this money and help families who are living with CF is an important way for us to keep Emma's memory alive in a meaningful way. There is a real need for ongoing support for families and for the vital isolation units that make all the difference to treatment" he says.

The Emma Keenan fund remains open at www.cfireland.ie ●



Barry completing his first marathon.

Getting organised

IMPACT has been building a team of union organisers over the last couple of years. In this special feature we invited organiser LINDA KELLY to tell the story of the organiser, what they do and how they're building the membership network across the country, and we include a brief introduction to each of IMPACT's organising crew

JUST OVER two years ago, I joined the IMPACT family as one of six new union organisers. Bright eyed and bushy tailed (and perhaps even a little bit green) I was sent off to work with the Special Needs Assistants South Dublin/South Leinster branch.

During that time I've worked closely with the wonderful and dedicated group of people that make up our branch executive committee. Together we've been working to increase our membership, training workplace representatives and equipping them with negotiation skills and building a network of support across seven counties.



NAME: Úna Faulkner

ROLE: Health organiser Dublin Care Services Branch

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: Before working for IMPACT I was working on an Atlantic Philanthropies initiative called 'We the Citizens'. The project was a year-long programme aimed at testing deliberative democracy in Ireland.

Prior to this I worked in the GAA for three years, based in Croke Park and working in ticketing. Needless to say it was an incredibly busy job, as the soccer and rugby was also being played in Croke at the time!

I was welfare officer in Trinity College Students' Union, a year-long full time elected post that I ran for in my final year.

WHAT LEAD YOU TO BECOME A UNION ORGANISER?: Like most people who work in unions or who join trade unions I grew up with parents who were always in a trade union. It was something that was discussed at the dinner table and being a member of a trade union was taken very seriously..



NAME: Sinead Wynne

ROLE: Organiser Midwest region.

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I have worked for the HSE and have been a member of IMPACT for over 25 years. I first became involved with the union as a local rep before becoming a member of the Clare branch. In 2007 I became chair of the Health section of the Clare branch and in 2009 was elected to the National Health and Welfare Divisional Executive of IMPACT, where I served for three terms.

WHAT LEAD YOU TO BECOME A UNION ORGANISER?:

Given my background I believe I have a good understanding of the issues facing members and the union. I hope to encourage participation and involvement, to represent the interests of members as well as promoting the benefits of membership.

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD: I plan to meet as many members as possible through information and other meetings over the next number of months.

As organisers we work to bring the union closer to members, to build on the reputation of IMPACT, and support workers who are in difficult situations, supported by a great network of staff and activists across the union.

Nothing compares to meeting a group of SNAs to talk about joining the union. They'll all have different reasons for being there and they'll have plenty of questions. It's a big first step for many of them, and quite often we'll be meeting somewhere like a coffee shop miles away from where they work because there's a genuine fear that they might be spotted meeting with a union rep.

No worker should have to live with that kind of fear, and much of our initial conversation will be about dispelling that fear, and empowering people through union

membership. After that we set about the process of providing advice and guidance on whatever issue might be causing them trouble in their workplace.

Through this process we get to know each other a lot better, and you can begin to spot the people with the potential for taking on the role of the workplace rep. We'll spend several weeks guiding new reps through negotiation with management, working with our official (Dessie Robinson) and helping to resolve any difficulties in the workplace. Taking people through that process, from our initial chat to developing a unionised workplace with members who feel supported and prepared, is the reason I love doing the job.



NAME: Joan McCrohan.

ROLE: Organiser with the SNA Munster branch

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I became an activist with the Kerry branch in 2002. I was conscious from the start that, as a member, I could help shape our union. I was encouraged and supported in campaigns for recognition of the value of the role of the SNA.

WHAT LEAD YOU TO BECOME A UNION ORGANISER?:

As chair of the SNA Branch, I made changes that improved support for members in isolated workplaces. I organised branch reps to support SNAs nationally. I came to work at IMPACT in 2011 and in 2012 I became one of four organisers in the Education division. We bring the union to isolated workplaces. We organise and support staff in education and train future activists and leaders.

Photo: Clearys Photography



NAME: Deirdre O'Connell Hopkins

ROLE: Organiser with SNA North Dublin/North Leinster branch

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I've worked as a social care worker in Ballydowd special care, secure unit. During that time I was the local workplace rep, and then a branch executive member and officer of the branch.

WHAT LEAD YOU TO BECOME A UNION ORGANISER?:

I was driven by my sense of how important it is that union members are active within IMPACT. The union is far stronger where activists and reps are taking a more active role in their workplace.

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD: I'm a past member of the Reserve Defence Forces (RDF) Artillery wing. I still live by the RDF's patron saint's (St. Barbara) motto: 'Be at the bursting doors of doom and in the dark deliver us'.



NAME: Joe O'Connor

ROLE: Organiser with the Boards and Voluntary Agencies branch

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: President, Union of Students in Ireland (USI); President, GMIT Students' Union; member, Higher Education Future Funding Expert Review Group (Current); board director, SpunOut.ie (current); board director, Higher Education Authority.

WHAT LED YOU TO BECOME A UNION ORGANISER: I believe in the principles of trade unionism, I'm passionate about economic and social change, and I want to play my part in building a strong trade union movement for the 21st century which is proactive, innovative and led by our membership

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD: Favourite quote: Vince Lombardi- 'Obstacles are what you see when you take your eyes off the goal'.

Photos by Conor Healy



NAME: Eimear Ryan

ROLE: Organiser SNA Connacht/ Ulster branch

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I graduated with a MSc in regional and local development in 2004 and began working with Breffni Integrated Ltd. in Co. Cavan as an education co-ordinator. I have been a union activist since 2005 and a workplace rep since 2006. I chaired the Local Enterprises branch until I took up the post as an organiser with the Education division.

WHAT LEAD YOU TO BECOME A UNION ORGANISER?: I always relished debating at school and was instrumental in the establishment of the students' council, upholding the values of solidarity, fairness and equality. In the workplace, and at a local community level I strived towards achieving equality. I was the first woman ever to be awarded Club Person of the Year by Cavan Rugby Football Club! I have always been strongly committed to trade unionism and social justice.

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD: You may fall many times, but always stand up!



NAME: Linda Kelly

ROLE: Organiser with the SNA South Dublin/South Leinster branch

PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE: I graduated from UCC with a degree in speech and language therapy. Then I was elected to USI and served two years as the union's equality officer. After that, I worked with AHEAD, a charity that supports students and graduates with disabilities before joining the IMPACT team in 2012.

WHAT LEAD YOU TO BECOME A UNION ORGANISER?: My dad has always been an active shop steward and trade unionist. It was the norm when I was growing up to talk about workers getting together to improve their conditions so it has always been something I've been interested in. Coupled with my years' experience of campaigning in equality, the job in organising is a perfect fit.

ANYTHING ELSE TO ADD: Cork for the All Ireland Double in 2015!

The role of organiser is one that IMPACT has really developed over the last number of years. The Dublin Care Services branch and the Boards & Voluntary Agencies branch were the first to develop the role and my colleagues Una Faulkner and Joe O'Connor work with these branches respectively. The other SNA branches across the country work with my colleagues Joan McCrohan, Eimear Ryan and Deirdre O'Connell-Hopkins and Sinead Wynne has recently joined our team, boosting our crew to seven working with branches in the Mid West.

It's a great team and between June 2013 and June 2014 we've seen 30% of all new IMPACT members recruited to the branches we work with. That's an encouraging figure, and it has helped us to expand a thriving rep networks across our branches and develop effective campaigns.

IMPACT has a much greater visibility in the workplaces where we've organised and that means that branches are stronger, better able to fight for their members and more effective at getting results. Best of all, we get to witness fear transform into empowerment. I love it.

"Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much." Helen Keller ●

Looking for new blood

The retired members' vocational group in IMPACT needs new blood says group chair Brian Burke. In a special newsletter feature for Work & Life, HELENA CLARKE talks to Brian about the group, and its objectives, as he looks forward to their AGM in February.

Purpose

"The purpose of the group has changed in recent times" says Brian "the key issues now are around pensions and negotiating rights for retired workers. The social aspect is important too as you've finished your working life but kept your connection to the union.

Older people are getting more and more nervous. They feel that money has been taken off them before, so what's to stop it happening again? And my answer to that is a strong retired section in the union. That's what'll stop it."

Membership

"Whilst we have a strong network, we only have 800 retired members in IMPACT, and that's our weakness. There is life in the trade union movement after you've retired. With more members we have more influence – it's very simple".

Lobbying

"In the New Year we will provide members with information, letters we've written to politicians, and questions they can ask their representatives coming up to the next election. That way we'll have influence. Politicians need to know that austerity affects pensioners too.

The vocational group helped found the Alliance of Retired Public Servants, and remains very involved in it. This group is very active in lobbying on behalf of retirees, and has met with Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, many times. "We have written to every TD, minister and senator. This is a huge network. The alliance represents a network of approximately 75,000 pensioners across 16 separate organisations. There's real strength in those numbers" says Brian.

Get involved

The AGM for the Retired Members Vocational Group is scheduled for Tuesday 17th February at 11am, at the Gresham Hotel, O'Connell Street. Brian is encouraging retirees to get involved. "Prospective members should come along to get a feel for the group. We need new people, new ideas, and new energy to take us to the next level."

Dr Tom Healy is NERI's director. Tom moved to NERI from the Department of Education and Skills, where he was chief statistician. Prior to that Tom had worked with the ESRI, the Northern Ireland Economic Research Centre, the OECD and the National Economic and Social Forum.

Leading in the battle of ideas

When you turn on the radio these days and hear a debate on matters economic there's a very good chance you'll hear someone from the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) offering an alternative perspective to that offered by the economic mainstream. PAT MONTAGUE charts the development of this unique organisation.

SO WHAT exactly is the Nevin Economic Research Institute? Where did it come from and what is it about? And what kind of effect is it having on the national conversation about the Irish economy?

Creating an alternative

NERI was founded in 2012 and, from the outset, had as its vision the achievement of a better fairer society – a vision it shares with its founders, a number of trade unions affiliated to the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) including IMPACT. Its aims are to contribute towards “the construction of alternative perspectives and possibilities that will lead to the creation of an economy that works for society”.

As NERI director Tom Healy explains, the institute works to deliver on its aims through the provision of world-class economic research and analysis. This is carried out by its five staff, four based in Dublin and one in Belfast.

NERI has published twelve of its Quarterly Economic Observers over the last three years, building a comprehensive picture of economic trends during that time. The institute has also produced working papers on taxation, incomes, education and the operation of the labour market. Tom publishes a weekly blog on the NERI website, which hosts the entire archive of the institute's publications.

But just three years ago, none of this body of work existed, and the national debate on Ireland's economy was being bitterly waged among a small group of high profile celebrity economists.

A new voice

This was a deciding factor for the trade union movement to create, in the midst of the crisis, an economic think tank.

Tom Healy explains that the trade union movement was in considerable shock when the crisis first hit Ireland over six years ago.

“As a result, economic debate was being largely colonised by more conservative voices. When the trade union movement put forward its *Better Fairer Way* proposals they were consistently challenged on the basis that the country couldn't afford them.

“Key players within the movement knew that it needed to establish an economic think tank that could engage with credibility in the debate. They also knew that if such a body was to be effective, its work had to be grounded in research and it simply couldn't be just a mouthpiece for the movement.”

David Begg, ICTU General Secretary, explains that the creation of NERI was seen as critical due to the ‘titanic battle of ideas’ that was taking place in our society and right around the world. The debate continues, and the outcome of it will shape the future of the world for decades to come.

“If we are to engage in this battle of ideas, let alone have a chance of winning it, we must be able to convince our fellow citizens that we have a credible, alternative vision for our society.

“We must be able to explain that political choices determine economic and social outcomes and not the application of some iron law of economics. Crucially, we need to upend the current paradigm and demonstrate that the economy must be subordinate to society and not vice versa. This explains, to some degree, the rationale for the founding of the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI), named after my predecessor, Donal Nevin.”

In short, NERI was established in order to equip the union movement to engage more successfully in this battle of ideas, backed up by top quality research and analysis.

Taking off

From its inception in 2009, it took two years to get NERI up and running. Tom Healy explains “The establishment of NERI took longer than expected. It was late 2011 before the first tranche of staff were in place and March 2012 before



NERI's senior research officer is Dr Micheál Collins who previously was assistant economics professor at Trinity College. Micheál served on the 2008-2009 Commission on Taxation and the Government's Advisory Group on Tax and Social Welfare 2011-2014.



Daragh McCarthy is NERI's research and administration officer and is responsible for planning the institute's events, disseminating its research and administering the organisation.

continued on page 14 ►



Tom McDonnell is NERI's economist in the Republic and joined NERI from the progressive think tank TASC. Prior to that Tom taught economics at NUI Galway and DCU.



Paul MacFlynn is NERI's economist in Northern Ireland. Paul is a graduate of UCD and the University of Bristol and previously worked in financial services.

it was formally launched.” But the institute got a foothold in public discourse far quicker than anyone had originally expected.

“Over the past two years we have become regular contributors in the media. There are almost weekly references to our work in the Irish media – North and South – as well as in important international publication like the Financial Times. In addition, key commentators regularly cite NERI’s work in their blogs and articles” says Tom.

IMPACT general secretary Shay Cody says that the creation of NERI has ended the monopoly on the airwaves of “stockbroker economists and those ideologically opposed to public services and public investment.”

“NERI has managed in a short period of time to introduce issues, such as the fairness of the tax system and income inequality, into public debate.”

Healy says that gaining such an authoritative position in economic debate for a trade union-backed body would have been unthinkable back in 2009.

This view is backed by David Begg: “Thus far, the Institute has proven an enormous success – indeed far more than we originally anticipated.”

Making an impression

Shay offers an important clue to NERI’s success in gaining a strong foothold in economic debate: ‘Over the last three years, the Nevin Institute has established itself as a credible researcher and commentator in shaping policy options – both north and south of the border.’

Shay Cody’s perspective on why NERI has been successful is echoed by Tom Healy.

“The fact that we offer an alternative perspective coming from economists and grounded in credible research is noted and appreciated in the media world even by those who disagree with us.”

From talking to Healy it’s clear that the research alone isn’t the only reason why NERI has gained such a strong foothold in public discourse.

“We’ve invested a lot of time in relationship building. For example, through meeting trade union members, civil society groups, politicians, civil servants, economists and researchers as well as individual journalists and commentators to introduce ourselves and to explain what we’re about. It took a while for some to take us seriously but we’ve now established excellent working relationships with most of the journalists writing about economic affairs.”

Next phase

Both David Begg and Tom Healy recognise that while to date, NERI’s critical role has been to get unions a hearing in the ongoing public debate on the economy, it is now time to move to the next phase.

“Early in 2015, in conjunction with NERI, Congress aims to produce and publish our view of what a better, fairer, post-crisis Ireland might look like and, crucially, how we might get there. That’s when the real battles will begin,” David Begg says.

Tom Healy says that the institute needs to get ahead of the curve and start to map out where Ireland could be headed over the next 30 years.

“At the moment we’re very much focused on dealing with current economic issues but we need to get more involved in the medium and long term. While we can’t predict the future we can certainly set out where Ireland and the world need to go. Our job is to help win hearts and minds so that we can build a different economic and social model and make sure that we avoid some of the appalling decisions that ultimately have cost us all so dearly.” ●

It’s not just about the voice



Caitriona Heffernan, SLT Cork.

Professional registration has recently been introduced for speech and language therapists. MARTINA O’LEARY spoke with some IMPACT members working in this area to find out more about their work and the crucial role they play in healthy development.

COMMUNICATION IS essential to every individual. Being able to communicate defines us and helps us find our way through life. Speech and language therapists (SLTs) work with infants, children and adults who have problems with communicating, and/or eating, drinking and swallowing.

Speech and language therapy continues to break ground in dealing with all aspects of the physiology of the voice “We give a cradle to grave service. If someone presents with a communication difficulty, our job is to see if this is a problem. It could be an educational issue, or it could be something else,” explains Rosemary Curry, chair of IMPACT’s SLT vocational group.

SLTs work in a number of settings including local health centres, hospitals, schools and nursing homes. They assess various areas of language, understanding and use, speech

and a child’s or adult’s ability to eat or drink safely. Then they plan how to work to improve areas of concern.

I was surprised to learn about the SLT specialists working with infants and premature babies as young as 32 weeks in the Cork University Maternity Hospital. I met up with Margaret Mary Smith and Caitriona Heffernan.

How do they work with babies that are so tiny? “There are three key components we look at. Firstly safety- which is our primary objective when we assess a child. Is the child safe to feed, is the fluid going into their stomach or lungs? Secondly, are they responding the way they should at their particular age; and thirdly, promoting typical development, where possible”.

“We try to help mum and baby feed safely and comfortably ►

with minimum stress, to help the baby strive and to gain weight.” explains Margaret Mary.

Margaret Mary and Caitriona work with babies and children that have a varied range of problems, some that will be solved over time, and others require ongoing intervention and management.

“Communication is at the core of what we do. The baby’s physiological stability is of primary importance as this is how they communicate with us, telling us if they are stressed by the process of feeding. A large part of our job is teaching parents to read the communication cues of their child and to use those cues to respond in terms of feeding,” says Caitriona.

It’s immediately clear they get a lot out of their job. Margaret Mary beams a massive smile when I ask about the sense of achievement her job gives. “We develop a relationship with the family and the baby, we work well together as partners with the aim of developing safe and efficient feeding skills. Seeing their gains we cheer with the parents, equally, when there are setbacks, we are sad with them. Then moving forward and being supportive. It is really rewarding,” she says.

Language

I also met with Lisa Kelly, a community based senior therapist in South West Dublin. Lisa works with children as young as two up to the age of 17. ‘We deal with a range of communication problems including difficulties with pronouncing particular sounds or difficulties with understanding words and following instructions. Children may be unable to understand concept words such as before and after and may have trouble remembering long instructions with multiple steps. We also see children with expressive language difficulties. These may include difficulties with choosing the correct words to use and using correct grammar.’

What difference does the work make? “Many of the children we work with present with a diagnosis of Specific Speech and Language Impairment (SSLI) which is almost like a hidden disability. These children can often be very quiet and you may not suspect a problem but when you investigate further you often find that they have significant language difficulties. Sometimes their comprehension difficulties can be interpreted as poor behaviour because they are not able to follow instructions given. Also children with language difficulties can sometimes display frustration when they are unable to communicate their ideas clearly.”

“Speech and language difficulties can have a negative effect on a child’s self esteem and confidence. Sometimes children become withdrawn and their difficulties can have a huge effect on their social and emotional wellbeing if the treatment is delayed or they can’t access the help they need. Speech and language difficulties can also impact negatively on a child’s educational success in terms of keeping up with the curriculum at the same rate as their peers.” says Lisa.

“As well as children with SSLI we also work with stammering,



Lisa Kelly, community based Senior SLT.

Photo : Michael Crean.

hearing impairment and children whose language difficulties are related to an additional diagnosis such as mild intellectual disability or a medical issue such as cleft lip and palate.”

Qualification as a speech and language therapist requires a four year degree course, and professional registration has recently been introduced. All SLTs work closely with other health professionals such as occupational therapists, physiotherapists, psychologists, public health nurses, GPs, paediatrician and teachers.

Whatever setting the SLT is working in, they must keep up with the paper work. For all SLTs this means keeping quite detailed case notes. For community based Lisa, she also works with schools, supporting teachers, giving advice and showing them what early signals to look out for.

Lisa explains that early intervention is vital. “Communication is so important for education. Children who have language difficulties are really affected educationally, throughout their educational experience. We maintain relationships through communicating. If children struggle to communicate it can affect them socially” she says.

SLTs also provide therapy to adult clients who are experiencing communication difficulties due to stroke or head injury. Speech and language therapists also work with adult clients with degenerative conditions such as Parkinson’s disease. These clients may experience difficulties understanding the words they hear, accessing the words they need, forming sentences and sequencing the correct sounds to say the words clearly. SLTs also have a major role to play in treating eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties in both children and adults. ●

Preparing for change

New fitness to practise procedures for social workers, which could see practitioners face consequences for failing to meet standards of competence, came into force on 1st January this year. MARTIN FRAWLEY looks at what this will mean for social workers, and talks to IMPACT about how the union is preparing the necessary supports and protection for those in the profession.



Social worker Aine Davin, Portlaoise.



Social worker Pierce Murphy, Portarlinton.



Social worker Niall Byrne, Our Lady’s hospice, Dublin.

WHILE THE introduction of fitness to practise procedures will affect the rapidly changing role of the social worker, it is also a positive step which puts the profession on a par with doctors, nurses and teachers who are already subject to such procedures.

It is a result of the Health and Social Care Professionals Act 2005 which introduced statutory registration for twelve health and social care professions. Currently, the registers for social workers, radiographers and radiation therapists, dietitians and speech and language therapists are open, with the remainder to follow on a phased basis between 2015 and 2017.

Under the 2005 Act, existing practitioners have two years to register once their register opens. The section of the Act dealing with fitness to practise was commenced by the Minister for Health at the end of 2014.

This is at a time when health and social care services are coming under increased scrutiny, with almost weekly stories of abuse of patients or clients in homes and state run institutions. The new procedures will help ease concerns among the public as to the professionalism of health and social care professionals working on the frontline of such key health services.

Fair procedures

IMPACT acknowledges the role of the procedures but says that all practitioners are entitled to fair procedures and due process in the event that a complaint is made against them.

Photos: Michael Crean Photography

Social workers - fitness to practise

IMPACT deputy general secretary Kevin Callinan explains that the union has been campaigning for registration for decades and the fitness to practise procedures represents a “significant step” in this campaign.



IMPACT deputy general secretary Kevin Callinan.

“However, sometimes good things have unintended consequences and members can find themselves at the end of a vexatious or unwarranted complaint” says Kevin.

Accordingly, the union has put a new package in place to ensure its members are guaranteed all necessary legal advice and representation in the event that any member is subject to a complaint.

Kevin says that the union has developed a scheme to defend members’ interests which includes legal experts

(Hayes McGrath solicitors) as well as expert barristers.

“This scheme, which is part of union membership and free, goes well beyond any service a member or group of members can secure from an insurance company” Kevin explains.

“While a complaint can have implications for the individual, there can also be implications for the profession as a whole. As such, the union is prepared to go all the way to the High Court if it’s necessary to defend the interests of the profession” he says.

IMPACT has supported statutory registration because the union supports the principles of best practice, high quality public service and the maintenance of outstanding professional standards, sustained by ongoing professional development.

Structure

Statutory registration means the professions are recognised as independent and autonomous and are properly valued in their own right.

Prior to the union’s campaign for statutory registration many years ago, there was effectively no career structure for social and health care professions and this was reflected in extremely poor rewards and career structures.

The fitness to practise procedures heralds the next important step in this long road to proper recognition for practitioners. While a positive step, obviously the move has implications for members. Under the new procedures, a complaint about a social worker can be made by managers, colleagues, patients, clients or their families.

Not all complaints will go to fitness to practise hearings. However, a serious complaint, if upheld, could ultimately see practitioners struck off the register for professional misconduct, poor performance, criminal conviction, or impairment due to illness including alcohol or drugs dependency.

Process

IMPACT official Christina Carney explains that a complaint will first go to a preliminary proceedings committee. The committee will assess the complaint and decide if it warrants further consideration. If the preliminary committee decides it does, it will be forwarded to a committee of inquiry – either a professional conduct committee or a health committee. ➤



Fitness to practise – Are you ready? We can help

Check out IMPACT’s unrivalled support for social workers

Social workers throughout the country are preparing for big changes next year, as new fitness to practise procedures are due to come into effect from 1st January 2015. The new procedures will present social workers with some significant challenges and, as your trade union, IMPACT wants to make sure that you have all the supports you need under these new arrangements.

Representation

IMPACT will continue to provide professional and informed representation in your workplace. We’re there to support and advise you on how the new procedures will affect you. We’re also there to give the union’s full support when you need us. In the event that you are ever subject to a fitness to practise hearing, there are more ways we can help.

Legal defence scheme

IMPACT has developed an unrivalled legal defence scheme in order to ensure that IMPACT members get a fair hearing and the assistance of legal representation, including a legally qualified union official, when they need it. With our legal expenses insurer partners, DAS, we offer a comprehensive and thorough service that ensures you have access to the best advice and guidance on fitness to practise procedures whenever you need it.

The scheme we’ve developed is tailored specifically for health and social care professionals, and can’t be matched by any other private insurer or professional body. If you’re an IMPACT member, this service is included among your membership benefits and is provided to you at no additional cost.

Please note, you must be an IMPACT member to avail of this unique level of support for social workers. In circumstances where a fitness to practise issue pre-dates your membership of the union, we won’t be able to provide assistance. To avail of full protection it is vital that you become a member of IMPACT before the fitness to practise affects you.

If you are already a member of IMPACT, you are covered with immediate effect. If you want to find out more please contact your local rep or get in touch with our membership services office at jhealy@impact.ie or baston@impact.ie.

Christina explains that the role of the preliminary proceedings committee is to filter out frivolous or vexatious complaints. “It’s important to note that all complaints will be forwarded to CORU, the government agency charged with regulating health and social care professions and running the fitness to practise hearings.

“Complaints to do with performance or conduct will be held in public, while complaints of a medical nature will be held in private, as is the case with nurses” she says.

Complaints will be assessed against a code of conduct for each of the professions. The code for social workers includes rules under a number of domains including ‘professional autonomy and accountability; interpersonal and professional relationships; effective communication; personal and professional development; provision of quality services and knowledge, understanding and skills.

Christina adds that it’s vital that registered social workers are aware of, and abide by, the code as complaints will be measured against it. “Fitness to practise is a good thing for social workers in that it ensures all practitioners operate to a high standard. It protects the public and the profession while the requirement for continuous professional development ensures those standards will be maintained” she says.

Christina adds that, for members who may be facing complaints, the union will be providing advice and assistance in this new environment, as well as providing legal support.



IMPACT official Christina Carney

Seek advice



Rosemary Mallon

Speaking at IMPACT’s special seminar on professional registration, and the implications for practitioners of the fitness to practise procedures in 2012, barrister Rosemary Mallon defined poor performance as; “any failure of the registrant to meet the standards of competence that may reasonably be expected of registrants practicing that profession.”

She urged practitioners to seek advice from their union if complaints were made against them – or even if they thought a complaint might be made by a manager, colleague, client or patient. “The importance and value of immediately contacting your union cannot be overestimated. Your union will on a very basic human level provide you with support. On a practical level your union will also be able to guide you through the process and offer advice on the course of action you should take. Complex legal issues and/or procedural issues may well arise when a complaint is made,” she said.

Clare Treacy of the INMO, who has responsibility for fitness to practise hearings for nurses, said that the number of complaints was increasing year on year. She explained that professionals were responsible for their legal costs, which could be as high as €10,000 in complex cases. She said that the trend indicates that more and more professionals will be subject to complaints for a variety of reasons.

However, irrespective of the challenges that regulation brings to the profession, Treacy saw it as a positive development. “We can all agree that regulation is positive to ensure the public is protected and our professions are held in high esteem.” ●



Five bad habits to break

Poor time keeping

Habitually being late for work or meetings or coming back late from breaks must stop. It will be interpreted as carelessness and unreliability and is disrespectful to those who have turned up on time. In breaking this habit strive for punctuality; aim to be 5-10 minutes early, this cushion of time will help if something unexpected happens ensuring you arrive relaxed and on time.

Procrastination

Putting off what you need to do until the last minute impacts negatively on your work, those dependent on you, and the perception you create with your manager. As deadlines loom it creates last minute panic, stress and frustration. If the project subsequently fails you are more likely to be blamed because of the negative perceptions created.

Practice being proactive, recognise why you are putting off the task. Is it inertia, lack of planning or because you hate the task? Planning and prioritising are key to breaking this habit. Do the task you least want to do first. This removes the stress of the deadline, minimises the risk of conflict and improves efficiency.

Negativity and gossiping

These bad habits drain energy and demoralise. Managers and co-workers come to see you in a bad light. Gossip is a power trip that is disrespectful to colleagues, leads to mistrust, poor morale and even perceptions of bullying.

If a real problem exists speak to your manager, be prepared to suggest solutions and be open to compromise. A proactive, problem-solving outlook is a positive habit to develop, casting yourself in a more positive and constructive light.

Poor body language

We communicate largely through non-verbal cues. Do you roll your eyes, avoid eye contact or sneer? These will be perceived as disrespectful, disparaging and unprofessional. Focus on developing positive non-verbal habits such as nodding to show you are listening, making respectful eye contact and smiling appropriately.

Losing your temper

There is no place in the workplace for this; it demonstrates poor people skills and an inability to work under pressure. Develop coping habits; practice stress management techniques, deep breathing and mindfulness. Don't speak until you are calm enough to express yourself. If you feel you will lose your temper take a break, excuse yourself from the situation and walk around to release the tension. Seek help if you cannot break this habit.

Breaking bad habits, embracing new ones

As a new year begins, there is a natural desire to break some of the bad habits we feel are holding us back, and to develop some new and rewarding habits instead. ISOBEL BUTLER takes a look at how to change and develop new practices in our working life.

OVER THE course of our working lives we develop habits, behaviours and patterns of thinking that have been repeated so many times they become automatic, requiring no conscious thought or effort, freeing our minds to focus on other things requiring attention.

Positive habits contribute to the smooth, effective working of our organisations, teams and relationships helping us to be successful in our work and personal lives and succeed in our careers. Conversely, bad habits damage working relationships, impact negatively on the quality of our work and have a domino



Develop a plan, are you going to break the habit all in one go or try to cut it out gradually? Habits like checking emails during meetings are easier to try and cut out immediately because you can always check emails before and after meetings, other habits might need to be reduced gradually.

Avoid situations or people that trigger the behaviour; a habit of gossiping with colleagues could be stopped by avoiding where you normally gossip. It's easier to break a bad habit by replacing it with something positive. Replace sitting in the canteen talking negatively, with going for a walk after lunch, a healthy habit that will also enhance your mood.

The key to forming habits is repetition. The power of the bad habit, once stopped, will diminish and disappear over time. Remember it took years to develop, so it will take a long time to break and replace with a good habit.

The more you repeat your new behaviour the sooner it will become habitual, keep reminding yourself why you want to break the bad habit. Be patient and reward yourself ●

effect on those around us. Over time they attract the type of attention which is potentially damaging to a career.

Breaking habits is challenging as these automatic, frequently repeated patterns have become laid down within our brain's neural pathways. However, the same neuroplasticity that laid down these pathways can be used to develop new patterns too.

Self-awareness, repetition and vigilance provide the key to forming new habits. With thought and effort bad habits can be replaced with new, positive habits and improve your effectiveness.

The key to forming habits is repetition. The power of the bad habit, once stopped, will diminish and disappear over time. Remember it took years to develop, so it will take a long time to break and replace with a good habit.

It might sound obvious but the first step in breaking a bad habit is recognising it, this is more difficult than you might think!

Be honest; monitor yourself over a week and spot habits that negatively impact on your performance or your team's ability to succeed. Which are the important ones to change? Be selective and realistic, changing habits is difficult, don't be overly ambitious and doom yourself to failure.

Five good habits worth developing



Be organised and prepared

Do your homework, know what is expected of you, develop a plan to keep you on track. It shows commitment and allows on time delivery.

Work on one task at a time, avoid multi-tasking

It's faster, focuses your attention and mistakes are less likely to happen.

Admit when you make a mistake

Don't jump to defend yourself, take responsibility and admit mistakes. It makes you more open to learning and shows you accept responsibility.

Take direction well

Ask questions and clarify. Be prepared to accept delegated responsibility, see it as a development opportunity, a chance to demonstrate willingness to learn and practice new skills.

Practice team working

Acknowledge your work is a small part of a bigger objective, recognise when colleagues are dependent on your efforts. Offer help when needed, show respect for different viewpoints and be willing to compromise.

Isobel Butler is an independent organisational psychologist who works with people on a wide range of workplace issues including conflict management, dealing with change and solving problems. If there are specific issues you'd like her to tackle in these articles send them in via the editor, Work & Life magazine, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1 or info@impact.ie.

Agatha Jumpsuit,
Phase Eight.

The boiler suit brigade

The wheel of fashion has turned full circle again, and, as the editor dusts off old VHS copies of 'Dynasty' to relive the glory of the jumpsuit/boiler suit, PATRICIA O'MAHONY says it's time to stop saying 'never again' and enjoy the reinvention of this fashion staple.

WHETHER WE like it or not, there are leaders of fashion and there are followers of fashion. When the leaders, like Kate Moss, Sienna Miller and Alexa Chung, start to appear in boiler suits, it's time to take notice.

Even if we declared that we wouldn't be seen dead in one (they enjoyed a brief but noticeable blaze of glory, complete with shoulder pads, in the 1980s) it's hard not to be tempted when we see how well they can look.

When it comes to fashion, never say "never again", just in case we have a change of heart and a re-imagined fashion item is resurrected. There's no getting away from the fact that fashion is about following trends and when a trend hits, it becomes what we want to wear. All the signs are that the boiler suit will be the essential piece of kit for 2015.

Advantages

There are so many advantages to owning a boiler suit; It's versatile, you can go from day time to night time with total ease. Because it's one piece it's less hassle, it requires less coordination. It's practical and comfortable, and it gives the illusion of length. It also provides plenty of coverage, which is good on an 'off' day.

Boiler suits suggest easygoing chic, a reflection of a certain type of person who will wear it. I'm talking personality rather than a body type. It says 'I am comfortable in my own skin', but it also says I'm in touch with fashion. Not trying too hard to be fashionable, but nailing it at the same time. Very little effort required, but maximum result.

It earns its street credit kudos because it's non-fussy, androgynous, grown-up cool. And it's a change from wearing dresses. It's dressed up without the feeling of 'being all dolled up'. It's very smart casual with a lot of chic thrown in, a comforting nod of approval to those of us with a tomboy streak. Dressing down is the new dressing up – keep it simple.

Disadvantages

The only disadvantages I can think of is getting out of it in a hurry and avoiding looking like a maintenance worker when you're trying to look stylish.

To wear a boiler suit is a big statement, and one that needs precision accessories to achieve the desired result. Boiler suits do require a certain format when it comes to wearing it to achieve the cool, high trend look and avoid the workmanlike look that is equally associated with such functional, industrial clothing. It's not a style that suits every body shape but it's worth a try.

So versatile in fact, that, according to Top Shop there's at least five



Gold Falling Starts Chandelier Earring,
Accessorize. Printed floral jumpsuit, Dorothy
Perkins. Fur Rucksack, Accessorize.

different looks you can achieve – 'AM', 'PM', 'seasonal', 'grunge' and 'minimal'. For a casual, daytime, around the town look wear with sneakers and a rucksack. Doc Martens or loafers also play their part for an easygoing effect.

Wear a tartan jacket or parka to liven up the plain material, or flat, strappy, open toe sandals. Change to strappy sandals, stilettos and a clutch for evening sophistication. The single most important thing to do, so as to differentiate you from the hardworking janitor, is to show some flesh. Just a little will do the trick.

The utilitarian, no fuss look is what is giving this trend its edge. So don't fuss it. If it's just a bit too work-wear for you just soften it, or feminise it with carefully chosen accessories. For a flattering ladylike alternative, a lace top jumpsuit is a compromise. Because it's a very unstructured piece of clothing, add a belt if you need to incorporate some shape into it. To avoid the onesies pyjama look, which should be restricted to slouching around the house, take a look at Christian Dior Spring/Summer 2015 for ideas.

Favourite fabrics and finishes are khaki for Kate Moss, loose denim for a laid back look. There are two style directions for 2015 – utility with large patch pockets or a sleeker, suited look. Buy grey, white or khaki for good transitional colours, from Spring to Summer; black, navy or aubergine for evening sophistication.

Cream and white are showing up on a lot of runways. Good old denim features a lot, in either faded or indigo. The website matchesfashion.com has a collection that is only available online. Not surprisingly, because it is an androgynous trend, this range includes boiler suits for men. For a more embellished male version, look to Louis Vuitton for inspiration. There's no shortage in the high street shops and Dunnes and Penneys have their versions already in stock ●

Some tips from the stars on how to work the look

The single most important trick is to remember, less is more... don't over-embellish, or over-layer, or over-accessorise. Keeping it simple is the key for this look. Allow the boiler suit to be the main feature. And expose some flesh.

- ✓ Roll up to expose some ankle and/or arm and open some buttons or zips. Wearing hair up helps to achieve this too.
- ✓ For day wear add a beanie hat. And a bag. And a cropped jacket.
- ✓ For the evening, do the opposite. Wear a chunky neck-piece. Or very statement earrings. Not both. Wear strappy sandals and carry a clutch bag.
- ✓ For a Kate Moss twist, wear a polo neck underneath. And a gilet to finish. Avoid more than two layers.
- ✓ Wear a waisted belt to give structure.



Casual:
Sienna
Miller



As forecasters predict an icy winter this year, EAMON TIMMINS of Age Action gives some tips on how we can help our older family and neighbours.

HOLLYWOOD ACTRESS Bette Davis summed up the challenge of growing older by saying “old age ain’t no place for sissies”. She was right, and she could have been talking about twenty first century Ireland.

Each stage of life throws up its own challenges, but for some older people these challenges are huge and can only be overcome with assistance from family, friends and outside organisations. Other challenges can be overcome by older people on their own, but only if they have courage and determination.

Within Age Action we are only too well aware of these challenges and how older people across Ireland tackle them every day. We are a charity which works to improve policies and services for older people and all of us who intend to grow older in Ireland. On a daily basis we see older people who are enjoying life to the full, contributing to their communities and sharing their experiences. They help as grandparents minding grandchildren. They work as volunteers for community organisations and charities. They provide wisdom and mentoring for family and neighbours. Many of these people are marvellous examples of positive ageing.

We are also committed to working with the most disadvantaged of older people. Their disadvantage can take many forms including people on very low incomes, those with mental or physical disabilities or reduced mental

capacity, and those who are socially isolated or excluded. Many of these people need some assistance to live with dignity and independence.

Difficult time

The winter can be a difficult time for some older people. Those problems are multiplied if there are prolonged periods of icy conditions, like we had in 2010/2011. Age Action runs a “Stay Well and Warm” information campaign each winter, which focuses on getting key public information messages out to older people. At the heart of the campaign is the fact that the cold can kill and does kill in Ireland.

Between 1,500 and 2,000 excess deaths occur during the winter in Ireland, compared to the summer. Many of these are older people who die as a result of respiratory illness or cardiovascular disease. The cold weather, inadequate heating, low incomes and poorly insulated homes are contributory factors in some of these deaths.

Maintaining a comfortable temperature in the rooms you are living in is essential at this time of year. It should be about 21 degrees celsius in the room you are living in and 18 degrees in other rooms. “If you are struggling to afford to heat your home, concentrate on heating your bedroom and the other rooms you live in,” Age Action’s chief executive officer Robin Webster advises.

Critical temperature

The temperature in your home is crucial. Medical research has found that when temperatures fall below

Cold winds, warm hearts

16 degrees celsius there is an increased risk of respiratory problems. Where it drops below 12 degrees, the blood thickens and there is an increased risk of stroke and heart attack.

Age Action’s top tips for older people to stay well and warm in your own home this winter include:

Dress correctly.

Wear layers, rather than one thick layer of clothing. Maybe wear a woollen or fleece hat in bed.

Remain active.

Don’t stay sitting for long periods. Spread your chores throughout the day to ensure you keep moving. Exercise daily, but avoid risks in wet or icy conditions.

Eat well.

Have at least one hot meal a day. Sip hot drinks regularly. Stock up provisions in case there is icy weather and you cannot go out. Ensure you have a working smoke alarm and carbon monoxide alarm.

Contact

Remain in telephone contact with family and friends, including other older people. The general public can play a vital role in assisting older neighbours and friends by phoning and visiting them. This takes on a greater importance if the weather is icy. By offering to buy bread or milk for an older neighbour you could be preventing an otherwise hazardous journey.

Regular contact

Regular contact with older neighbours also ensures you know they are well, and they know there is somebody they can call on in the event of an emergency. The peace of mind this creates should not be under-estimated, especially for older people who live alone, and whose family members do not live locally.

Crime and home security are also important issues for older people, and can be a source of anxiety for those living alone. If visiting an older person, encourage them to fit a door chain if they have not already done so. “It is one of the most cost-effective security investments you

Keep safe this winter

Some tips on how you can help older people in your community.

- ☀ Remain in regular contact with them by phone and visiting. Give them your phone number in the event of an emergency
- ☀ Ensure they are aware of Age Action’s “Stay Well and Warm” advice
- ☀ Offer to collect essentials such as groceries, medicines and fuel at times when the weather is bad
- ☀ Offer a lift to social events you are attending locally. Just 40% of men over-80 and 15% of women over-80 still have a driving licence
- ☀ If they have not fitted a security chain on their front door, encourage them to do so and help them fit it
- ☀ If your area does not have a Neighbourhood Watch or Community Alert group, contact neighbours and the crime prevention officer at your local Garda station to establish one
- ☀ Encourage older people to do a falls risk survey of their home.

can make,” advises Webster. “If your neighbour is unable to fit a chain themselves, offer to do it for them.”

Age Action’s Care and Repair volunteers fit security chains and do other small DIY jobs for older people in Dublin, Cork, Galway and through 33 community partner organisations across Ireland. For more details see www.ageaction.ie or phone 01-4756989.

Finally, you could also help your older neighbour or friend avoid one of the great (negative) life-changing events in an older person’s life. One-in-three over-65s suffer from a fall every year in Ireland. Two-thirds of this group fall again within six months, leading to a risk of hospitalisation and significant health decline.

If you know a person well enough, raise this issue with them and encourage them to do a quick survey of their home, removing falls risks. These may include re-arranging furniture to make it easier to navigate around, removing rugs or using non-slip tape or backing on them, ensuring wires from lamps or telephones do not trail where you walk or removing papers, books, shoes from floor areas where you walk and from the steps of stairs.

For more information about Age Action’s work and how you can help, visit www.ageaction.ie; phone 01-4756989, email info@ageaction.ie, or follow us on Facebook and Twitter.

Eamon Timmins is head of advocacy and communications at Age Action Ireland

The back-up plan

Photos: dreamstime.com

It's always a good time to do a little forward planning, says MARGARET HANNIGAN, as she advises on how to be prepared for those quick, easy and tasty meals.

IT REALLY doesn't matter what time of the year it is, a dark and dreary January, a warmer May or a crisp September day, it really makes no difference. It's always a good time to get one step ahead of yourself in the kitchen.

What we're looking for here is the dish that saves your life. The one that comes through when you're too wrecked to think about ingredients, or too hungry to think straight, or just too busy painting the bathroom or doing origami to actually commit to much in the way of kitchen activities.

It's a culinary get-out-of-jail card for busy Saturdays, and chaotic times in your life, running from work, to doing the taxi-run for the kids, to food shopping, when the idea of preparing food is almost repulsive, but sadly not enough to stop hunger taking hold.

So have a think about your fall-back, fail-safe meal, the minimal effort dish that always sparks your tastebuds in just the right way, and that freezes and reheats well. I know, if it got any better you'd marry it. But everyone with even a smidgen of interest in cooking has a dish like this. It's the ace up their sleeve. If you don't, now's the time to find one. ►

"Think about your fall-back, fail-safe meal, the minimal effort dish that always sparks your tastebuds in just the right way, and that freezes and reheats well."

Old reliable

It's hard to beat the gold-standard reliables; casseroles, stews, curries, chillies, tagines, bolognese and lasagne. Yes, lasagne is a bit of a palaver to make, but freezes so well, and just needs a salad and some garlic bread to dress it up.

After indulging last December, chances are you'll be craving sharp and pungent flavours, like garlic, chillies, ginger, fresh crispy lettuce, balsamic vinegar and sunny olive oil. But there you'll be, collapsed on the couch in your pyjamas, with an untouched box set of your favourite show, or desperate for a long walk to get the sound of Band Aid out of your head, simply nauseous at the thought of cooking.

Being prepared means you will be Citizen Smug as you extract your clearly labelled container from the freezer. Your main task with these kinds of dishes is keeping the cooking slow; even the lowest hob setting can be too high, but chillies, casseroles etc. cook really well in the oven at a low heat, and you can set the timer to automatically switch it off. Bonus points for doubling the quantities in your recipe, and freezing the extra, two meals for the effort of one.

"Yes, lasagne is a bit of a palaver to make, but freezes so well, and just needs a salad and some garlic bread to dress it up."

Left-overs

Planning ahead once in a while, means less waste, less effort, and a break for you from the chore that having to get a meal on the table every evening can be.

If you like simpler meals, leftovers of most meals can be frozen in portions, and reassembled at a later date. For instance, the safest way to deal with leftover chicken or lamb, is to leave it to cool (not in the still-warm oven), then strip the carcass of its meat.

You can freeze the meat in slices, for meals and for sandwiches, or combine with slices of ham in individual portions and freeze, with or without some gravy added. I find it's best to reheat roast meats in a little liquid – gravy, stock or sauce, as they tend to dry out when cold. Roast potatoes can be reheated, halved and crisped on the pan, and stuffing and vegetables handled in the usual way ●

Curry Rogan Josh



THIS RECIPE is from Jamie Oliver's 30-minute Meals book. It's fast, tasty, all-vegetable, nutritious and freezes well.

- 2 onions
- 1 medium butternut squash
- 1 small cauliflower
- OPTIONAL: 1 fresh chilli
- 4 cloves garlic
- Bunch fresh coriander (have some in the freezer)
- Half a 238g jar of Patak's rogan josh curry paste
- 1 x 400g can of chickpeas
- 100g prewashed baby spinach (frozen spinach works too)

Peel and slice the onions, add to a large pan over a medium heat with a splash of water and a few good glugs (around 2 tbsps) of olive oil. Cut the squash in half, and slice it into 1cm chunks (I take off the hard outer skin, Jamie doesn't), add to the pan.

Remove outer leaves from the cauliflower, cut into bite-sized chunks and add to the pan. For extra heat, if desired, slice the chilli (or half only, if you're cautious, like me) and add it now. Crush in the garlic, add the finely chopped coriander, stalks and all (or snip it in with a scissors), and add a couple of generous splashes of boiling water. Add the rogan josh paste and tin of chickpeas with their juices, season and stir well, then put a lid on.

Cook hard and fast (for about 15 mins), stirring occasionally, then check for consistency. If it looks dry, add a splash more boiling water, and check again in a few minutes. Watch the consistency of the vegetables, you don't want them to turn to mush. Check again after five minutes or so, taste, add a pinch of salt if needed, and add the spinach and stir through. Cook for another two to three minutes to integrate the spinach, then serve with rice, natural yogurt and a salad.



Saving water in the garden

ITA PATTON looks at ways of saving water in our gardens and having fantastic looking plants and flowers this year.

I KNOW it may seem strange to be reading an article at this time of the year about the importance of water and its conservation. However, as we all await the much-anticipated new water bills, capped though they may be for a few years, I thought it apt that we now consider how we use water in the garden, and look at ways to cut down on waste.

A thriving business in the sale and installation of water barrels has recently emerged. Flyers dropped through our letter box advertising the installation of a 190 litre rain water barrel for €99. Watering the garden, washing the car and even power-hosing the patio are highlighted among its uses.

Of course garden centres sell rainwater barrels (210 litre barrels for under €40) which are very easy to connect to a down pipe from the house, garage or glasshouse. It is important that the barrel/butt stands on a secure base (e.g. bricks or their purpose-built heavy duty plastic stand) to allow space for a watering can under its tap. An overflow pipe can be attached from the top of the barrel to a second barrel (and more) for those with the space to do so. Keep the barrel(s) covered and, if free from algae, it should be perfect for garden use for six to nine months.

Adequate water is crucial for good plant growth and some plants need more at certain stages of their life cycle. A wet spring followed by a dry summer is ideal for growing roses, while fruit trees require more water when the fruits are forming and swelling than later in the season.

A well-structured soil holds its water supply in fine capillary pores usually less than 0.1mm in diameter, with air in the larger pores. Therefore a good loam soil can be described as both moist and well drained. Mulching and adding organic matter such as leaf mould or well-rotted farmyard manure can greatly improve a soils ability to hold on to water for longer periods.

It is important to water the soil slowly and thoroughly so that it reaches the plant's deeper roots, as water which is applied too fast will just collect in a pool and flow away from the thirsty plant. Frequent applications of small quantities is of limited value because much of it evaporates off the surface and it encourages the roots to rise to the surface. Watering is particularly important for those newly planted or transplanted plants and those in shallow soils.



This is a good time to survey how many pots and containers are being used in the garden and consider whether some of the plants in them could be transplanted into the ground. I have reduced mine by a third. Also, mulching containers with materials such as pebbles, sea shells or pine cones will help to reduce the need for watering. The compost will dry out slower if terracotta pots are painted or sealed with varnish.

Transplanting

Try to use larger containers when possible, as root bound plants will dry out very quickly. We still take peat-based composts very much for granted in Ireland but these dry out very fast, so try to avoid using them or else incorporate some of your garden soil and always use water retaining crystals to the compost mix before planting. Grouping pots together not only looks better than dotting them around the garden, it also protects them from heat and drying winds.

Lawns

Sprinklers on the garden lawn are probably considered by most as a huge waste of water. The main reason that lawns sometimes turn brown in summer is due to too close mowing, rather than super-hot dry weather! If it starts to brown, just raise the height of the mower. Most lawns recover quickly when rain returns.

Of course, when considering water conservation in the garden, the actual choice of the plant itself is so important. Aromatic silver leafed plants from the Mediterranean region such as lavenders, santolinas, rosemary and sage produce an oily film on their leaves, helping



to protect the plants from water loss. Succulent plants, such as sedums, echeverias and aloes have swollen modified leaves and sometimes roots which enable them to withstand long drought periods. Ornamental grasses, including stipas, fescues and quaking grass are three examples which deserve a place in all gardens. There are many books, magazines and gardening websites which recommend lists of suitable plants for the water conscious gardener ●

Ita Patton is a craft gardener in the National Botanic Gardens ●



His dark materials

MORGAN O'BRIEN takes a look at Jake Gyllenhaal, the Hollywood star who appears happiest on a road less travelled.



Southpaw

WHILE JAKE Gyllenhaal may not, in Hollywood terms, project the most 'star wattage', his career has been marked by a series of high calibre performances that have made him one of contemporary cinema's most interesting performers. Gyllenhaal grew up steeped in Hollywood. His father is a director and his mother is a screenwriter. His older sister Maggie, meanwhile, has carved out a similarly successful acting career.

In *Nightcrawler*, his most recent cinema release, Gyllenhaal plays Lou Bloom, a freelance videographer, who sells crime scene recordings to news stations. In the film, Gyllenhaal's character, in pursuit of increasingly sensational footage, descends into a progressively more amoral sequence of actions. In the role, Gyllenhaal brilliantly essays the intensely obsessive and icily unscrupulous Bloom, with a physically gaunt visage and blackly comic deadpan delivery of the character's self-help mantras. It is a role through which Gyllenhaal marshals his characteristic mixture of disarming charm and glowering intensity.

While Gyllenhaal's first significant screen credit was in 1991, as Billy Crystal's son in *City Slickers*, he dynamited his way to public attention and critical praise in 2001 in Richard Kelly's cult classic *Donnie Darko*. As the eponymous Donnie, who is

haunted by hallucinatory visions, Gyllenhaal is suitably unhinged while grounding the supernatural elements of the story in a persuasive and believable portrayal of teen angst.

The combination of off-kilter charm and manic intensity that Gyllenhaal brought to bear in *Donnie Darko* are in many respects hallmarks evident across his best performances. In *The Good Girl* (2002) Gyllenhaal parlays these qualities in his portrayal of a young *Catcher in the Rye* obsessive who embarks on an affair with Jennifer Aniston's smalltown supermarket cashier. In what is an often overlooked film, Gyllenhaal's portrayal of the gauche and compulsive Holden is well counterbalanced by an understated performance from Aniston.

Growing maturity

While this early work saw Gyllenhaal often cast in the part of teen anti-hero, his performance in Ang Lee's *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) was arguably indicative of a growing maturity ►



Donnie Darko

in his roles. In the film, Gyllenhaal, alongside co-star Heath Ledger, distilled the tragic narrative into a powerful portrayal that earned him an Oscar nomination and BAFTA award.

Mainstream success hasn't dimmed his appetite for selecting left-of-centre roles. He brought a manic energy to Sam Mendes' ensemble feature *Jarhead* (2007), which focuses on the repetitive boredom of war. In the occasionally overwrought *Rendition* (2007) he is a reliably interesting screen presence.

Notably, in David Fincher's sprawling thriller *Zodiac* (2007), as part of an exceptional cast, he gives a brilliant performance as a naïve, wide-eyed newspaper cartoonist who becomes compulsively driven to discover the identity of the eponymous serial killer. As with other roles, he successfully blends a performance of earnest innocence and forceful obsession.



Nightcrawler

Romantic lead

Less memorable are his roles in larger scale projects like Roland Emmerich's climate change catastrophe *The Day After Tomorrow* (2004) and the overblown *Prince of Persia: Sands of Time* (2010). Elsewhere, however, the actor has shown himself to be a charismatic romantic lead in the romantic-comedy *Love and Other Drugs* (2010).

Throughout his career Gyllenhaal has often been esoteric in his selection of films. His performances are often marked by troubled intensity or eccentricity. But, at the same time, with his portrayal of less likeable characters, like Bloom in *Nightcrawler*, he manages to convey a sense of recognisable humanity. His performances in police drama *End of Watch*, the science-fiction film *Source Code* and the thriller *Prisoners* are characteristically well grounded and realistic. Gyllenhaal has two films set for release in 2015. The boxing drama *Southpaw* with Rachel McAdams and *Everest*, based on the true story of a 1996 mountaineering disaster, with Keira Knightley and Josh Brolin ●



Love and Other Drugs

COMING UP

FOXCATCHER (9th January)

Dramatic telling of the true story of the events leading up to millionaire John du Pont's murder of Olympic Wrestling Champion Dave Schultz. Steve Carrell's dramatic performance has won early praise alongside co-stars Channing Tatum and Mark Ruffalo.



TAKEN 3 (9 January)

Despite initially playing down the possibility of a third instalment in the franchise, Liam Neeson returns as all-action tough guy Bryan Mills, who must use his 'special set of skills' to clear his name after being falsely accused of murder.

AMERICAN SNIPER (16th January)

Directed by Clint Eastwood, and based on an autobiography by a navy seal sniper, Bradley Cooper is the titular marksman alongside Sienna Miller.



A MOST VIOLENT YEAR (23rd January)

Oscar Isaac and Jessica Chastain star in this crime drama set in early 1980s New York as an immigrant family seek to expand their business but get embroiled in crime and corruption.

INHERENT VICE (30th January)

Paul Thomas Anderson adapts one of Thomas Pynchon's more accessible novels, essentially a shaggy-dog detective story about private investigator 'Doc' Sportello (Joaquin Phoenix) looking into the disappearance of his ex-girlfriend's boyfriend.



JUPITER ASCENDING (6th February)

Space opera from the directors of the Matrix Trilogy, the Wachowskis, who return to the sci-fi genre with a characteristically visually opulent spectacle starring Mila Kunis and Channing Tatum.

50 SHADES OF GREY (13th February)

Adaptation of the best selling novel by E.L. James, Dakota Johnson stars as the innocent Ana Steele, who is drawn into the complex world of enigmatic businessman Christian Grey (Jaime Dornan).

BLACKHAT (20th February)

Michael Mann directs this conspiracy thriller about a cyber criminal, with Chris Hemsworth taking on the lead role.



THE SECOND BEST EXOTIC

MARIGOLD HOTEL (27th February)

Sequel to the 2012 hit *The Best Exotic Marigold Hotel*, which follows the ongoing dramas of the expats in India; Richard Gere, David Strathairn and Tamsin Greig join the returning cast.

Playing the long game

AS A KID I recall the rivalry between Milk Tray and Black Magic as the 1970s chocolate wars. The Milk Tray advert campaign was based on a James Bond-like all-action uber-male heroic tale ending with... "and all because the lady loves Milk Tray." The Black Magic campaign was a much more mysterious and secretive business altogether: "... who knows the secret of the Black Magic box?"

There are springs in the mind from which others cannot drink. Samuel Johnson once said of secrecy "to keep your secret is wisdom but to expect others to keep it is folly." Benjamin Franklin opined "three can keep a secret if two are dead." In songwriting terms I was always taken by the conflicting approaches to lyrical messaging; the veiled and obscure versus the more openly in-your-face "I'll tell you what it is" method.

Take Taylor Swift for example.

The Pennsylvania philanthropist has a reputation for narrative songs about her personal experiences - "I hate you and I hate you n'all" type of thing. Her songs throw the proverbial kitchen sink at such luminaries as Taylor Lautner and John Mayer.

This is in marked contrast to the approach adopted by Carly Simon with the world famous 'You're so vain'. For over forty years there's been plenty of speculation as to the subject matter of this song. I'm not sure which generates more tedium... the song or the speculation.

I have to confess, solving the riddle of the guy that song was really about is not on my list of the 3003 things I must do in my life, or as they insist on calling it now, my 'bucket list'. The use of that phrase has now topped my personal annoyance charts.

My previous No.1 was the use of the word 'disconnect' as a noun... particularly in trade union speak..."there's a disconnect between the union and its members". So, if that was fixed, would there be a 'connect' between the union and its members? I don't consider myself old school but the nouns are connection and disconnection... now go home and write it out 100 times... in classical Latin.

Anyway, establishing Ms Simon's subject matter is a bit like playing Cluedo. It was Warren Beatty in the bed- ➤



Mick Jagger



Warren Beatty



Cat Stevens

room with the lead pipe. No, it was Mick Jagger in the conservatory with the rope (I doubt it, as Mr Jagger actually sings backing vocals on 'You're so Vain'). Or maybe it was Mark Felt... Cat Stevens, John Taylor?

She had many suitors, so it could've been anybody really. For many years the singer herself claimed that the song was about a composite of three people rolled into one. My catechism teacher tried that one on me in school and I remain confused.

In 2010 Simon revealed that the answer would be whispered backwards on some new pared back version of the song and there is a swell of opinion that the subject matter was record producer David Geffen. Backward subliminal whispering? Do me a favour.

I can still recall all the brouhaha about supposed satanic subliminal messages on Led Zeppelin's Stairway to Heaven. As if listening to it frontways wasn't penance enough, when played backwards it was claimed to eulogise the devil an' all. In actual fact it sounds like the immediate aftermath of a sharp ingestion of a glass of Andrews liver salts.

Songwriters have often used the same veil of secrecy whilst treating the pet subjects of sex and drugs. Robert Johnson famously sang "squeeze my lemon 'til the juice runs down my leg." I can forgive him for this less than subtle reference because it was 1937.

Rock 'n' roll stars seem to think that they are clever by writing songs about drug use in coded colour. As if this was some kind of groundbreaking phenomenon (please, spare me the anecdotes about 'Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds').

Well I have news.

Those romantic and meta-physical poets a couple of hundred years ago were the rock and rollers of their day. Some of the stuff was bananas. So much so that when Keats penned 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' he must have been fresh from a visit to the local equivalent of the 'Breaking Bad' lab.

I'm all for expression. My cerebral regions can even process the odd nuanced reference. But as for Carly Simon's saucer full of secrets, isn't it time we all moved on? ●

Winter-Spring 2015 solutions (From page 46.)

Easy

7	3	4	9	6	8	5	2	1
2	5	6	4	7	1	3	9	8
1	8	9	3	2	5	4	6	7
9	7	2	8	3	4	6	1	5
3	1	5	6	9	7	8	4	2
4	6	8	1	5	2	7	3	9
6	4	1	5	8	9	2	7	3
5	9	7	2	4	3	1	8	6
8	2	3	7	1	6	9	5	4

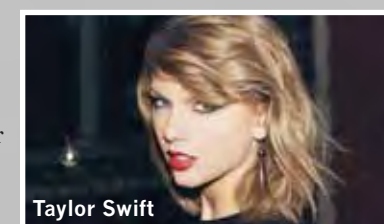
Difficult

2	5	9	4	6	3	1	7	8
1	6	8	2	5	7	4	9	3
3	4	7	1	8	9	2	5	6
5	7	6	9	1	2	8	3	4
4	8	3	5	7	6	9	1	2
9	1	2	8	3	4	5	6	7
6	9	5	7	2	8	3	4	1
7	2	4	3	9	1	6	8	5
8	3	1	6	4	5	7	2	9

TOP TEN OVERT VS. COVERT

Five that do exactly what it says on the tin...

- Sex and drugs and rock and roll, Ian Dury - 1977**
Is all my brain and body needs. Ian Dury tops the class in self-assessment.
- Anarchy in the UK, Sex Pistols - 1977**
I am an anti-christ. Chill out John. We hear ya.
- Dear John, Taylor Swift - 2010**
Don't you think I was too young to be messed with? Get over it love he'll be an old man and you'll still have your beauty.
- Special Brew, Bad Manners - 1980**
I love you yes I do and I spend all my money on you. Put your hand in your pocket girl.
- She hates me, Puddle of Mudd - 2001**
She hates me. She f@*ng hates me. So you're tellin' me there's still a chance?



Taylor Swift

Send these off to Bletchley Park for deciphering

- Secret Smile, Semisonic - 1999**
You see. Dentures can be beautiful too.
- You're so vain, Carly Simon - 1972**
Musical Cluedo... it was Colonel Mustard with the dagger in the lounge.
- Ebenezer Goode, The Shamen - 1992**
E's are good e's are good. And we're such clever dicks.
- Golden Brown, The Stranglers - 1982**
Hugh Cornwell is browned off as he pens the 1982 Come Dancing entry.
- There she goes, The La's - 1990**
Coursing through my veins. The La's keep everyone guessing... if they'll ever have another decent tune.



The Shamen

Autumn-Winter 2014 Crossword Solutions See page 46 for the competition winners from Issue 27.

ACROSS: 2. Garden 5. Attic 8. Protest 10. Job 11. Ten 13. Dot 14. Camera 16. Thumb 18.3.3. A pear tree 20. Ulster 21. Tory 22. Tutu 24. Sun 25. Echo 27. 7D. James Bond 29. Dear 30. Era 31. X 32. Larceny. **DOWN:** 1. Copper 3. Ditto 4. Noon 6. Table 7. See 27 across 9. Estimate 12. Ladies 14. Cuba 15. Month 17. Half time 18. Articles 19. Ear 23. Radar 24. State 26. Oval 28. Ski.

Mekong adventure

SHANE LAMBERT of IMPACT's South Dublin County Council branch shares his experiences of a trip through South East Asia, exploring life along the Mekong River.

MY WIFE Audrey and I made a decision last year to take on a longer holiday adventure and spent the month of October 2014 travelling in South East Asia. It's a nice time of year to get away to a place where the sun shines longer (and warmer) before facing into the darker months of an Irish winter.

We booked a trip with G Adventures (www.gadventures.com) which would take us through Thailand, Cambodia and Laos, tracing the Mekong River and its rich and diverse culture and communities. G Adventures design tours with a focus on an "authentic and sustainable travel experience" and cater to tourists looking for something a little bit different. That's exactly what we were after.

We flew out via Abu Dhabi to Bangkok, spending a couple of days amidst the intense and exotic bustle of Bangkok. We stayed in the famous backpacker district of

Khao San Road. Bangkok continues to be an extremely popular destination, and there's a noticeable increase in the cost of most items compared to my last trip there (in 2006). Nevertheless, it's still a very good value for money destination, and Bangkok has a warm and relaxed atmosphere despite the initial shock of the city's intensity.

We were among a group of ten people from all over the world, and we bonded quickly with our Canadian, Australian, Swiss, German and British travelling companions. Crossing the border into Cambodia was a strange experience. Long queues, visa checking and high-tech fingerprinting scanners took us through a strange no man's land between the two

countries, where a collection of vast and opulent casinos exist entirely at odds with the noticeably lower living standards once you cross into Cambodia.

Siem Reap

Our next stop was the city of Siem Reap, the capital of this northwestern province of Cambodia. It's a popular resort town, providing a gateway to the Angkor region. The city is full of shops selling lots of very convincing counterfeit luxury goods cheek-by-jowl with the real thing. The city also provided our first taste of Cambodian food, which consists of very fresh and hot 'Khmer curry'. Cambodian tastes are a mix of the sweet, savoury and (even compared to Thai food) very very hot. It takes a few days to acclimatise (I'm not usually given to very hot spices but I was eventually won over), and the quality of food on offer was consistently good.

The Angkor night market in Siem Reap is a vast and fascinating place. We were transported around the market on a tuk tuk, and the market is buzzing with traders, locals and tourists haggling over all manner of goods.

Angkor Wat

Angkor Wat was our next destination and involved a very early start. The Angkor UNESCO World Heritage Site is huge, much bigger than I expected, and even at 4am is witness to coach loads of tourists pulling up to see the magnificent remains of the Khmer civilization. Angkor Wat consists of five towers and an amazing central

tower symbolising the mythical Mount Meru. Vast areas of wall space are covered with intricate carvings that depict scenes from Hindu mythology.

We watched the sun rise over the temple complex, a personal highlight of the trip, and we spent much of the day in this fascinating and exotic place.

Phnom Penh and The Mekong

Our next stop was Phnom Penh, the capital city. We had a very lively seven hour road trip to get to Cambodia's largest city, which involved navigating some very treacherous roads despite the fact they lead to the capital. We'd been warned that the roads aren't great and they have completely disintegrated in places. Cambodian drivers are accustomed to the dust and mud challenges in these off-road conditions. It provides a reminder, considering this country's difficult and painful history, of the resilience of the Khmer people.

Arrival in Phnom Penh gave us our first proper encounter with the Mekong River, as the city is situated on the banks of the Tonlé Sap and the Mekong. It's a modern city in every respect, including the visibly stark contrasts between poverty and wealth all around.

The scale of the Mekong was awe inspiring; Phnom Penh is home to a huge river port. The river teems with life; it's a major hub of activity and provides a livelihood to a vast number of people. I spent the first night in awe of the abundance of life and activity on the Mekong.

Tuol Sleng is difficult to take in, but compelling, and inspires huge respect for the people who have survived the experience and sought to build a better future.

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Travel and trips

Tuol Sleng

The modern history of Cambodia is one that is steeped in tragedy. The communist Khmer Rouge regime ruled the country from 1975 to 1979, following a five year civil war. The Khmer Rouge's shocking brutality was made especially famous by the 1984 film *The Killing Fields*. I hadn't watched it before the trip, but I have watched it since, and the film's faithfulness to what I learned at Tuol Sleng is remarkable.

The Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum is located at one of a number of sites in Cambodia where large numbers of people were killed and buried by the Khmer Rouge. The site is a former high school which was used as the notorious Security Prison 21 (S-21) by the regime. Tuol Sleng means "Hill of the Poisonous Trees" or "Strychnine Hill". It was only one of at least 150 execution centres in Cambodia. It's believed that as many as 20,000 prisoners were killed there, and no vegetation can grow in places because of the presence of strychnine in the soil.

We met a survivor, Chun Mey, and our local guide explained that he had also lost many family members during the Khmer Rouge's regime. The experience appears to have been universal. Education was one of many things the Khmer Rouge attempted to suppress, and education is now a huge focus for the people of Cambodia.

Tuol Sleng is difficult to take in, but compelling, and the manner in which the story of Tuol Sleng is told here inspires huge respect for the people who have survived the experience and sought to build a better future.

Dolphins and spiders

From there we travelled to Kratié province where we encountered the endangered (and charming) Irrawaddy dolphin and stopped off at Skuon, in the Kampong Cham Province, which is sometimes known locally as "Spiderville" and famous for its fried spiders. Not a place for arachnophobes, obviously.

No, I didn't try them. I did, however, try the Tarantula rice wine, which is a homemade liquor that came in a clear bottle with Black Tarantulas swimming in it. It tastes just like German Schnapps but wouldn't be my tipple of choice.

Laos

Crossing the jungle border into Laos we arrived into a part of the Mekong which is home to four thousand river islands. We visited Don Khong which is very scenic, with rice fields, small villages and ancient wats and is famous for brewing some of the country's finest national drink, lao-lao or 'lao whiskey'. Be warned, it's very strong. We continued through the beautiful province of Champasak and visited Wat Phu, an impressive archaeological site dating from the Angkorian period.

We travelled to one of the islands, Dong Deng, where we experienced the wonderful hospitality of a rustic homestay. It's very basic. We slept on a mattress on the floor in a central living area with a blanket, pillow and mosquito net and very basic shared bathroom facilities. We enjoyed a very simple and traditional evening meal with our Lao hosts and the home stay was clean and comfortable and offered a great insight into Lao island life.



Chun Mey survivor of Tuol Sleng



Kwang Si Waterfall, Laos



Tarantula wine



Vientiane, Laos

Stopping off at a number of towns, including Luang Prabang, famous for its Buddhist temples and monasteries, our trip concluded in the Laos capital of Vientiane, situated on the Mekong and close to the border with Thailand.

Our arrival in Vientiane coincided with our second wedding anniversary, providing a great way to mark the occasion and the conclusion of our Mekong adventure.

The trip of a lifetime ●

From the author

Capturing the imagination

He's a special needs assistant, runs his own publishing company, and in amongst US and Irish book tours DEREK MULVEEN has just launched his second illustrated children's book. We recently caught up with him.

HUSBAND AND wife team Derek Mulveen and Michelle Melville have successfully published their second children's illustrated book *Oisín the Brave – Robot Island*, which is loosely based on Irish mythological characters with modern themes.

Oisín the Brave – Robot Island is the second instalment in a series of books, which began captivating children with the release of *Oisín the Brave Moon Adventure* in 2012. More books are planned for 2015.

Derek is a member of IMPACT and works part-time as an SNA at Lakeview School, Galway. He changed career in recent years after the decline of the construction industry. Through volunteering with Michelle for the Irish Wheelchair Association he became interested in working with children and then became an SNA. His working hours were cut back in 2012 and he used the opportunity to devote more time to his writing.

Why children's books? "Michelle would read to our daughter Mikaela (5) every night, when she was really young, and words weren't really recognised. From that, I wanted to have our own stories out there. We thought we could do better, with an Irish twist to the stories" explains Derek.

As parents to Mikaela and Matthew (22 months), Derek and Michelle understand the importance of reading to children. They wanted to ignite the minds of three to seven year olds. "We hope the books encourage kids to use their imagination, to go to another realm, like when we were kids, playing outdoors. We want to promote that outdoor imagination of having fun, you don't need technology to keep you entertained" he says.

Irish language

The narrative journey features interactive use of the Irish language, encouraging children to instil a 'cúpla focal' into their reading experience. "I went to an all Irish school, and

worked in France, Belgium, and Spain for a while. When I came back I had almost lost my Irish. We wanted to bring back the mythology that won't scare kids, with stories children could relate to, while using a little of the Irish language.

The books follow Oisín and his friend Orane (a dragon, of course) on their journeys through the Dolmen of Time into space and across the seven seas, where they meet strange creatures and help a little robot on a quest to find the golden key and save Robot Island, before time runs out.



It's a family affair: Derek and Michelle launch *Oisín the Brave* with the help of their children Mikaela and Matthew.

Derek and Michelle run their own publishing house, Eire's Kids, and they hope to promote more Irish writers next year. They have headlined at the Dublin Book festival, as well as the 2014 Listowel writers week, and completed two book tours in the US, and made an appearance in last year's toy show on TV3. Derek does the illustrations for each book, which can take up to six months to complete.

Oisín the Brave – Robot Island retails at €7.99 RRP and is available to purchase from Easons and leading

bookshops nationwide. For further details or to purchase the book online and send someone special a signed book visit www.EireKids.com.

Interviewed by Martina O'Leary ●

Win a copy

We have two copies of *Oisín the Brave – Moon Adventure*; and *Oisín the Brave – Robot Island* to give away. To be in with a chance of winning, send the answer to this question: Book competition, *Work & Life* magazine, IMPACT, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1. Make sure it reaches us before Friday 13th March 2015.

What is the name of the dragon in *Oisín the Brave*?

Only one entry per person. Multiple entries will not be considered.



Looking for redemption

Levi's Gift

Jennifer Burke (Ward River Press, £16.99 in the UK).



THEY SAY you can't judge a book by its cover; but they lie, reader dear, they lie. The cover is the first selling point and the marketing people beaver away in publishing houses put a lot of work into them. The cover sends a subliminal message to your subconscious, in an attempt to spark a positive response from the memories of all the books you've ever read.

That of course depends on whether you're a fan of Scandinavian murder mysteries, with their dark, bleak, covers; humour, which tends to have brash colours and quirky graphics; literature, which can be anything as long as it's tasteful, or romantic fiction, which comes in pastels and wispy trails of colour that look like solidified sighs.

This book falls into the pastel section; a rear view of a sad lady with a faraway building which, judging by the way she's dressed and the peach tones everywhere – very wistful and poignant, is somewhere other than Ireland.

So what about the book itself? Well, this is the second novel by Jennifer Burke who secured a three-book deal from Poolbeg when she won TV3's write a bestseller competition. The story starts in the aftermath of a truly heartbreaking event, with Mattie, a twenty-year old student trying to recover from the loss of her stillborn son. Her mother, Lena, hovers close by, trying to rebuild their somewhat distant relationship, and to help Mattie heal.

The story is told in their dual narratives, and the different voices add depth and contrast to the story. Adding colour and warmth are Lena's best friend Ruth, and her robust family of sons, one of whom, Simon, was Mattie's teenage boyfriend and best pal through her growing-up years. In an attempt to help Mattie's crippling depression, Ruth encourages her and Lena to come on a family trip to Italy, and spend time in a seminary there. This harks back to Lena's youth, when she fell in love with a young seminarian, who remains the unfulfilled love of her life. It turns out mother and daughter need healing, and both are looking for redemption for choices made in the past.

Quite a lot of the story is set in the seminary in Italy, surrounded by nuns and monks, and choral singing. Much is made of the serenity of life there, and the enjoyment of simple pleasures, like secret wine and cheese nights below stairs. The writing is a little uneven, and the characters a little flat, with the exception of Mattie, whose voice is very strong and assured.

Obviously, with much of the chatter and clatter of day to day modern life stripped away, Lena and Mattie are freer to

address their problems, and try to find some resolution, and while both are flawed characters, it's hard not to wish them well in that.

Margaret Hannigan.

Nasty rumours

The Art of Scandal

Susan Loughnane (Poolbeg, £16.99 in the UK).



SUSAN LOUGHNANE is an actress, best known in this country for playing Debbie, in the TV series *Love/Hate*. She is also a portrait artist and in *The Art of Scandal* she turns her talents to writing about a young artist.

Katie McKenna has returned from New York for her grandfather's funeral and discovers that he has left her his cottage in a small village in County Clare. Life had not been going well for Katie in New York. She is heartbroken having just left her boyfriend of three years, Seb, and her career as an artist has not taken off.

Realising that there's nothing to take her back, she moves into the cottage. She gets a job in Ballytiernan's only pub and meets up with Fred, her childhood friend, now grown up and very fanciable, who also works there. Katie is starting to enjoy life again but needs a focus.

Her next-door neighbour, Mrs. McNerney, suggests that she try painting male nudes. Although she laughs this off at first, when she surreptitiously takes a topless photo of Fred as he shears sheep, Katie is inspired to start a new project of painting local men in various stages of nudity, set against the backdrop of New York streets. The men are very happy to be involved in the project, however nasty rumours begin to circulate about what goes on in Katie's cottage and storm clouds gather.

Meanwhile Fred and Katie fall in love but, on her birthday, she returns home to find something she's not expecting. Katie now has some serious decisions to make. Also she may be in real danger. The wife of one of her subjects is furious about Katie's project and is known for being unreasonable. She wants Katie out of the village.

While this book may not win any prizes for literature, it is an easy and fun-filled read. Written in the first person, it is a bit like being told all the insider gossip by your very best friend.

Kathryn Smith.

Tanzanian travels

The Songbird's Way

Jennifer Barrett (Poolbeg, £9.99 in the UK).



I CAME across a completely new word while reading this book. More than simply a word, apparently it's an entire condition, possibly even a syndrome. Ladies and gentlemen, let me announce the arrival (into my lexicon anyway) of the "thrisis". No, it's not a fear of things that come in threes, it's what happens in your thirties, when you wonder if the things you thought would make you happy, actually do that, and you feel fearful of what the years ahead will bring.

So, in a mid-life crisis, you look backwards in bewilderment and wonder what you might have done differently. In a thrisis,

you look forward, and wonder have you lost the road map. This is what happens to our heroine, Chrissie at her surprise thirtieth birthday party.

On the face of it, things are going pretty well for Chrissie. The product of loving, but unconventional parents, she's achieved stability and happiness, with a permanent teaching position in the offing, and her fiancé, Tim on her arm. The impulse behind her dash from the party Tim has so thoughtfully put together, is what takes us into the story, and off to far-flung shores.

Chrissie, it seems, lives more in her mother's shadow than she realises. It is her legacy, as a travel writer who cycled her way across various continents, that stirs Chrissie's wanderlust. Looking at her mother's well-travelled old bicycle parked in the hallway, and stumbling across an article about a grand old lady of ninety who has lived an adventurous, unconventional life, Chrissie succumbs to a full-blown thrisis, and heads off to Tanzania. The narrative then encompasses the lives of three women. Chrissie (30), Red (60) and ninety year old Mrs. Thorpe.

The writing is something of a jumble of styles, and tends towards the Paulo Coelho school of semi-mystical magic realism. Three songbirds appear in the text, each a symbol for Chrissie, Red, and Mrs. Thorpe, each placed there for the purpose of reflecting the inner life of the character. If you tend towards the mystical part of the reading spectrum, and don't mind great leaps of illogical narrative, then you might very well like this.

Margaret Hannigan.



Fresh perspective on modern life

The Playground

Julia Kelly (Quercus Fiction, £12.99 in the UK).

THE PLAYGROUND tells the story of Eve, who is now in the aftermath of the break-up of her marriage. It appears she once had it all, a lovely house in leafy South Dublin, plenty of money and an adorable baby daughter. Now, however it is all over and her partner, Joe has gone for good and is uncontactable.

With no money and no job, Eve finds a small flat in a run-down area where she will start a new life, with Addie, her four year-old daughter. It's not what she is used to but all she can afford. Her flat overlooks a playground, which some of her new neighbours are trying to clean up and reclaim from the drunks and teenage gangs who use it. Eve reluctantly gets involved but through this she gets to know the local people and the book is strong on bringing these interesting characters to life. Eve also takes in a lodger, a hippyish

American woman, and the awkwardness which develops as Joy increasingly advises Eve on how to raise Addie, is wince-inducing.

Kelly allows her characters to speak for themselves. They are authentic people who are annoying, warm, funny, stoic, hurtful and hurting. The littered, shabby, environment along with the cold weather, early darkness and a dead rat give a sense of foreboding. The underlying feeling of dread is increased by a particularly hostile and troubled teenager. When something awful happens, Eve realises that this is the point where she becomes an adult in a harsh world.

The dialogue is very strong and the book is not without humour. Occasionally the crossover from past events to present can be confusing but otherwise this is an example of the fresh perspective of modern life being offered by a new generation of Irish writers. This is the second novel from Julia Kelly, her first *With my Lazy Eye* won a Best Newcomer of the Year Award in 2007.

Kathryn Smith.

Fighting Ebola

Ebola has wreaked havoc in parts of West Africa, and has triggered panic globally as the fight against the disease faces a serious resource challenge. SIOBHAN CURRAN examines the connection between these two developments.

IT HAS been gripping the world with fear since news of the latest outbreak reached us – Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). Efforts to contain the spread of the disease have come too late for thousands of victims. The prospect of the disease continuing to spread outside of the intense-transmission countries of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone is a worrying one.

Health workers continue to donate their valuable time and expertise in the affected areas, despite the obvious risks to their own health and safety. This is to be commended as these workers are risking their lives to save others and safeguard the rest of the global community. We should salute their selflessness, commitment and bravery. Many have paid a heavy price for their efforts.

Latest figures from the World Health Organisation confirm that there have been 17,145 reported cases of Ebola, with 6,070 reported deaths. Incidence of the disease has increased in Guinea and Sierra Leone, while in Liberia it is actually declining.

At a national level, there is now sufficient bed capacity in EVD treatment facilities to treat and isolate all reported cases in each of the three countries, although the uneven distribution of beds and cases means there are serious shortfalls in some areas.

Public Services International (PSI), to which IMPACT is affiliated, have recently named the 325 health workers who have given their lives fighting Ebola this year. They were doctors, nurses, midwives, cleaners, ambulance drivers, pharmacists and community health workers.

They've died because of exposure to people with infection or contaminated materials, while lacking personal protective equipment and the necessary tools to do their work safely. Trade unions and other agencies have been warning about the threat of Ebola for a year but a continuing lack of investment in the public health systems of the affected countries remains an issue. It also draws attention, once again, to how the rest of the world interacts with developing nations.

Resources and spending

In recent decades, loans from international financial institutions have financed extractive industries and private sector enterprises in many African countries, while national measures to invest in public infrastructure have been subject to criticism about overspending.

The systems in some countries facilitate a flow of resources directly into foreign corporations instead of investment in the local community. PSI General Secretary Rosa Pavanelli says that all the people affected by Ebola in these countries "are victims of a careless international community that has



Health workers wearing protective suits carry a patient suspected of having Ebola on their way to an Ebola treatment centre run by the French Red Cross in Macenta.

allowed such conditions of exploitation and poverty to flourish." If we needed a wake up call about the injustice of foreign trade policies imposed on Africa, then this is it. We are now forced to come to terms with the fact that many of these political systems, combined with foreign exploitation, can have serious implications for global health.

International trade union bodies such as PSI and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) have made a plea to the international trade union community to show solidarity with the struggling agencies in West Africa. IMPACT has contributed €10,000 to PSI's Ebola aid fund. The money enables PSI to provide relief and assistance to members and their families, especially in cases where they have no access to social protection.

Recent reports suggest that the world is beginning to heed the calls for support. Despite the obvious infection risks to medical workers, large numbers of volunteers continue to arrive in West Africa to join the efforts to halt the spread of the disease. These aid workers need resources to remain safe as they work to provide care and implement measures to halt Ebola.

Response activities in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone continue to intensify. The UN mission for Ebola Emergency Response is the first ever emergency health mission. It aims to isolate and treat 100% of EVD cases and ensure safe burial for 100% of EVD-related deaths by the start of 2015.

Hopefully these efforts will turn the tide against this horrible disease.

Globally, there's still a need for an honest discussion about what policies we need to prevent further outbreaks and ensure resources are there when they're needed ●

The whole country needs a pay rise

IMPACT GENERAL secretary Shay Cody has said that, in terms of achieving pay improvement in the public sector, he hoped that there would be a consensus between the employer and unions that the pension levy would be "a sensible place to start." Shay was taking part in a discussion about pay restoration on the Sean O'Rourke radio programme in December.

Shay emphasised that pay recovery was needed right across the economy, "Wage movement is just one ingredient of economic recovery, and public service pay improvement is just one element of that. The whole country needs a pay rise.

"Wherever it's possible, and where employers can afford to, it's good for domestic demand. Be it in the public sector, or retail or manufacturing, wages should be increased. Wages haven't been increased in seven or eight years. Those employers who can afford it in the private sector, including multinationals, are already increasing pay" he said.

Untenable

Shay also addressed a conference organised by Public Affairs Ireland (PAI) in December, and said that income recovery "across the workforce", the unwinding of pay cuts under

Collective bargaining laws welcomed

IMPACT HAS welcomed news that draft legislation on collective bargaining has been approved by the Government. The legislation is expected to become law by mid-2015.

General secretary Shay Cody said "This is legislation that will allow trade unions to engage in collective bargaining and secure benefits for workers in companies where employers refuse to pay the going rate. It also gives statutory protection against the victimisation of workers in such companies for the first time. We look forward to reading the Heads of Bill when they're published, which is expected shortly."

Minister for Business and Employment, Ged Nash TD, said that the proposals, which will amend the Industrial Relations (Amendment) Act 2001, will bring Irish law in line with recent European Court of Justice rulings. He said that, in order to improve the working of the Act, legislative provision will be made to provide:

- a definition of what constitutes "collective bargaining",
- guidelines to help the Labour Court identify if internal bargaining bodies are genuinely independent of their employer,

emergency legislation, and reductions in pension deductions from current "untenable" levels will be key trade union goals this year.

He added that it was not credible to have an indefinite financial emergency, as applies under current Financial Emergency Measures in the Public Interest (FEMPI) legislation. The FEMPI laws were first introduced in order to cut the public service pay bill in 2009.

IMPACT welcomed the change to the FEMPI Act announced in October last year, as the Government announced its intention to remove Section 2B of the most recent Act, introduced as a limited contingency measure in 2013.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin, has indicated his intention to begin the process of dismantling the legislation. He told the Dáil he would "open the books in the same open way as I did in the negotiations for Haddington Road and come to an orderly and, I hope, fair mechanism for unwinding the emergency provisions that were necessitated by the economic collapse".

The minister has indicated his intention to hold negotiations with unions this year on the start of public service pay restoration.



Ged Nash TD, Minister for Business and Employment.

- clarity in the process of trade unions advancing a claim under the Act and
- policies and principles for the Labour Court to follow when assessing those workers' terms and conditions.

ICTU general secretary David Begg commented, "Collective bargaining is an essential requirement of the workplace if growing inequality in society is to be arrested."

Aer Lingus shareholders back pension

IMPACT, WHICH represents almost 2,000 cabin crew, pilots and ground staff at Aer Lingus, welcomed the backing by Aer Lingus shareholders of settlement proposals to address the deficit in the Irish Aviation Superannuation Scheme (IASS).

Shareholders backed the plan to make a once-off €191 million payment to a new pension scheme as part of the proposals.

IMPACT national secretary Matt Staunton said the decision brings a long period of uncertainty for Aer Lingus workers to an end. “The settlement provides for a decent percentage of income to be available as pensions when workers reach retirement age. This contrasts with the alternative, which was the prospect of reaching that time of life with no certainty about their income” he said.

Matt said that the focus would now switch to the Dublin Airport Authority. “This remains a live issue for workers in Dublin and Shannon airports. Recent complications have seriously delayed reaching a similar settlement” he said. Matt has called on the DAA’s CEO, Kevin Toland, to ensure that airport authority workers do not lose out on achieving a solution.

In a December memo, the group of unions representing airport authority workers acknowledged the frustration of members about the lack of clarity on the pension issue. The memo added “It is our intention to do all in our power to bring matters to a point where members can ballot on proposals as early as possible” and advised members to consider carefully the appropriateness of signing any waiver to release payments until they had heard from their union.

Industrial action ends at Limerick Hospital

IMPACT MEMBERS working at the Limerick Hospitals Group concluded their industrial action in December. The action, which began in July 2014, was in opposition to the payment of a €250,000 annual fee to management consultants Starline Ltd. for a chief operations manager. The union described the payments to the company as excessive and unwarranted. The industrial action ended after Starline’s involvement with the hospital group concluded in December.

An internal audit by the HSE has confirmed that the awarding of successive contracts to Starline was non-compliant with EU tender regulations and the HSE’s own financial regulations.

IMPACT official Andy Pike said “The HSE’s admission that its own financial regulations were breached, and that the process also breached EU rules, vindicates IMPACT’s position that the use of a management consultant was inappropriate” he said.

Andy said that IMPACT is pursuing the full disclosure of the internal audit. “It remains our view that those managing HSE staff should be paid according to public sector pay rates and should be subject to the same rules as the staff they manage. We have little doubt that, if IMPACT members had not taken a stand on this issue, the management consultant would still be in place” he said.

Recruitment moratorium ends



IMPACT WELCOMED the Budget 2015 announcement that there are to be no further reductions to public service numbers. IMPACT general secretary Shay Cody said, “The news that public service numbers face no further cuts is welcome. That there is to be recruitment in some areas will be especially welcome news to hard pressed staff who have faced the challenge of increased demands on the services they work in.

“This has built up every year since the moratorium was applied and as numbers continued to fall. The announcement of new posts marks an end to that phase, and hopefully the beginning of a new phase of recruitment, crucial to the sustainability of services across the public sector” he said.

The Minister for Public Expenditure and Reform, Brendan Howlin TD, announced new teaching posts, including resource education posts, and over 550 entry and graduate level jobs due to be filled in the public sector. These include 300 clerical officer jobs and at least 250 graduate positions.

Fragmentation

IMPACT’s deputy general secretary Kevin Callinan said that while the announcement of an additional 365 SNA posts was welcome, he hoped that the increase in numbers would help guard against a growing trend for the fragmentation of existing posts. “While these new posts are a great addition to the service, individual SNAs have really suffered in the last couple of years as their posts are broken down into, in some cases, just a few hours a week.

“That’s not a good development for children who rely on the service, and it has made it impossible for many SNAs to make any kind of living from their work. I hope that the additional posts can contribute to reversing this type of harmful work pattern” he said.

Unions lift lid on secret trade talks

A NEW report by global trade union federation Public Services International (PSI) has exposed highly secretive trade negotiations that could see further deregulation of international financial services and new threats to Irish public services.

PSI says the proposed Trade in Services Agreement (TiSA) being drawn up by 23 negotiating government bodies, including the EU, would promote privatisation of public services like health, water and transport, and make it illegal for governments to take services back into public control if private operators failed.

The *Really Good Friends of Transnational Corporations Agreement* looks at how TiSA could introduce sweeping and permanent restrictions on public service delivery, and says the negotiation process remains shrouded in secrecy.

Threat

Separately, the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) has said that the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) poses a threat to democracy which cannot be overstated. TTIP is a proposed free trade agreement between the EU and US.

Congress General Secretary David Begg has described the proposed trade agreement as “profoundly anti-democratic” and warned it would make it almost impossible for Governments to introduce any progressive legislation in the future.

Mr Begg said the proposed deal would effectively complete the ‘subjugation of society’ to corporate needs.



ICTU hosted a special seminar on TTIP in December. Speaking at the seminar, ICTU’s legal affairs officer Esther Lynch said TTIP creates a right for companies to launch a suit for financial compensation if a Government introduces any rule that has a negative impact on expected profit.

“The result is that elected governments will be unable to afford to regulate. There is also widespread concern that companies will be enabled to make their claim against the state in private arbitration. The idea of secret private courts is unacceptable and in all likelihood unconstitutional.”

Ms Lynch added “There is no justification for providing companies with such excessive enhanced protection. Citizens and workers do not have the benefit of similar protections.”

Flexi-time win in Carlow

LOCAL AUTHORITY staff in Carlow have welcomed a decision by the Labour Court recommending the introduction of a flexi-time scheme by the beginning of February.

Unions had sought the introduction of a flexi-time scheme at Carlow County Council for a number of years. IMPACT’s Shay Clinton explained that management at the local authority had always resisted efforts to discuss its introduction.

Shay said the recommendation would ensure that arrangements at the local authority would now be consistent with all other local authorities. “We made the case that, where flexi-time schemes are already in place in other local authorities, there has never been any reduction in the level of service to the public as a result. This is a very positive step for the staff involved, and we’re confident that management will quickly come to appreciate the value of the scheme once it’s in place.”

The Irish rugby team have maintained spectacular form following the retirement of Brian O'Driscoll, and his successor has big boots to fill. But, writes KEVIN NOLAN, whoever takes over the number thirteen shirt in the longer term will have to do it their own way

IT'S MISSION Impossible really isn't it?

The greatest mistake Leinster and Irish rugby could make is to look for a carbon-copy, like-for-like replacement for Brian O'Driscoll. It just won't happen.

In the same way that the late, revered Jack Kyle could never be matched as an Irish out-half, O'Driscoll's long-term successor would be advised by Joe Schmidt to be his own man.

Sometimes fate can play its part too.

It was O'Driscoll who anointed Robbie Henshaw as the man most likely to take his number thirteen jersey based on how far the Athlone man had come in the short space of time both spent together at Ireland Camp last season. "Robbie is a very, very talented young lad, who is a

great listener, a really good young talent, and really good lad too," said O'Driscoll nine months ago. "I think he has all the attributes to be a seasoned campaigner for Ireland for many, many years."

People tend to look back with forgiving eyes on how O'Driscoll rounded out his career with two trophies in his final season. In truth, he was in survival mode, physically and mentally.

In contrast, Ulster's Jared Payne is at the peak of his power and Connacht's Henshaw is learning like a scholar.

The biggest worry for Ireland coach Joe Schmidt must have been Payne's embrace for the physical nature of the midfield when, arguably, his best position is full-back where he has time to create magic.

Certainly, Payne's workload against South Africa was up to the standard required and his experience from Super-15 rugby makes him, in some ways, a safer bet at thirteen in the short-term but the iconic jersey should be Henshaw's in the longer-term.

After all, the 29 year-old did spend the 2011 Super-15 season playing almost exclusively at thirteen for Auckland Blues where he was surrounded by world-class All Black talent, like inside centre Rene Ranger and wing Joe Rocokoko.

However, Henshaw, still just 21, is an impressive physical specimen, touching the scales at 16 stone, or over 100kilos, as a modern-day prototypical back who can man and manage a number of positions from full-back to either centre slot.

The former Westmeath minor footballer (2010 & 2011) shares with O'Driscoll a natural appetite for the aggressive side of the game and is already a better kicker of the ball than the man some call BOD (and others call God!).

It is in the nuances of the game, the reading of defences, the experience to know what's on and when it's on, that Henshaw still has a long road to travel compared to Payne.

There is a school of thought that Henshaw can reach his potential faster by wrenching him away from Connacht and moving to Leinster where O'Driscoll can continue to mentor the 21 year-old.

This would deny Connacht their shining star and reduce the value of importing big signings, like Mils Muliana and Bundee Aki, sending out a bad signal to the province as it continues to ►

Big boots

battle against the resources enjoyed by The Big Three.

In fairness, the western province is resourced better now than at any time since the advent of professionalism. Their current form puts them right in the frame for qualification for the Rugby Champions Cup next season.

They just have to hold onto what they have. This is where the argument veers into the debate between province and nation.

The Irish system is set-up, primarily, to feed players up and through the food chain from school or club, to academy and on to province, eventually wearing a cap at the summit that is Ireland.

For Ireland to prosper to the fullest, Henshaw would be best served at a club where the hard-nosed winning of trophies is all that matters because it has become a normal part of service at Leinster.

It is in the cauldron of that day-in, day-out environment that Henshaw can compete for Ireland and even on the British & Irish Lions tour to New Zealand in 2017 ●



Can Harte inspire?

ARGUABLY THEY were the Gaelic football 'Team of the Noughties' - Mickey Harte's Tyrone side who lifted the Sam Maguire in 2003, 2005 and, for the third time in their history, in 2008.

Since those halcyon days the success rate of the Red Hands has slowed significantly - their last Ulster SFC title came in 2010, the same year they won their last All Star when Philip Jordan was the lone Tyrone man selected.

Manager Mickey Harte is considered one of the all-time great managers, held up there like Kevin Hefferan, Mick O'Dwyer and Sean Boylan.

But now he is really starting all over again on a rebuilding process as Tyrone aim to get back up to the top of the summit.

Minor All-Ireland victories in 2008 and 2010 suggest the Ulster men can get back there but they will have to do so without the services of the prodigious Conor McKenna.

McKenna is set to embark on a career Down Under with Aussie Rules side Essendon after they captured the coveted signature of the English native ahead of five other AFL clubs. It was hotly contested signing after he scored four goals in a trial game attended by scouts on behalf of several Aussie teams.

McKenna showcased his superb talents in Tyrone's 2013 run to the All-Ireland minor final. He was declared Man of the Match in both their Ulster final and All-Ireland semi-final victories.

He also starred for his school St Patrick's Armagh in the MacRory Cup where his accuracy, pace, strength, long-range point-scoring and eye for a goal made him stand tall over his peers.

His loss, in the short-term at least, will be more than significant to Tyrone and massively weakens Harte's hand as he attempts to inspire his new generation of senior footballers ●



Jared Payne with support from his Ireland team-mates Tommy Rowe, left, and Robbie Henshaw, right. Guinness Series, Ireland v South Africa



Prize quiz

Just answer five easy questions and you could win €50.

YOU COULD add €50 to your wallet or purse by answering five easy questions and sending your entry, name and address to Roisin Nolan, Work & Life prize quiz, IMPACT, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1. We'll send €50 to the first completed entry pulled from the hat.* You'll find the answers in this issue of *Work & Life*.

Safe Ireland's MAN UP campaign aims to:

- A Give DIY tips to all
- B Teach men how to cook
- C Highlight the positive role men can play in ending domestic violence.

Barry Cunningham's epic challenge was:

- A Dancing to the *Birdie Song* for 20 hours
- B To run his first marathon and trek to Everest Base Camp, inspired by his niece
- C Spending a week in Florida.

IMPACT's retired members' vocational groups' AGM on the 17th February 2015 is being held in:

- A The Empire State Building, New York
- B The Gresham Hotel, O'Connell Street, Dublin
- C Euro Disney, Paris.

Age Action's stay well and warm campaign advises us to:

- A Take care of our older neighbours and relations
- B Teach our older family members to break dance
- C Bring our older relations white water rafting.

IMPACT's new fitness to practise legal defence scheme covers:

- A Dancers
- B Social workers
- C Golfers.

The small print*

You must be a paid-up IMPACT member to win. Only one entry per person (multiple entries will not be considered). Entries must reach us by Friday 13th March 2015. The editor's decision is final. That's it!



HOW TO PLAY:

Fill in the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no maths involved. You solve it with reasoning and logic.

					3	1		
		8		5	7	4		
		7		8			5	
5					2	8	3	
4								2
	1	2	8					7
	9			2		3		
		4	3	9		6		
		1	6					

Difficult

7	3	4	9					
		6		7	1	3		
				2				7
			8	3	4	6		5
		5		9		8		
4		8	1	5	2			
6				8				
		7	2	4		1		
				6	9	5	4	

Easy



PRIZE CROSSWORD

1		2		3		4			5		6		7
					8								
9									10				
				11		12		13					
14	15		16						17	18		19	
					20								
21										22			
				23									
24		25		26					27		28		29
					30			31					
32										33			
						34							
35										36			

Crossword composed by Maureen Harkin

ACROSS

- 1. Simple, essential (5)
- 5. Prior to (5)
- 8. CIA list turns the writing (7)
- 9. Some fun fitness is not (5)
- 10. Join together (5)
- 11. Is a note going to the country (7)
- 14. Demands we do not like (5)
- 17. These vegetables sound watery (5)
- 20. Spice can be found in Sea Dine (7)
- 21. See Cantona in rice (4)
- 22. Ben Affleck current movie (4)
- 23. Popular British Science fiction programme (9)
- 24. Revere (5)
- 27. Was Miss Jean Brodie in hers? (5)
- 30. One of Roald Dahl's characters (7)
- 32. Jean Paul French writer (5)
- 33. Some Madrid erring for the jockey (5)
- 34. Think deeply on (7)
- 35. Delay like Flynn did (5)
- 36. Measurements of time (5)

DOWN

- 1. Main force (5)
- 2. Pores over (5)
- 3. Alludes to sounds like nice vistas (5)
- 4. Toal the singer (4)
- 5. Normal for you and me to start (5)
- 6. Banal (5)
- 7. City in England (5)
- 12. Highly confidential (3,6)
- 13. I marry .. 1961 song (5,4)
- 15d & 31d .. Ireland (7,4)
- 16. Farm vehicle (7)
- 18. Country in south America (7)
- 19. Kerry's other name (7)
- 24. The donkey kicks off the advantage (5)
- 25. Route to the fringe (5)
- 26. Paper or board for filling (5)
- 27. Fun & games together (5)
- 28. Country in South Asia (5)
- 29. The snare merits its makeover (5)

Win €50 by completing the crossword and sending your entry, name and address to Roisin Nolan, Work & Life crossword, IMPACT, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1, by Friday 13th March 2015. We'll send €50 to the first correct entry pulled from a hat.

Winners!

The winners from competitions in the autumn-winter issue were:

Crossword: Noelle O'Sullivan, Kerry. Book competition: Angeline McCaul, Cork. Survey: Eugene Boyle, Dublin South HSE. Quiz: Yvonne Coulter, Teagasc General.

Lots more competitions to enter in this issue!



How do you like Work & Life?

WE HOPE you enjoyed this issue of *Work & Life*, the magazine for IMPACT members. We want to hear your views, and we're offering a €100 prize to one lucky winner who completes this questionnaire.

Simply complete this short survey and send it to Roisin Nolan, Work & Life survey, IMPACT, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1. You can also send your views by email to rnolan@impact.ie.

We'll send €100 to the first completed entry pulled from a hat.*



The survey

1. What did you think of the articles in the winter-spring 2015 issue of *Work & Life*?

Excellent ☐

Good ☐

Okay ☐

Bad ☐

Awful ☐

Comments _____

2. What did you think of the layout, style and pictures in the winter-spring 2015 issue of *Work & Life*?

Excellent ☐

Good ☐

Okay ☐

Bad ☐

Awful ☐

Comments _____

3. What were your favourite three articles?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

4. What were your least favourite articles?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

5. What subjects would you like to see in future issues of *Work & Life*?

1 _____

2 _____

3 _____

6. What did you think of the balance between union news and other articles?

The balance is about right ☐

I want more union news ☐

I want less union news ☐

7. Any other comments? _____

Name _____

Address _____

Email _____

Phone _____

IMPACT branch _____

The small print*

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The Union uses the size and composition of its membership base and, where possible, competition between the various service providers, to seek the best possible deals for the widest possible sections of our membership. It is probable that the majority of members will get better value from these schemes than if they sought the same service individually. However, this will not be true in all cases and there will be occasions where individual members may, because of their specific circumstances, be able to get better value elsewhere. It is not possible always to ensure that all schemes will be accessible equally to all members and the scheme underwriters will not depart totally from their normal actuarial or risk assessment procedures and rules.

IMPACT does not make any claims as to the quality or reliability of any of these products/services and while advising members of the availability of the National Membership Services and Discount Schemes does not endorse or recommend any particular product or service. IMPACT's role is that of facilitator to ensure that such schemes are available to its members. All contracts are directly between the product/service provider and the individual member. IMPACT is not in any way a party to these contracts and will not accept any responsibility or liability arising from any act or omission on the part of the product or service provider. Neither IMPACT nor any member of its staff receives any fees or commissions or other rewards from these product or service providers arising from such schemes.

While IMPACT does occasionally provide such product/service providers with limited information regarding IMPACT branch and/or workplace representatives for the purpose of advertising such schemes, the Union does not make any personal data relating to individual Union members available to them for any purpose.

The Union requires that product/service providers agree to ensure that all such schemes comply with all lawful requirements including the Equal Status Act 2000.

Advertisements for agreed membership services will have an  logo on them.

Some of the companies providing agreed membership services may offer other products or services (that are not as a result of any agreement or arrangement with IMPACT) directly to IMPACT members. The Union has no role whatsoever in relation to such products or services. Likewise, other product or service providers may make offers directly to IMPACT members through advertisements in the Union newspaper or otherwise. These do not arise as a result of agreements or arrangements with IMPACT and the Union does not ask members to consider availing of such products/services and accepts no responsibility whatsoever for any such offers.

The product/service providers with which IMPACT has agreed the provision of membership services and/or discount schemes are as follows:

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Group Insurance Services (GIS)

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Cornmarket Group Financial Services Ltd.

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Salary Protection and Life Assurance – Local Government and Health Divisions only.

Marsh Financial Services Ltd.

AVC Schemes – all Divisions excluding Municipal Employees.

Salary Protection and Life Assurance – Civil Service and Services & Enterprises Divisions only.

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