

Brief CV of Dr Valerie O'Brien

Qualifications:

Couple and Family Systemic Psychotherapist

PhD in Systemic Family Therapy

Trainer and Supervisor of the Family Therapy Association of Ireland – FTAI.

Statutory Registered Social Work; CQSW and Master's in Social Work.

Working Context

Programme Director of Systemic Psychotherapy Programme

Associate Professor in School Medicine, University College Dublin –

Clinical Practice, Supervision and Research

Private Practice

Train and supervise teams and professionals in systemic, couple and family therapy. Direct work with couples and families – life cycle issues

National Board Membership Family Therapy Association of Ireland - FTAI the Irish Council of Psychotherapy – ICP.

Areas of Research/Publication and Conference Presentations

Fifth Province and Systemic Therapies, Child Welfare and Protection; Kinship Care, Foster Care and Adoption; Family and Professional Consultation and Decision-Making Models. Wide experience of presenting key notes, lectures, and workshops in Ireland and in International Conferences

Summary Information

I am enthusiastic about family therapy /systemic practice, and I have collaborated with great colleagues in its development in Ireland and Europe. I am very much a collaborator. Currently I am the Programme Director of a four-year family therapy programme in the School of Medicine in UCD. This programme was started in the Mater in 1982 under the leadership of Dr Nollaig Byrne, Dr Imelda McCarthy, and Mr Philip Kearney (Fifth Province Associates under whom I studied /researched) and Prof Jim Sheehan. Prior to taking on the leadership role in the UCD Programme, between 1997 and 2018, I was a faculty member at Clanwilliam Institute - Family Therapy Training Faculty also in Dublin and a faculty member at the School of Social Policy Social Work and Social Justice in UCD.

I have played a significant role in systemic professional organisations at National and International levels, and in the areas of systemic training, supervision, research, practice /consultation, and service developments. I am particularly proud of the contribution that my practice-based research in the area of child and family welfare, adoption and the fifth province systemic model has made to families' lives, especially those that live in challenging and marginalised positions. My interest in family therapy crosses training, research, supervision, and practice.

- I am interested in ensuring that curriculum and training methods are equipped to enable practitioners meet ever changing social, political, and economic contexts.
- I am committed to assisting training institutes across Europe develop and find ways to link the great expertise that already exists and to work to meet identified gaps.
- I am attentive to helping practitioners use and develop a research / practice focus to their work. Building an evidence base for our work is of vital importance, while working at the same time to expand the type of methodologies used to capture practice.
- I wish to continue communicating a message within Europe and across the world that systemic thinking, with its focus on context, relationship, ethics, dialogue, and justice can and does contribute. This thinking is needed more than ever if we are to ensure that the tragedies of the past and the lessons from history are not forgotten in our quest to work towards a more 'just world' where individuals, families and communities can flourish.