

Counsellors Shine a Light on Mental Health at Bloom

The Irish Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (IACP) is helping to raise awareness about Mental Health Issues by co-sponsoring the first ever Mental Health Concept Garden 'Sharing the Load' , at the Bloom 2016 festival this weekend.

The IACP, which has almost 4,000 qualified and accredited members across Ireland, is the largest professional counselling and psychotherapy organisation in Ireland.

Moira Sharkey, the acting CEO and Cathaoirleach said *"IACP members from all around the country are proud to sponsor 'Sharing the Load', Pádraic Woods's mental health garden at the Bloom festival in the Phoenix Park"*.

She went on to say *"This garden depicts how someone suffering from mental health issues can feel, and also the positive outcomes that can be achieved by seeking support. IACP members can offer this support and along with Pádraic we believe this garden provides a unique opportunity to tackle the stigma surrounding mental health in Ireland. Most importantly the garden depicts light at the end of the tunnel and that recovery is possible by getting the right kind of help with a professional accredited IACP counsellor"*.

Pádraic Woods a self-employed garden designer said that the inspiration for his design had come from a sibling with bi-polar and borderline personality disorder. He said *"I am also hoping to encourage people to consider Mental Health First Aid so that we can support each other in our communities"*.

The main garden structure is a giant see-saw that depicts the highs and lows that are experienced by people suffering with mental health issues.

Tight planting of trees to the rear of the garden creates a shaded area, represents how a person suffering from deep depression can feel.

Dark coloured planting and plants with spikes and thorns depict a person who is trying to block out the world because they are finding it difficult to cope.

Loose gravel from the centre of the tunnel towards the rear of the garden gives the sense of instability.

In contrast, the front of the garden is a colourful, bright, positive space to show that life gets easier when help is sought.

Pádraic's 'Sharing the Load' garden is located in the Show Garden Area is co-sponsored with St. John of God Hospital.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of Bloom. As Ireland's largest gardening, food and family festival is now a key feature of the June bank holiday weekend, with more than 100,000 visitors last year.

Bord Bia's annual showcase of the best of Ireland's horticulture and food industry will once again feature a range of impressive show gardens, food features and family entertainment.

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