



FIRST FORTNIGHT
THE ART OF MENTAL HEALTH

Media Release

Thursday, 30 November

Photos available/ sent to picture desks

EVA O'CONNOR, RUSANGANO FAMILY, NIKKI HAYES, ADRIAN CROWLEY, BARRY HYDE (THE FUTUREHEADS), DERMOT EARLEY AND THE DRUMMER & THE KEEPER DIRECTOR NICK KELLY SET FOR FIRST FORTNIGHT - MENTAL HEALTH ARTS FESTIVAL

Arts events aimed at challenging mental health stigma will take place in Dublin and 17 counties nationwide this January

Dublin, 30th November: Award-winning playwright and BBC series co-creator **Eva O'Connor**, broadcaster and author **Nikki Hayes** music acts **Rusangano Family, All Tvbins, Delorentos, Adrian Crowley, Ailbhe Reddy**; international poetry performers **Poetic Pilgrimage**, Manchester poet **Tony Walsh**; director and screenwriter **Nick Kelly** and former sports stars **Alan O'Mara** and **Dermot Earley** are among a number of well-known names set to challenge mental health stigma this January as part of the 2018 First Fortnight mental health arts festival.

Now in its ninth year, First Fortnight 2018 will see live music, film, theatre, discussion, sport and arts events **staged in 17 counties across Ireland** to create open discussion and understanding of mental health problems, and challenge prejudice and discrimination.

Among the events taking place across Dublin and selected venues nationwide include **Lunatic, There I Go**, a powerful new play based on the memoir 'Bird's Nest Soup' by **Hanna Greally**. At the age of 19, Hanna was wrongfully incarcerated in an Irish lunatic asylum for more than 20 years. 'Bird's Nest Soup' shocked the nation upon its publication in 1971 and that year Hanna made a memorable appearance on the Late Late Show with Gay Byrne.

Leads 2 Better Mental Health is a unique meet-up event involving dog owners and is **one of seven events that will take place in Cork** this January. Musicians **Adrian Crowley** and **Nocturnes** will take part in **First Light**, a night of great Irish talent in Sligo and Leitrim, while Nick Kelly's heartwarming movie **The Drummer & The Keeper** – about the friendship between a young drummer with bipolar disorder and a goalkeeper with Asperger's Syndrome – will screen in 14 counties in partnership with **See Change**, the national mental health stigma reduction partnership, and in association with IFI National.

Is technology reshaping how we respond to mental health issues? For the first time First Fortnight will examine aspects of technology and mental health in **Don't Worry be APPY**, as part of our series of discussion events in Dublin.

What is the state of Ireland's mental health services? How can you help? Mental health advocate, author and DJ **Nikki Hayes** will chair **#InOurHourOfNeed**, a panel debate on Ireland's current mental health policy held in association with Mental Health Reform and A Lust For Life.

First Fortnight once again partners with **St Patrick's Mental Health Services** for a series of events, including the premiere of **Sally Denver Matthews**, a humorous one-woman show that looks at the mental health strains of being a new parent and how mothers often compare themselves to other mothers.

Award-winning playwright and actress **Eva O'Connor** returns to First Fortnight with an interactive piece of theatre, **The Friday Night Effect**, while dark, comedic odyssey **The Egg is a Lonely Hunter** will be staged at Smock Alley Theatre.



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This year's music events will include four Therapy Session events in Cork and Dublin, two of which will be curated by **Delorentos** and **All Tvvins**. The annual Big Gig also returns featuring **Rusangano Family**, **Ailbhe Reddy**, **Le Boom** and **A. Smyth** while this year's **Banter** event will feature **An evening with Barry Hyde** of **The Futureheads**.

Hope Flies is the theme of this year's festival, a concept that will be embodied in a new collaborative sculpture from Co Clare-based artist **Shona MacGillivray** and young people from the National Learning Network. The sculpture will express ideas of what hope means to them and will travel from the west of Ireland to the east to be displayed in the atrium of Dublin City Council's Civic Offices on Wood Quay.

Other events taking place as part of First Fortnight 2018 include: **heArts and Minds**, a series of events within the National Gallery of Ireland discussing art and mental health, a special screening of the movie **Loving Vincent** and a post show discussion in the stunning NGI courtyard; **The Public Diary**, an interactive multimedia installation of personal diary entries collected at last year's First Fortnight; **Corinthian: Sports & Mental Health** debate featuring former Kildare footballer **Dermot Earley**; screenings of acclaimed films **Loving Vincent**, **32 Pills** and **The Departure** from Emmy award-winning **Lana Wilson**; and **OutStraight** – a concept-based show combining spoken word/ hip-hop theatre with visual art graffiti; and much, much more. The full line-up can be viewed at <http://www.firstfortnight.ie>.

This year's festival presenting partners include; **Mental Health Reform**; **St Patrick's Mental Health Services**; **Mental Health Ireland** and **See Change, the National Mental Health Stigma Reduction Partnership**.

Launching the official festival programme, **First Fortnight co-founder and project manager JP Swaine** said: "First Fortnight has become synonymous with fresh, creative and innovative ways to spark the national conversation on mental health. Each festival that passes seems to encourage a new crop of artists to work creatively in response to mental health as an issue in Irish society and it has been hugely encouraging to meet with artists who have been developing their work with the expressed purpose of contributing to the First Fortnight."

Paul Gilligan, CEO of St Patrick's Mental Health Services, said: "We are delighted to partner once again this year with the First Fortnight festival. Mental health stigma continues to be deeply engrained in Irish society and this affects those experiencing mental health difficulties on a day-to-day basis. However, negative attitudes are being slowly challenged and replaced by a more accurate, understanding and optimistic view of mental health difficulties and those who experience them.

"First Fortnight is a festival that highlights and advocates for healthier attitudes regarding mental health and those that experience mental health difficulties through the arts. We are delighted to partner with the First Fortnight festival to reemphasise the importance of reaching out to those in need of mental health care and to further advocate for the rights of those experiencing difficulty."

Among the highlights of this year's festival will be:

- **Lunatic, There I Go** - a powerful new play based on the memoir 'Bird's Nest Soup' by Hanna Grealley. At the age of 19, Hanna was wrongfully incarcerated in an Irish lunatic asylum for more than 20 years. 'Bird's Nest Soup' shocked the nation and in 1971 Hanna made a memorable appearance on the Late Late Show with Gay Byrne. This will be performed exclusively at the Civic Theatre.
- **Don't Worry Be APPY** - Is technology reshaping how we respond to mental health issues? For the first time First Fortnight will examine technology and mental health as part of a panel discussion.



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- **#InOurHourOfNeed** - What is the state of Ireland's mental health services? How can you help? Mental health advocate, author and DJ Nikki Hayes chairs a panel debate on Ireland's current mental health policy held in association with Mental Health Reform and A Lust For Life.
- **Banter: An Evening With Barry Hyde of The Futureheads** will see the frontman perform tracks from his debut solo album and discuss his battles with mental health difficulties.

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NOTE TO EDITORS

1. The organisers of the First Fortnight festival, the presenting mental health partners and a range of performers **will be available for interview** to discuss challenging the stigma of mental health problems through the arts.

About First Fortnight

Now in its ninth year, First Fortnight is an arts-based mental health charity that organises a festival in the first two weeks of the year aimed at challenging stigma. An awareness campaign in the First Fortnight of the year works because we are all a little raw that time of year and more likely to be open to an empathic response. First Fortnight has become a fixture in the cultural calendar and synonymous with mental health awareness, challenging prejudice and ending stigma. First Fortnight also runs a **Centre for Creative Therapies**, which provides an art psychotherapy and music therapy service to adults with experience of homelessness or at risk of homelessness. First Fortnight 2018 is grant aided by The Arts Council, Dublin City Council and HSE Mental Health Services. In 2019, First Fortnight will stage the European Mental Health Arts Festival.

<http://www.firstfortnight.ie>

About Mental Health Reform

Mental Health Reform is a national coalition promoting improved mental health services in Ireland.

www.mentalhealthreform.ie

About Mental Health Ireland

Mental Health Ireland promotes positive mental health and wellbeing to all individuals and communities, and through our network of Mental Health Associations, we support people who experience mental health difficulties on their journey of recovery. MHI's vision is for an Ireland where mental health is valued as being an essential part of personal wellbeing and the health of the nation. MHI will lead the way in informing Irish society's understanding of mental health and fostering a culture where people with mental health difficulties are respected and supported.

<http://www.mentalhealthireland.ie>

About See Change - The National Mental Health Stigma Reduction Partnership

See Change is Ireland's national programme to change minds about mental health problems. Over 90 partner organisations and hundreds of volunteers and ambassadors from every part of Irish society have signed up to help end the stigma and discrimination of mental health problems. In May 2017, See Change brought us the fourth annual Green Ribbon campaign to get Ireland talking about mental health, sparking an increasing number of conversations about mental health. 500,000 green ribbons were distributed nationwide and free of charge in conjunction with hundreds of grassroots events and initiatives. Look out for your Green Ribbon next May.

www.seechange.ie

About St Patrick's Mental Health Services

Founded by noted author Jonathan Swift, St. Patrick's Mental Health Services is Ireland's largest, independent, not-for-profit mental health provider and aspires to be the recognised leader in the provision of quality mental health care; the promotion of mental health awareness and the protection of the rights and integrity of those suffering from mental illness.

www.stpatricks.ie

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