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HSCP conference
Plus music, food, travel, movies,
competitions and more



FÓRSA



All together now

"It's very refreshing to meet new people and seeing where our ideas can take us. Fórsa committees are starting to meet, and there's a tangible energy and enthusiasm to them."

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Sub-head

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Reflecting on our first steps into the future

Fórsa's three presidents, PAT FALLON, ANN McGEE and NIALL McGUIRK reflect on the road ahead following the official launch of the union at Dublin's Mansion House on Thursday 15th March.

THE LAUNCH event gave us all a moment to reflect on the fact that, together, we've built a union of considerable size and strength within the Irish civil and public service. The launch had an energy that revealed the potential in the organisation.

It was also the first opportunity for branch activists and members to meet and greet ahead of a busy conference season in April and May, where we'll focus on creating a sound policy footing for this new organisation.

It's very refreshing to meet new people and seeing where our ideas can take us. Fórsa committees are starting to meet, and there's a tangible energy and enthusiasm to them.

Our Youth committee, Diversity/Equality/Disability and Equivalent Grades committees have all had good initial engagements, while branch campaigns are being greeted with enthusiasm from new colleagues.

These early engagements reveal Fórsa's potential to be a leading light within the trade union movement, as well as in broader Irish society, underpinned by the formidable strength we share as an organisation of 80,000 members.

These are strong foundations on which to continue building. Let's all do our best to get another colleague to join Fórsa and increase these numbers further. Let's also keep listening to each other, making sure we remain inclusive and sensitive to our members' needs.

The world we're facing into shows great promise, but we can't ignore the challenges we face. The Irish economy continues to grow, but we know that 'recovery' is a hollow word unless it can be shared. External threats have the potential to undo the progress of recent years. For these reasons, our new, shared path is a timely one.



Fórsa presidents Pat Fallon, Ann McGee, Niall McGuirk

March 2018

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Niall Shanahan.

Our readership is growing and your feedback has been wonderful. NIALL SHANAHAN sets out his stall for the latest edition of your favourite trade union magazine.

Welcome and thank you

WELCOME TO the latest edition of Fórsa magazine. First of all, on behalf of the contributors and editorial team I'd like to say a very sincere thank you to those of you who've taken the time to get in touch and share your thoughts about the publication.

Your comments have been overwhelmingly positive, with a good many of you telling us how the magazine has played a role in promoting the new union in your workplace. That's everything we'd hoped for and very welcome news indeed.

We've also noticed there's a legion of crossword fanatics within our newly unified ranks. Our postbox hasn't been this busy in quite some time, so thank

you, and let's keep it up.

In future editions we plan to cover more on the changing nature of work. In this edition Bernard Harbor and Lisa Wilson lift the lid on precarious work, and what's new (and not so new) about the gig economy.

We also had a chat with Fórsa member Lisa Walsh, whose play *Love In The Wild* completed a sell-out run at the Viking Theatre in Clontarf with rave reviews back in March. I got a chance to find out more about Lisa's writing and how it was inspired by her childhood and her experience as a social worker.

We're also taking a look at the future of waste management, the launch of One

Galway, the problems of PeoplePoint (hint; it's not the people that are the problem) and the extraordinary EPIC care day event.

We have photos from the Fórsa launch event and we've included photos of our divisional executives to give you a better sense of who's who in Fórsa.

When you crave something less work-oriented, check out Una-Minh Kavanagh's guide to Vietnam, as well as our music, movie and food pages, where Daniel Devery looks at our relationship with TV cooks.

Hope you enjoy this edition, keep your comments coming ■



You can read all the most up-to-date Fórsa news at forsa.ie. You can also subscribe to our news bulletin service, which delivers all the latest news to your inbox every fortnight. If you don't already receive the bulletin, contact info@forsa.ie to register for your subscription, which is free to all Fórsa members. In these news pages, we include the most read stories from the Fórsa news bulletin.

Employers flouting pension law

FÓRSA HAS slammed public service employers for ignoring their legal obligation to keep staff informed about how much their pension savings are worth.

The law that established the new 'single public service pension scheme,' which covers public servants employed since 2011, obliges employers to give scheme members annual benefit statements within six months of the end of the tax year.

But Fórsa has told the Department of Public Service and Reform (DPER) that it's simply being ignored.

Staff are meant to receive details of their pension payments and the current value of their pension pot, including any contributions that have been carried over from previous employments.



Billy Hannigan.

Failure to provide a statement is grounds for a complaint to the pensions ombudsman.

Fórsa official Billy Hannigan said the union has complained to DPER in the strongest terms. "It's extraordinary that the provisions of the scheme, which is now in its sixth year of operation, are simply being ignored by public service employers. We have demanded an early meeting with DPER to discuss the issue," he said.

Meanwhile, the union has asked DPER to review the value of public service subsistence payments, taking account of price rises since the current rates were agreed. The rates are set using an agreed formula, which takes account of hotel accommodation and food prices.

Fórsa rejects pay cut call

FÓRSA HIT back at a business lobby's call for the reintroduction of deep public service pay cuts last week, after the Irish Small and Medium Enterprises (ISME) association called for the gap between average pay in the public and private sectors to be reduced to 10% by 2025.

The union questioned the entire basis of ISME's position, and said it was effectively a call for deeper public service pay cuts than those imposed during the economic crisis. The employers' group issued its call following the Central Statistics Office's publication of its latest pay survey, which recorded the biggest jump in pay

across the economy since the recession hit in 2009.

The CSO found that average weekly earnings increased by 2.5% in 2017. Fórsa head of communications Bernard Harbor said this was welcome after almost a decade of pay stagnation and cuts in the public, private, semi-state and voluntary sectors.

"After almost a decade of pay stagnation, Fórsa welcomes the fact that pay is improving in all sectors of the economy, albeit at a modest pace. ISME should welcome this too, as its members benefit when we have a little more to spend on the products and

services they sell," he said.

Harbor also rejected the attack on the so-called public-private pay gap. "The CSO is crystal clear that its figures do not attempt to compare the pay of people doing the same or similar jobs in the public and private sectors. It also says that recent improvements in public service pay are a result of partial restoration of recession-era pay cuts.

"The CSO figures do not take account of the actual jobs that people do, their qualifications, age, experience, trade union membership, or other factors that account for differences in earnings," he added. An earlier CSO report, which took these determinants into account found that the public sector pay gap ranged from -0.36% to +5.05% in 2014, depending on the methodology used and the way the so-called pension levy was treated.

The most recent CSO report showed that average earnings in finance, the highest-paid sector, were almost three times higher than the lowest-paid accommodation and food sector.

Quick fix sought for new entrants

FÓRSA WANTS pay scales shortened as quickly as possible for staff who joined the public service after January 2011. The union has said a new talks process, agreed before Saint Patrick's weekend, must lead to equal treatment for all civil servants by removing two points from new entrant pay scales.

Under discriminatory measures announced by the then-Government in December 2010, it currently takes so-called 'new entrants' two years longer than their colleagues to reach the top of their pay scales.

The ICTU Public Services Committee, which represents almost all unions in the sector, secured agreement in March

for new talks under a clause in the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA), which allows for an "examination" of the new entrants' pay issue. This followed union representations to Government.

Fórsa senior general secretary Shay Cody said it was an issue of fairness and equality. "The main outstanding issue is the existence of two additional scale points for staff employed since 2011. That's why we want to see the length of these scales reduced by two points as quickly as possible, in order to improve new entrants' incomes and equalise the time it takes civil servants to reach the top of pay scales," he said.

Cody acknowledged that the different length of pay scales across the public service was a complicating factor, but said the talks process was capable of dealing with this. "We need to avoid a 'one-size-fits-all' approach that delivers fairness for some but not for all. The aim of this process must be to find a solution that works for everyone," he said.

A Department of Public Expenditure and Reform (DPER) report published on 16th March found that some 60,000 'new entrants' had been adversely affected by the unilateral cuts imposed in 2011, and that it would cost an estimated €200 million a year to resolve the problem.

CWOs want emergency support clarity

FÓRSA HAS called on the Government to give clear advice to older people and other vulnerable groups about the financial supports they can expect from community welfare services during extreme bad weather.

Fórsa said confused official statements during the recent snow storms had fallen short of what's needed to ensure that vulnerable people keep warm in the face of unseasonable weather. The union, which represents community welfare officers (CWOs), also demanded more investment in community welfare budgets and increased discretion for CWOs when vulnerable people seek their help.

The union criticised Taoiseach Leo Varadkar for suggesting that the budget-stretched community welfare



service had unlimited funds to grant 'exceptional needs payments.' Rather, the number of exceptional needs payments has fallen by 93% between December 2011 and February 2016. Some 226,200 payments were made in December 2011, compared to just 14,631 in February 2016.

The union said the social welfare department had directed people in need to the Society of St Vincent de Paul during the recent weather crisis. And it said CWOs discretion had been eroded since the service had been subsumed by the Department of Social Welfare in 2011.

Fórsa official Eugene Quinn said elderly citizens and other vulnerable people needed firm reassurance that they would not risk running up unpayable debt if they needed additional heating during cold snaps.

"Rather than bland assurances, we need a budget supplement to ensure that CWOs have extra funds to allocate in emergency needs payments. In the longer term, we must return to a position where CWOs have the discretion to make payments when they see an objective need," he said.

Mr Quinn said the union had frequently voiced concerns about inadequate funding for community welfare services. "Local clinics have been closed and vulnerable customers must now mail or phone in their applications, or travel long distances to centralised facilities, which are mainly designed for employment supports. The discretion available to CWOs has been watered down considerably," he said.



Colleagues shocked at Dympna's death

MEMBERS, ACTIVISTS and staff of Fórsa's Local Government Division were shocked and saddened to hear of the sudden death of Dympna Reilly of the union's Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown branch at the beginning of March.

A long-time union activist, Dympna was one of the lead negotiators on Fórsa's library negotiating group. She was also a member of the union's Professional Librarians Vocational Group Committee.

Fórsa head of division Peter Nolan said union and workplace colleagues in Dun Laoghaire-Rathdown council and Cabinteely library were devastated by the news.

"Dympna was a fine trade unionist and a true professional who made a huge contribution to the union's campaign for safe, high-quality library services available to all. Her participation in Fórsa's negotiating team helped deliver positive outcomes for her immediate colleagues, and for library users and staff across the country," he said ■

Dympna Reilly graduated from IMPACT trade union's member activist training series in April 2016.

Public control will improve waste services

THE RE-MUNICIPALISATION of privatised refuse and waste services could reduce costs for households and businesses, while improving pay and working conditions for staff, according to a new study published by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

The head of Fórsa's two local authority divisions, Peter Nolan, says there are lessons for Dublin as well as other areas in the report's findings. He said: "The most significant takeaway from the report is that re-municipalisation can be done, both in Dublin and elsewhere. As the report demonstrates, the trend of waste management services returning to the public sector is becoming more common on the continent and offers numerous benefits."

The study, *Waste management in Europe: Good jobs in the circular economy*, says there is no evidence to support the view that privatised waste management operations are better than publically-provided services. Conversely, the report suggests the opposite to be true.

Its author, Vera Wegmann of the London-based Public Services International Research Group, identifies European examples of 're-municipalisation', where privatised waste and refuse services have been brought back into public control because of high costs or service shortcomings. But she warns that the trend towards privatisation remains strong in other places.

Waste management services in Dublin were privatised in early 2012. Prior to this the city had been seen as a bastion because it was the last European capital with a fully municipalised public waste management service. Fórsa (then IMPACT) campaigned against the privatisation of services in the city. An IMPACT position paper from September 2011 criticised the move and warned of the likelihood of increased fly tipping in the city as being of particular concern.

Fly tipping in Dublin has become progressively worse in recent years particularly in areas of the north side of



Peter Nolan.

the city, and a Fórsa campaign on the issue is now underway. The campaign aims to solve the issue of private waste collection companies refusing to collect "bagged and tagged" rubbish. Calls for council waste crews to lift this waste have also increased drastically in recent months, despite the private waste collection companies being contracted to lift the waste.

The EPSU report also addresses the transition towards a circular economy. Its author, Vera Wegmann says a general move towards a 'circular economy', which places a high value on the re-use and recycling of waste materials, is heralding change in the waste sector. The most notable change is the shift towards recycling and away from landfill.

As well as being more environmentally sustainable, it's estimated that this trend will create a million new jobs by 2030, because recycling is more labour-intensive than the old method of disposal. The report suggests that further advancements to the circular economy have the potential to treble that figure to three million.

Peter Nolan, who represented Fórsa at a recent EPSU seminar that discussed the research findings, said: "A municipalised waste management

service at the centre of refuse and waste services in Dublin, and geared towards a circular economy, is of much higher value to society than the current privatised model. That is in terms of sustainability and the environment, reducing costs and improving efficiency, ensuring the best possible conditions for workers and the best possible service for customers."

The report says the circular economy holds out the prospect of better pay and working conditions in the industry if it integrates informal workers into the public waste sector, where conditions are significantly better than in private companies. Although more research is needed, Wegmann says, initial reports point to poor conditions and low pay in the sector.

Twilight payments under discussion

THE FIRST meeting of a group set up to deal with Fórsa's claim for the restoration of 'twilight payments' met in mid-March. The payment - which saw staff paid at 'time and one-sixth' for working between six and eight o'clock in the evening - was discontinued in 2011.

It was subsequently restored in some areas of nursing, but not for clerical staff of social care workers. The recently-established process is examining where evening work patterns have become more demanding in the years following the abolition of the payments.

Fórsa tabled the issue at last year's pay talks, which led to the Public Service Stability Agreement (PSSA). The PSSA, which was overwhelmingly backed by Fórsa members, included a commitment to a process to deal with the union's claim.



Bernard Harbor.

BERNARD HARBOR could have coined the phrase 'gig economy' 30 years ago. But he didn't.

When the man with a van is his very own man

WE USED to joke that my younger brother Kevin was from the Dutch side of the family. We were Harbors and he was a Van Driver. Geddit?

Anyway, he drove a van for a living and one day, much to our surprise, Kevin announced that he was now self-employed.

In our late-1980s working class circle, this seemingly entrepreneurial break from the world of employment was as unusual as it was unexpected.

Except it wasn't what it seemed.

What had happened was this. One morning, Kevin's boss told him he was now self-employed. He could rent the van and would do his deliveries as before. Only now he was a contractor, not an employee. And he'd have to sort out his own tax and insurance.

They privatised the buses around the same time. That's another story but, like Kevin's newfound small businessman status, back then it seemed as inexplicable as it was unsettling.

Sure enough, a short while later the 'contracts' from (though not the van repayments to) Kevin's former boss thinned out. Then they disappeared. No redeployment. No holiday pay. No redundancy. No responsibilities.

Cool platforms

Almost three decades later, as the Ubers, Deliveroos, Amazons and others rushed to explain that they were

'platforms' not employers, I started to hear the term 'gig economy.' I came to realise that my unwitting little brother was among its pioneers but, no matter how cool it might sound now, I was right about that unsettling feeling.

"A recent Irish report found that precarious 'gig economy' working arrangements are now spreading, including into the seemingly safe neighbourhoods of public administration, health and education."

Countless workers who would simply have been employees in previous eras now work as 'contractors' without the protections against sub-minimum wage and unfair dismissal – or benefits like paid holidays and sick leave – that the rest of us take for granted.

Cue teams of legal, trade union and academic experts wrestling with the distinction between employed and contractor status, and the thorny challenge of maintaining employees' rights in situations where – how to put it? – they just ain't employees.

One of those experts, Jeremias Prassl of Magdalen College Oxford, spoke at the prestigious *Industrial Relations News* conference in Dublin earlier this year. He reckons substantive aspects of laws governing rights at work need to be reviewed to protect workers in the new dispensation.

Confronted with zero-hour arrangements, bogus self-employment, and other new forms of work organisation, Professor Prassl said unions must address the limits of laws on unfair dismissal, minimum wages, and qualifying periods for job protection.

But he says reform of social welfare and taxation policy is as, if not more, important. That's because the so-called gig economy is luring people away from standard employment relationships by offering them a "no income tax" proposition.

continued on page 10 >



Photo: dreamstime.com

Less attractive

Stephen Holst of legal firm McCann Fitzgerald agrees that tax and PRSI reforms “could be the biggest driver of change” in this area. He says at least €60 million a year is lost to the Irish exchequer through the false classification of work as self-employment, which allows companies to avoid paying employers’ PRSI.



Legislation passed in 2017 allowed freelance journalists and other freelance workers to organise for collective bargaining. The legislation also defines ‘bogus self-employment’ in law for the first time.

Holst said these arrangements – including the prospect of lower income tax bills – can look attractive to workers at first. But they are less appealing when you need to fall back on PRSI-related benefits like maternity leave, pensions and social security.

Prassl said there was evidence that the gig economy was causing huge tax losses in other jurisdictions too. And he added that moving workers out of the PAYE system meant they carried all the burden of tax compliance.

Yet this issue could be relatively easy to address because all the data about who works, who for, and for how much, exists on the platforms – like Uber and Deliveroo – that typify the gig economy.

Should those of us in steady employment be concerned? A recent report from the Irish Congress of Trade Unions (ICTU) found that precarious ‘gig economy’ working arrangements were now spreading, including into the seemingly safe neighbourhoods of public administration, health and education.

Insecure and Uncertain: Precarious Work in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland, revealed that 8% of the Republic’s workforce – or over 158,000 people – see significant variations in their weekly or monthly working hours. Another 7% are in temporary employment, often simply because they can’t find permanent work.

The union study found that female and young workers are most likely to be stuck in precarious or insecure jobs. And, while uncertain work is most common in distribution, hotels, catering, retail and construction, it’s spreading to other areas including the public service.

Alarming

The alarming growth in precarious work since 2008 has prompted ICTU to urge the Government to legislate to address the problem. It wants new laws to guarantee the right to a minimum number of working hours, and to provide workers with a written statement of their terms and conditions from day one of their employment.

Meanwhile, Labour’s Ged Nash is to speak at Fórsa’s Services and Enterprises divisional conference about his proposed legislation aimed at strengthening protections for precarious workers. His proposals go further than new laws envisaged by the Government, which would ban zero hour contracts in all situations except emergency cover, short-term relief work, or genuine casual work.



Jeremias Prassl, Magdalen College Oxford.

The Congress report says the coalition’s approach is insufficient against the background of a dramatic 34% rise in part-time work and self-employment, which it says is “indicative of significant growth in bogus or false self-employment.”



Deliveroo, along with Uber, are the poster companies for the cool new platforms of the gig economy. But workers ultimately pay the cost.

Meanwhile, Professor Prassl says unions must avoid “falling into a crazy Luddite trap,” and should instead take on the negative aspects of the changing economy while embracing technology and innovation. “Over the centuries, technology has never destroyed the net amount of work, but it has made it better, safer, and more fun,” he says.

Unions also face the practical challenge of developing services that gig workers actually want. Things like advice on contracts and intelligence about good and bad ‘gig’ employers are not standard trade union fare, but they would be a real boost to the Kevins of today.

On the plus side, Prassl makes the rather obvious point that reaching and communicating with gig workers shouldn’t be that difficult. After all, they are – they have to be – among the most IT and social media literate people on the planet.

In any case, unions will have to up their game to stay relevant if, as seems likely, the sector keeps growing at its current rate ■

Michael D to address Fórsa conference

PRESIDENT MICHAEL D Higgins will address the opening session of Fórsa’s first-ever national delegate conference, which takes place in Killarney in May. The conference will see hundreds of delegates, representing all the union’s branches, set policy and elect Fórsa officers for the first time.

This is one of three Fórsa delegate conferences set to take place in the April-May period.

The Services and Enterprises Division conference takes place in Galway on 12th-13th April. Up to 150 delegates are expected, representing workers in commercial and non-commercial semi-state organisations and private companies.

Next, some 650 delegates will attend Fórsa’s Civil Service Division conference, which is set for Killarney on 19th and 20th April. Then the full national conference, with up to a thousand delegates, takes place on 16th-18th May.

The two divisional conferences are taking place this year on an exceptional basis. That’s because they are the divisions directly impacted by the recent amalgamation, and they need to elect new divisional executive committees. All six Fórsa divisions will hold conference events in 2019.

Separately Fórsa’s Education Division will host a conference in Dublin on 5th April. This is not a formal policy-setting conference, but the division holds an event during each year’s education ‘conference season’ to explore policy and service issues ■



Fórsa people

As we head into a busy conference season, let us introduce you to the men and women who make up Fórsa's divisional executives. Fórsa members working on your behalf in our new union.



Civil service divisional executive

Front seated (l-r): Gearoid O'Cribin, Tayna O'Neill, Ronon Bolger, Kieran Sheehan, Tom Geraghty - joint general secretary, Niall McGuirk, Ann McGee, Alan Hanlon, Tony Conlon. Second (l-r): Jack O'Connor, Tom Madden, Adam Egan, Denis Ryan, Derek Mullen - head of division, Debbie Brennan, Jean Taylor, Willie Sargent, Helen Linehan, Sheila Smith, Audrey Lyons, Brian Leonard, Jim McCarthy, Kathleen McGee, Michele McCaffrey, Kevin Garry, Dermot McAuley, Don Deane, Kevin Melinn, Sean Carabini, Betty Tyrrell, Eugene Quinn, Kevin Gaughran. Third (l-r): Andy Walsh, Daniel Copperthwaite, Sue Kelly, Marian Cody, Paul McSweeney, Des Fagan, Brendan Lawless, Melissa Brennan, Eugene Dunne, Michael Crowe, Sean Lowde, Rhona McEleney, Stephanie Kelly, Jim Guirey, Cormack Donoghue, Willie Duggan, Andy Pike - head of division, Liam McLoughlin, Terry Murphy. Forth (l-r): John T O'Flanagan, Benny Conaty.



Health and Welfare divisional executive

Front (l-r): Don Gibney, Maura Cahalan, chair, Martin Walsh, vice-chair, Eamonn Donnelly, Fórsa head of division. Back (l-r): Brenda Mulhall, Brian Gorman, Patricia Mellisop, Corinne Phelan, Carmel Devine, Michelle Spearman Geraghty, Tony Mitchell, Edward Harte, James Fletcher, Jarlath O'Connor.



Education divisional executive

Front (l-r): Kathleen O'Doherty, Gina O'Brien (chair), Noreen O'Mahony (vice-chair), Michael Smyth. Back (l-r): Kevin Callinan, Fórsa deputy general secretary, Antoinette Mullen, Siobhan O'Callaghan, Brenda Halley, Clare Keaveney, Elaine Elliott, Joan Regan, Eilise McGarrell, Séan Carabini.



Local Government divisional executive

Front (l-r): Julie Flood, Sean Reid - cathaoirleach, Linda Casey, Peter Nolan - Fórsa head of division. Back (l-r): Tom Browne, Gerry O'Quigley - leas cathaoirleach, Ann Marie Maher, Ray Kennedy, Pat Considine, Michael Whyms, Catherine White, Susan Gherin, Vincent Savage, Padraig McGivney, Seamus Smith.



Services & Enterprises divisional executive

Front (l-r): Piers Dillon, Helen Sheridan, Evan Cullen, Eugene Gargan, Gillian White, Ian Patel, Eugene Quinn. Middle (l-r): Kevin Gaughran, Willie Doyle, Tony Dawson, Jimmy O'Loughlin, Steve Pilgram, Paul McSweeney, Geraldine Hickey, Angela Kirk - Fórsa head of division, Grace Conlon, Carmel Keogh, David Orford, Philip Lambert. Back (l-r): Carol Foster, Terry Kelleher, Brendan Hanlon, Denis Keane, Ashley Connolly, Cormac Craven, Kevin O'Donoghue.



Municipal employees divisional executive 2018

Front (l-r): Michael Ross, Thomas Murtagh, Dessie Robinson, David Greene. Middle row (l-r): Lorcan Connolly, Mark Crosbie, Mick McLoughlin, Una Faulkner, Eddie Smith, James Cole, John Gaynor, Joe Malone. Back row (l-r): Tony Martin, Michael Kieran, Declan O'Brien, Michael Gibson, Vincent Brunton, Mark Wynne, John Meehan.



Blame the system not the staff

to identify a single aspect of PeoplePoint activity that has not given rise to problems," he said.

Impossible position

Tom and other Fórsa representatives are quick to say this is not the fault of the staff who work in the shared services office. This sentiment is also reflected in a large number of motions to the union's forthcoming civil service conference, many of which acknowledge the impossible position PeoplePoint staff are in - trying to work a system that simply isn't working.

That PeoplePoint works at all is down to the dedication of the civil servants employed there. They've had an extraordinarily difficult time in recent years as they try to make a poorly designed system function.

"That it works at all is down to the dedication of the staff, who've had an extraordinarily difficult time trying to make a poorly designed system function."

The overpayment described above was just one of the stories that emerged from a Fórsa survey of civil servants who'd fallen foul of the system, which was meant to herald a new era of HR efficiency when it was introduced in 2013.

When the union asked its civil service members about their experiences earlier this year, over 1,100 responded. The reaction far exceeded expectations and highlighted the sheer scale of the serious issues now endemic with the system.

And the range of issues cited bears out Tom's view that problems have emerged with pretty-much every aspect of HR.

Over and underpaid

Just under 83% said they'd experienced issues with PeoplePoint. Over 82% indicated that they'd experienced a pay-related issue, with overpayments, underpayments, sick-related pay, issues surrounding increments, promotion-related pay, and pension problems featuring prominently.

Worryingly, 53% of participants recorded pay-related repercussions as a result of the issues experienced.

Despite the media and political focus, only 22% of those surveyed experienced overpayments, though that's not to say this isn't a serious concern which, as we've seen, has the potential to have huge financial repercussions.

Problems with sick leave were also widespread, with 20% of participants

continued on page 16 >



Roisín McKane



Seán Carabini.

Civil servants are fed up with PeoplePoint. But they understand HR staff aren't to blame. SEÁN CARABINI and ROÍSÍN McKANE report.

HERE'S A story about an overpaid civil servant that you won't have seen in the newspapers.

A Fórsa member on long-term sick leave recently told us she'd been overpaid for several months. She was unaware of this until she got a letter from PeoplePoint, the centralised civil service human resources service, telling her she'd have to repay the sizeable debt that had accrued.

That's put her under considerable personal and financial strain, just at a time when she needs it least.

Ordinary workers like this got no mention - let alone sympathy - earlier this year when the Oireachtas Public Accounts Committee quizzed senior management from the National Shared Services Office, which runs PeoplePoint.

The papers happily printed stories of overpayments, without acknowledging the real victims, who can be put in dire financial straits when these mistakes occur.

And, as Fórsa joint general secretary Tom Geraghty recently pointed out, the equally

problematic issue of underpayments was simply not raised at the committee.

"The problem of overpayments has reached epidemic proportions under PeoplePoint. It has caused great suffering to many civil servants, often in vulnerable financial circumstances, who have to repay money they do not have.

"But the extensive underpayments and unprecedented delays in paying people their correct salary once they are appointed or promoted is equally problematic. It's difficult

“Over two-thirds of respondents complained of delays. Many said that disputes took anywhere from three weeks to two years to reach a resolution. Almost a third of cases surveyed are still ongoing.”



reporting difficulties with the reconciliation of their sick pay.

Delays in the reconciliation of sick leave cause a deficit in hours in the short term. If this is not reconciled in good time, the deficit carries on from month to month, showing a false position of the hours worked.

And an ongoing dispute over sick leave reconciliation can have a knock-on effect by impacting on how future sick leave is recorded.

Delays

Over two-thirds of respondents complained of delays. Many said that disputes took anywhere from three weeks to two years to reach a resolution. Almost a third of cases surveyed are still ongoing.

Respondents acknowledged that PeoplePoint staff are working under excessively stressful conditions, but they expressed frustration that issues previously dealt with in good time by local HR departments were now taking much longer to resolve.

This is far from the vision of efficiency and effectiveness predicted by then-public spending minister Brendan Howlin when he announced the new shared service. He said the system would save €12.5 million a year by centralising most HR operations in Clonskeagh, south Dublin, and by reducing the number of personnel staff by 17% across the civil service.

Proponents of the move also promised greater efficiency and a higher quality customer service.

In exchange for guarantees of job security and an end to further pay cuts as the post-crash recession started to bite, unions had agreed to cooperate with changes, including the move to shared services, under the 2010 Croke Park deal.

In any case, the idea seemed worth exploring as efficiencies and improvements through

shared services looked achievable. But the process limped on without adequate planning or direction.

Too early

The project was launched too early, before it was ready. The staffing requirements were poorly understood, and the organisation had an over-reliance on temporary staff from the outset.

Our members in PeoplePoint report a lack of adequate training for new staff who, with ever-increasing workloads, get little more than ‘on the job’ instruction. As if the system’s not difficult enough to navigate, staff aren’t being given the tools to do the job.



Tom Geraghty.

Quality control measures have also been absent, and were only introduced reactively. The IT systems that were used were not fully developed. The service level agreements

between PeoplePoint and line departments were unrealistic and lacked penalties.

On top of that, the system is largely unable to recognise the attendance patterns of shift workers and others with atypical working arrangements. As a result, these employees have effectively had no HR service in recent years.

Then, as difficulties emerged, there was no ‘ownership’ of the problem. It’s often difficult to tell if responsibility for solving a problem rests with the individual, their internal HR, shared services, or another stakeholder.

Almost by definition, it’s rarely a routine matter when someone needs to interact with HR. It usually involves something that has a significant impact on their lives.

They may have been promoted. Perhaps they’re returning to full-time work from work-sharing. What if they are faced with an illness that will keep them off work for so long that their pay reduces?

Strengthened

Is it unreasonable to expect a local, departmental HR service, where they can close a door and have that private face-to-face conversation?

Fórsa was prompted to conduct its survey on foot of a huge number of complaints from members, and senior management’s denial of the systemic nature of the problem.

It forms part of a broader action plan to tackle the issues. Union branches have been urged to raise PeoplePoint issues at Departmental Council, and the Civil Service Staff Panel has sought a meeting with the Management Board to discuss the treatment of staff.

Members have been urged to use the complaints procedure already in place after our survey revealed that only half of those who were dissatisfied had actually registered a complaint.

While Fórsa attends monthly meetings with PeoplePoint officials to deal with particular cases, the relatively low number of formal objections allows management to dismiss complaints of systemic failure as anecdotal, rather than fact-based.

In this context, the Fórsa survey has strengthened the union’s hand, as well as giving us a better understanding of the problem and its causes. It will aid our discussions with management, which focus on the difficulties faced by PeoplePoint staff as well as the problems the system is causing others.

We’re determined to get this resolved, and equally clear that senior management can’t be allowed to simply shift the blame to their hard-working staff.

Seán Carabini is a Fórsa assistant general secretary. Róisín McKane works with the union’s Communications Unit. PeoplePoint has changed its name to HR Shared Services, but we’ve used the old title as most people still use its former name ■



Lisa Wilson PhD.

As discussion and debate continue on the rise of precarious work, and the limited opportunities of the ‘gig economy’, we may have failed to notice that insecure, low paid, poor quality work are already well established problems for one group of workers. LISA WILSON of the Nevin Economic Research Institute (NERI) writes about how we must widen our focus on the definition of precarious employment and adopt the long proposed solutions of the women’s movement.

Towards ‘better jobs’ for all: Why we need to listen to the women’s movement

RECENTLY we’ve seen increased attention being given to the nature of employment and in particular to the quality of employment. There is hardly a day that passes when we pick up the newspaper or turn on the radio that we do not hear talk of ‘precarious work’, ‘insecure jobs’, ‘zero hours contracts’, ‘the gig economy’, ‘contingent employment’ or some variation of these terms.

Whilst there is much debate about the extent of these forms of employment, change over time, or the factors driving these there is more of a consensus on the human impact of these jobs. Workers in these forms of employment are more likely to have less security, have lower earnings, polarised working hours, less opportunities for training, face more occupational and health risks.

These work practices also impact negatively on workers in terms of lower living standards, bring about difficulties in accessing secure accommodation and place workers at greater risk of developing health problems. All in all, these lousy jobs bring lousy consequences.

In terms of assessing who precarious workers are we have seen quite a lot of attention being given to evidence illustrating the fact that precarious workers are concentrated amongst younger workers, workers in lower skilled jobs, and workers with lower levels of educational attainment. Relatively little attention has been given to-date however to the gender of precarious workers. And indeed, a quick glance at the gender of the average precarious worker tends to show that most of them are male. There is also an assumption that they work for Uber,

Deliveroo or one of the other platform-based apps.

In a recently published paper I systematically examined the gendered nature of employment, and insecure, low paid employment over a 20-year period. The results were a story of both continuity and change. In terms of change we have seen an overall convergence or ‘harmonising down’ of employment security and quality for men. It is from here that the perception that the precarious worker is a man or that the gig economy ‘is a man’s world’ comes from. Men’s employment has experienced the largest relative rate of change, becoming more insecure or poor in quality.

Segregation

The results however also show evidence of enduring gender inequalities in the labour market. The fact is that women continue to be more likely to be in insecure employment. In addition, significant gendered segregation remains in terms of the types of jobs that both men and women do, with women continuing to dominate in what is often known as ‘pink collar’ jobs, such as caring jobs and retail jobs. These jobs are significantly more likely to be low paid, insecure and of poor quality more generally speaking than the jobs dominated by men.

Having children further amplifies the differentiation between males and females. Having one or more children reduces the likelihood of females being in permanent, full-time jobs by almost one-third, with only 44% of females with one or more children working in a permanent, full-time job.

Moreover, when the income of men and women across occupations was examined it was seen that women continue to dominate in the low paid occupations. What is more, even in these lower paid occupations, a substantive gender pay gap remains. In this respect, women face a double pay penalty.

Insecure

Taking all of this together then we see that the average precarious worker is not male. What’s happening is that men’s work is starting to look like what women’s work has long been. Insecure, low paid, poor quality. But women continue to dominate this space.

To stop the spread of lousy jobs we need to move beyond a sole focus on these new forms of precarious employment as these only make up a minority share of the total. When we do, we will see that many of the policy solutions to tackling precarious employment are the same as those which have long been proposed by the women’s movement.

Lisa Wilson is an Economist at the Nevin Economic Research Institute. Her main research interests lie in the areas of income distribution, poverty, public expenditure, living standards and well-being. Lisa completed her PhD in Sociology titled ‘Income inequality and well-being in the United Kingdom’ which she carried out in the School of Sociology, Social Policy and Social Work, Queens University, Belfast.

See also: ‘When a man with a van is his very own man’ by Bernard Harbor on page 8 ■

The ONE Galway initiative was launched in February at the Mick Lally Theatre in Galway City. Activists, officials, students and community representatives came together to launch the second One Movement initiative, with a particular focus on precarious work.

One voice. One movement. One Galway.

THE PROJECT is a collaborative initiative comprising of trade and student unions operating in the Galway area, supported by the Irish Congress of Trade Unions and the Galway Council of Trade Unions.

Fórsa deputy general secretary Kevin Callinan, who was one of the speakers at the event, explained: "The aim of the project is to foster a deeper engagement and collaboration between trade unions, student unions and community groups at workplace and societal levels to organise, campaign, educate and communicate with workers and the wider community."

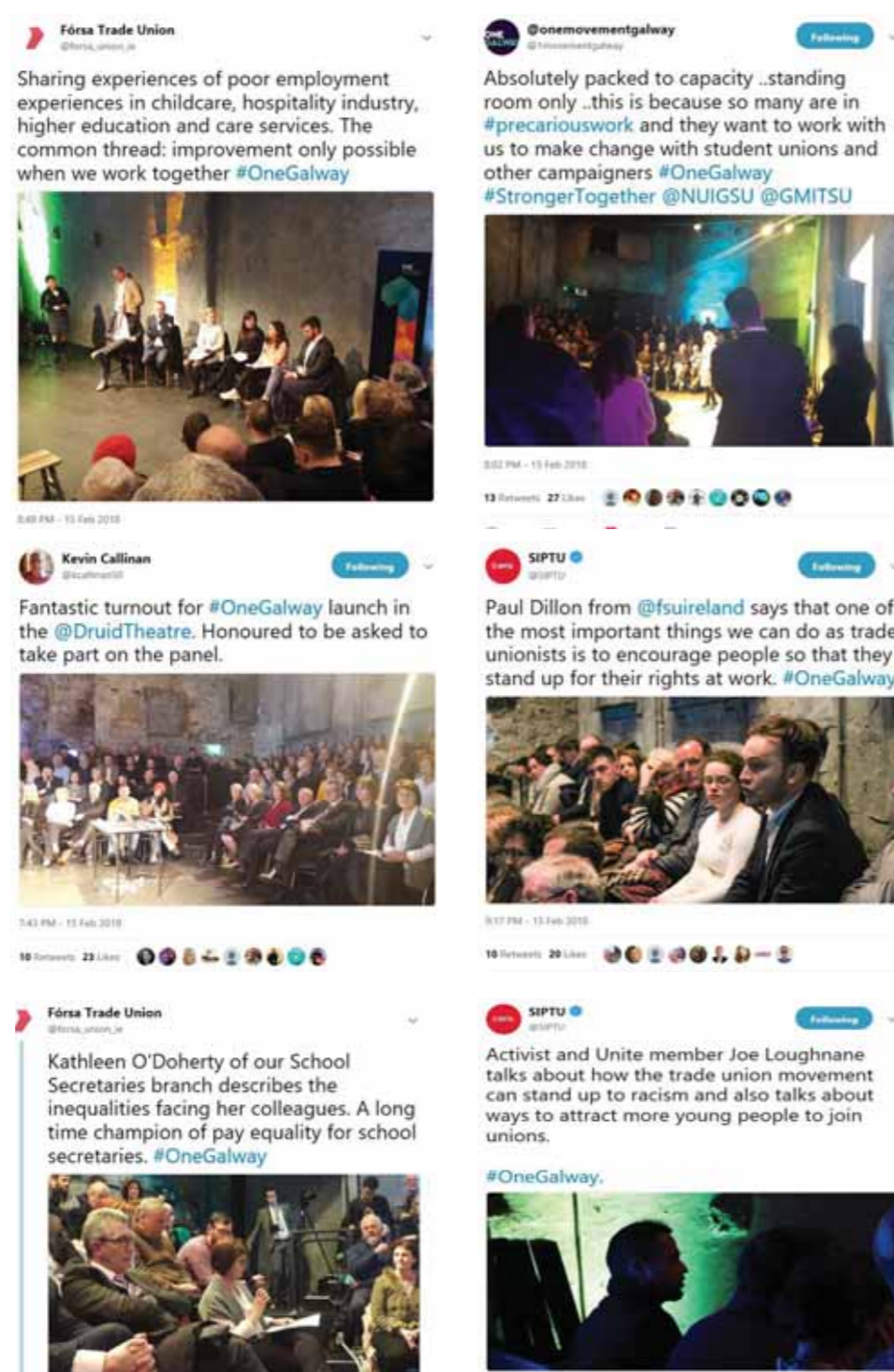


Dr Michelle O'Sullivan.

"Building on the successful model established by the ONE Cork initiative, launched in 2016, ONE Galway is about organising workers, their families and communities to influence change and create a future within which there is access to decent work, decent pay and a decent standard of living for all," he said.

Precarious work

The initial campaign focus for ONE Galway will be on precariousness and the exploitation of workers. The launch event featured a strong presentation on the issue from Dr Michelle O'Sullivan of the University of Limerick.



Fórsa organiser Helen Cousins and Maggie Ronayne (NUIG) at the ONE Galway launch event.

In her presentation, Dr O'Sullivan said "Precariousness, at its heart, is about uncertainty, and every problem, every poor outcome that workers have is because of uncertainty. Whether its hours, job or social insecurity, it's about uncertainty."

Dr O'Sullivan said many employers like to think of full-time, permanent jobs as

something "of the past" and said she was "highly sceptical" when employers claimed that millennials were no longer interested in full-time, permanent jobs. She said it was important to challenge the claim that more secure working arrangements was a thing of the past.

Members of the audience joined the

discussion to share their experiences of poor quality employment in childcare, the hospitality industry, higher education and in care services. Most of the contributions emphasised that improvement is only possible when people work together to secure them.

Campaigns

While similar to the Cork initiative, ONE Galway's focus lies in a broader organisational engagement from the outset, where student unions are working alongside their trade union counterparts on campaigns such as housing needs, in addition to the campaign focus on precarious working.

Joe Cunningham, the general secretary designate of SIPTU, said: "ONE Galway will also work to better equip and increase the capacity of the trade union movement in Galway city and county to deal together with the many different challenges which face workers, particularly students, younger workers and those from our migrant communities."

Kevin added: "It's about consolidating the strength, resources and expertise locally of all these organisations and building a stronger network to improve living and working conditions and achieve significant gains for all workers through greater trade union and civic participation." ■



Civil Service Credit Union (CSCU), would like to extend our sincere congratulations to Fórsa and its members on becoming one of Ireland's largest trade unions.

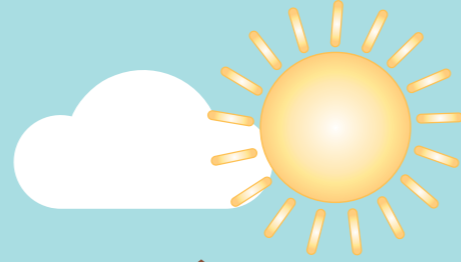
CSCU has been working with and on behalf of civil and public servants for over 25 years and we look forward to continue to build on the close relationship between the two organisations.

We wish all Fórsa members, staff and their families the very best going forward.

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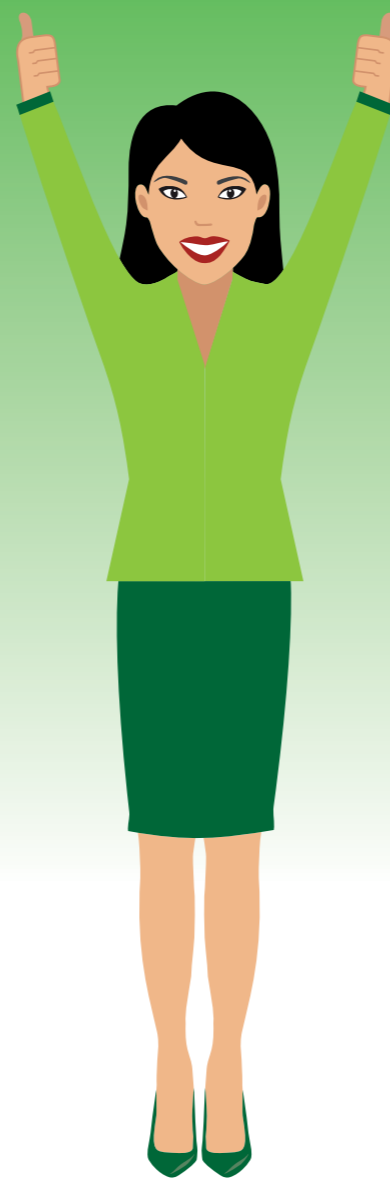


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Privatised council services now off trend



Diarmaid Mac A Bhaird

Three decades after privatisation first got a grip on public services, a new trend of 're-municipalisation' is emerging. DIARMAID MAC A BHAIRD looks at the implications for Ireland.

BRINGING PRIVATISED refuse and waste services back into public hands could reduce costs for households and businesses, while improving pay and working conditions for staff, according to a new study published by the European Federation of Public Service Unions (EPSU).

The head of Fórsa's two local authority divisions, Peter Nolan, says there are lessons for Dublin City Council and other Irish local authorities in the report's findings. "The most significant takeaway is that re-municipalisation can be done, in Dublin city and elsewhere in Ireland. The report demonstrates a trend of waste management services returning to the public sector in different places on the continent," he said.

The study, *Waste management in Europe: Good jobs in the circular economy*, says there is no evidence to support the view that privatised waste management operations are better than publically-provided services. Conversely, it suggests the opposite to be true.

Its author, Vera Wegmann of the London-based Public Services International Research Group, identifies European examples of 're-municipalisation,' where privatised waste and refuse services have been brought back into public control because of high costs or service shortcomings.

But she warns that the trend towards privatisation remains strong in other places.

Spread

The report follows the earlier publication of research from the Amsterdam-based Transnational Institute, which examined over 800 examples of re-municipalisation across the globe between 2000 and 2017. It says the trend of re-municipalisation emerged in European water services, before spreading to other sectors and continents.

It gives examples of re-municipalisation in various sectors including water supply in Paris and waste management in Germany. This follows previous EPSU reports, which found examples of re-municipalisation in cities like Paris, Munich and London demonstrating that the public service delivered more cost efficient and effective services.

Re-municipalisation has become increasingly common in the years since, with the trend spreading from large cities to smaller towns and rural areas. While examples of privatisation continue to occur, several reports find this leads to more expensive and less efficient services with increasingly poor working conditions.

Meanwhile, unions have warned that private companies that lose business as a result of re-municipalisation are seeking the repeal of French laws that stop water disconnections for customers with unpaid bills. They also warn of legal action being taken before the World Trade Organisation (WTO) on the basis of international trade rules and so called 'new generation' mega trade deals like the Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) and the Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA).

Dublin

Waste management services in Dublin were privatised in early 2012. Before that the city had been seen as a bastion because it was the last European capital with a fully municipalised public waste management service. IMPACT, one of the unions that merged to create Fórsa, campaigned against the privatisation of services in the city, and an IMPACT position paper from 2011 criticised the move and warned of increased fly tipping in the city.

Fly tipping in Dublin has, indeed, become progressively worse in the years following privatisation,



particularly in areas of the city's northside. A Fórsa campaign on the issue, now underway, aims to solve the issue of private waste collection companies refusing to collect 'bagged and tagged' rubbish, which private contractors are paid to lift.

The most recent EPSU report also addressed the transition towards a 'circular economy,' which places a high value on the re-use and recycling of waste materials. Wegmann says this is heralding change in the waste sector, most notably a shift towards recycling and away from landfill.

"Fly tipping in Dublin has become progressively worse in the years following privatisation, particularly in areas of the city's northside. Dublin city council crews are required to lift any illegal waste. Fórsa suspects that, as a result, private waste companies may be deliberately ignoring rubbish they are contracted to collect."

Calls for council waste crews to lift this waste have also increased drastically in recent months. Dublin city council crews are required to lift any illegal waste. The union suspects that, as a result, private waste companies may be deliberately ignoring rubbish they are contracted to collect.

Circular economy

As well as being more environmentally sustainable, it's estimated that this trend will create a million new jobs across the continent by 2030, because recycling is more labour-intensive than the old method of disposal. The report suggests that further advancements to the circular economy have the potential to treble that figure to three million.

Peter Nolan, who represented Fórsa at a recent EPSU seminar that discussed the research findings, said: "A municipalised waste management service at the centre of refuse and waste services in Dublin, and geared towards a circular economy, would be of much higher value to society than the current privatised model. It would also be positive in terms of sustainability, the environment, cost reduction, improved efficiency and ensuring the best possible conditions for workers and the best possible service for customers."

Unions believe this shift towards the circular economy holds out the prospect of better pay and working conditions in the industry if it integrates informal workers into the public waste sector, where conditions are significantly better than in private companies.

Diarmaid Mac A Bhaird is a Global Legal Studies masters student in Maynooth University who is currently a part-time intern at Fórsa ■

A special Fórsa conference in February brought together 200 health and social care professionals, and explored the future of the professions in a changing health service in the context of emerging health service structures, demographic changes, and the relationships between health promotion, hospital care and community-based primary care and social services.

HEALTH AND social care professions (HSCP) include speech and language therapists, social care workers, social workers, psychologists, physiotherapists, occupational therapists, dietitians, podiatrists, orthoptists, biochemists and audiologists.

The head of Fórsa's Health and Welfare division Éamonn Donnelly told the high-level conference that the country's 18,000 health and social care professionals were neglected in health service planning and delivery, and that 80-90% of final year health profession students were considering emigration as a more attractive option than working in the Irish health service.

He said the failure of politicians and health service managers to place the health and social care professions at the centre of service planning will hamper the implementation of the 'Sláintecare' health reform programme, which won cross-party political support last year.

Eamonn called on health minister Simon Harris, who also addressed the conference, to immediately create a departmental post of Senior Advisor on Therapy Services. The conference was also addressed by Rosarii Mannion of the HSE and the chief executives of Tusla and the National Federation of Voluntary Bodies.

Expansion

The Sláintecare programme envisages a major expansion of primary care and social care capacity, with free access to GP and hospital services within five years.

Exploring the future of healthcare



Eamonn Donnelly, Fórsa's head of division for Health & Welfare with Minister for Health Simon Harris.

Eamonn told the conference that health and social care professionals should be in leadership positions in the HSE and Department of Health, where they could take an active and visible place in health service policy and operational decision-making.

Measures

Fórsa listed a range of actions it says are necessary to realise the full potential of the professions in the delivery of Sláintecare and other health service improvements. They include:

- The appointment of more HSCPs to leadership positions including in areas like workforce and service planning, with the immediate creation of a health department position of Senior Advisor on Therapy Services.
- More certainty about how new Community Health Organisations will interact with hospital groups, and

what this means for therapy and care service provision.

- Additional investment and recruitment to ease staffing shortages, bring down waiting times, and move towards a seven-day service where there is demand for it.
- Improved career paths, with enough clinical specialists to reflect the development of professional knowledge and the needs of patients and clients.
- A "radical but simple shift" to allow therapists and others to refer clients to other health and social care professionals as necessary, rather than sending them back to a consultant or GP.
- More management support and advocacy for staff in highly-stressed settings like child protection.
- More consistent and solid employer support for CPD ■



Carmel Devine, Maura Cahalan- chairperson of Fórsa's health division and Lynn Coffey, Fórsa.



Kevin Callinan - Fórsa deputy general secretary and Suzanne Rastrich, Chief Allied Health Professions Officer, NHS.



Brian O'Donnell, John Delamere and Rosairi Mannion.



Margaret McMahon and Carmel Reynolds.



Kalawole Majora, Solomon Popolla and John Nwooo.



Delegates from all sectors of the health service attended the conference.



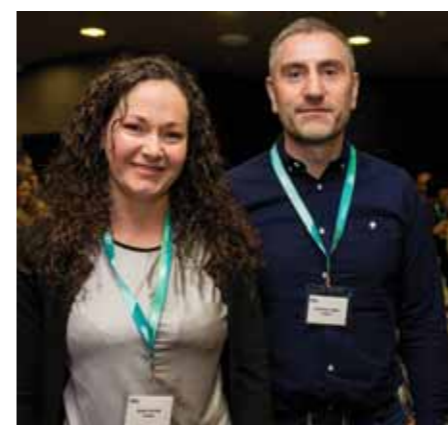
Delegates enjoying the conference.



Vickie Kirkpatrick and Maura Reynolds.



The conference was full to capacity.



Mags Kearns and Patrick Jones.



Corina Glennon, Kerry Cuskelly and Róisín Higgins.



Declan Slevin and Suzanne O'Brien.

A great night out

To mark the creation of Fórsa, over 300 guests and trade union members celebrated the occasion at a special launch event in the Mansion House, Dublin on Thursday 15th of March.



Joint Fórsa presidents:
Pat Fallon with Ann McGee and Niall McGuirk.



Deirdre Nihill - Dublin No. 2 Revenue, Ed Harte - Sligo branch and Michelle Spearman Geraghty, Tipperary North - health and community.



Former PSEU presidents: Patricia Tobin, Brian O'Connor, Valerie Behan, Niall McGuirk, Fiona Lee, John Rossiter and Brendan Lawless.



Bridie Shortall and Patricia Fanning - North Leinster SNA branch.



Jack McCarthy - BVA, Helen Canning - BVA, Maureen Madden and Pat Kelly chairperson for the Visually Impaired.



Sheila Smith - Civil Service Branch, Martin Walsh - Louth Branch.



Paddy Quinn and Liz Fay - Cork Branch.



Fórsa members enjoying the launch of the new union.



Tom Geraghty, Fórsa joint general secretary, Tom McKeivitt and Billy Hannigan.



David Begg former ICTU general secretary with Shay Cody Fórsa senior general secretary.



Cormac Donoghue - Portlaoise General, Maria Dowling - Revenue Cork Branch, Olajide Ogidan - Fórsa organiser.



Kathleen McGee - LetterKenny Branch and Daniel Sweeney - DEC, Donegal.



John Flanagan, Margaret Coughlan, Tom Brady, ex Nat. Secretary, Kathleen O'Doherty and Maria Dunne.



Kevin Callinan - Fórsa deputy general secretary, Andy Pike - Fórsa head of division and Ciaran Sheehan - Agriculture No.1.



Michael Clark - Municipal Employees, Tom Brady, ex nat. secretary and Julie Flood - Dublin City Branch.



Hannah Duffy - Revenue Branch, Paul Moyer - Fórsa, Tom Morrin - Revenue, Seán Carabini - Fórsa.



Eoin Ronayne, Fórsa general secretary, Betty Tyrell Collard - Dublin Central Branch, Helen Linehan - Cork General, Blaire Horan and Deirdre Nihill - Dublin No.2 Revenue.



Peter McLoone - former IMPACT general secretary, Blaire Horan - former CPSU general secretary, Eoin Ronayne - Fórsa joint general secretary, Shay Cody - Fórsa senior general secretary, Tom Geraghty - Fórsa joint general secretary, Dan Murphy - former PSEU general secretary and Kevin Callinan - Fórsa deputy general secretary.



Shay Kavanagh - Municipal Employees and Tara Robertson - Dublin City.



Fórsa members enjoying the launch.



Gina O'Brien, Barbara Byrne and Siobhan O'Callaghan - IOTI Branch.



Susan Sheran - Limerick, Mark Leahy - Local Gov, Limerick and Seamus Ryan - Clare.



Four former IMPACT presidents. Pat Fallon, Kevin O'Malley, Jerry King and Sean McHugh.



Debbie Brennan - Carlow General, Thomas Morrin - Revenue and Michelle Spearman Geraghty - Tipperary North, health and community.



Tom Delaney, Padraig Kelleher, Michael Peters and Larry Lyons, all Agricultural Number 1.



Neil Rooney, Dennis Rooney and Sinead Costello - Sligo.



Don Giveney - Westmeath, Ellen Brennan - FT branch, Eugene Dunne - Civil Service DEC.



Deidre O'Connell - Fórsa organiser, Tom Brown - Galway branch, Kay Miskella - Wexford branch.



Willie Doyle and Margaret Lennin - National Museum with Paul Rowe - Educate Together.



Eimear Codd - Legal Professional, Mick Ryan and Tom Madden - Civil Service NO.1, Liz Madden - Ballinasloe with Michelle Connaughton - Roscommon.

Let's get started

Fórsa's youth committee has begun planning its campaign activities. Lead organiser Joe O'Connor is pictured with the committee's campaign group as they met in March.





Niall Shanahan.

Love In The Wild is a new play written by Lisa Walsh, and opened in March at the Axis theatre in Ballymun. Lisa is a member of Fórsa and qualified as a social worker as a mature student in 1999. She is currently working in child protection having previously worked as a medical social worker and an addiction worker. NIALL SHANAHAN met Lisa before the opening night to talk about her inspiration for the play, its development from page to stage, and her desire to challenge the stigma of addiction.

Love in the Wild

"THE PLAY is about love, it's about judgment but hopefully it's also about redemption. He's not the stereotype of an addict, there are many layers to Ger and many layers to his story," Lisa explains.

Lisa chats at a mile-a-minute pace and her passion for storytelling shines through. "The play is a one-man show about a man called Ger Duffy. He's from Ballymun on Dublin's north side. He's on a methadone programme and he's journeying through addiction and through big changes in his life.

"He has a strong connection to wildlife and nature, which helps explain how he sees the world, in a way that's quite different to how most people see it," she says.

Ger's experience was informed and inspired by Lisa's work in addiction services over the last 20 years. While taking part in a creative writing course five years ago, Lisa recalled a story she'd heard about one addict's experience of visiting Ballymun swimming pool 20 years previously.

Stigma

"The swimming pool was a huge feature of life for anyone who grew up in Ballymun. Swimming and chester slices - the cakes we had after we went swimming - were a big part of the Ballymun childhood.

"He went back as an adult for a swim but he left because he became very self-conscious of being - as he called himself - a 'junkie'. It stayed with me and came back to me when I started writing," she explains.



"There's a lot of rich stories in a community like Ballymun, a lot to write about" - Lisa Walsh, social worker and playwright.

Before its recent tour of Dublin venues, including the Viking theatre in Clontarf, the play toured in a number of addiction centres in Dublin. "We knew we had a responsibility for the people we performed for in that setting. So I would do an introduction, and we'd have a Q&A after the performance. As a social worker I was very aware of that responsibility, and that's what I brought to this."

Lisa said the response to those performances helped to inform the development of the play. "One man told me 'We've all had that walk of shame, where we were walked out of places, security man would come over and put his hand on your shoulder.' When he described that I knew we were on to something, because it's trying to give a voice to that experience. We worked more on developing the script after each of those performances."

Lisa said it made her think about Ballymun and the experience of stigma. "I grew up with a lot of stigma myself, my mam had addiction problems. When I started to write lots of things came back to me, like my experience of being a little girl with my mam, and the way people treated her, and later looking at the experience of people when I worked in addiction services. It's why I was drawn to social work in the first place."

Team

Lisa is quick to give credit to her creative team, which she describes as "tight". The play is performed by actor Anto Seery, under the guidance of acclaimed director Peter Sheridan and backed by producer Sheila Sheridan.

Aside from how the play addresses the thorny issues of addiction and stigma,



Love In The Wild is performed by Anto Seery.

Lisa says the play is also funny and entertaining. "Peter is a very experienced director, and he's brilliant at script and pacing. A lot happens in this hour, Anto takes us there, with a minimal set," she explains.

Origins

Lisa has been a social worker since 1999, and began writing in 2013.

"I'd never thought about writing. I used to manage the childcare resource centre in Ballymun Partnership and got to know Ray Yates, who used to run the Axis theatre in Ballymun. I got the opportunity to take part in a writing workshop. It had three key features, it was free, it was high quality and it was accessible.

"There were great writers in the group. There's a lot of rich stories in a community like Ballymun, a lot to write about. The talent that was there was a bit intimidating to begin with.

"My writing was very formal, report-like, to begin with, because of my training and background. It took me a while to unpack that. Colm Keegan, who ran the workshops, encouraged me to find my own voice, and I came away with two

monologues, which formed the source material for Love in the Wild."

One of the monologues, *The Lift*, secured a best actor award for Seery in the Underground Cinema Film Festival Actors Showcase in 2015. It led to an invitation from Sheridan to perform both monologues on his *Are You Having A Laugh?* tour.

"I grew up with a lot of stigma myself, my mam had addiction problems. When I started to write lots of things came back to me, like my experience of being a little girl with my mam, and the way people treated her, and later looking at the experience of people when I worked in addiction services. It's why I was drawn to social work in the first place."

They were on to something. "From the start, audiences warmed to the character of Ger Duffy. They cared

about him. Peter turned to me at one of the performances and said 'You really need to run this into a full length play', and so began a collaboration that helped to nurture the play into its current form," she says.

Where to from here?

The *Sunday Times* review for *Love In The Wild* said "There's a risk he could cut a pathetic figure: living at home, sloppily dressed, occasionally rapturous at the prospect of a cup of tea. But Anto Seery's performance transcends his limited horizons. Under Peter Sheridan's subtle direction, he draws us into his world, slowly revealing layers of personality. When his past catches up with him again, offering an unexpected chance at new meaning in his life, we are fully invested in what's at stake."

Lisa tells me there's potential for the play to continue touring. There's even some talk of developing a film version, but ultimately Lisa wants to bring the play and her social work together in an environment that could provide training and development for social workers. Watch this space.

See loveinthewild.ie ■



Diarmaid Mac A Bhaird

Staged by advocacy organisation EPIC in partnership with Tusla, 'Care Day 2018' was a huge success. But fighting the stigma attached to young people in care is a year-round job. DIARMAID MAC A BHAIRD reports.

Reducing stigma takes care



Sharing positive experiences.

"YOUNG PEOPLE are young people regardless of their circumstances. Those who live in care deserve to have the same rights, goals and aspirations for themselves as any other young person would have."

So says Fórsa member Suzanne O'Brien, who recently helped organise the awareness-raising 'Care Day 2018', which is the world's largest celebration of children and young people with care experience.

There are over 6,200 young people living in care in Ireland today, and many more who have moved on after living in care.

"They have their own stories of love, laughter, resilience and overcoming barriers. They live in our communities, they go to local schools, and we need to embrace them and see them as we do any other young person, regardless of their circumstances," says Suzanne who, with her colleagues in the

advocacy organisation EPIC (empowering people in care), is dedicated to reducing the stigma that surrounds young people in care.

These days, residential care settings are mainly large family homes, with capacity for staff and perhaps four young people with a bedroom each. They don't stick out. They strive to make



Suzanne O'Brien.

themselves blend into the neighbourhood.

But workshops and other engagements with young people in care reveal that they feel different. And surveys carried out on Care Day show they are seen as different by other people too.

experiences of being in care and what it meant for us. Yes, I was in care, but now I'm also a professional living my life, happy and making my own choices," says Suzanne.

This year, the initiative included film showings, a football tournament, rap workshops, drama performances, social media posts, and even a flash-mob on Dublin's Grafton Street. It was supported by Tusla child and family agency's CEO Fred McBride and the Children's Ombudsman Niall Muldoon.

Most contacts from under-18s in care are about being unhappy in the home they're living in, or not seeing their parents as often as they want to. Poor access to aftercare, housing and education for the over-18s who have left care environments also loom large as issues.

Challenging

For many, things get most challenging after their eighteenth birthday when they have to leave care. Many have difficulty attaining their first time job as a result of their often fractured educational experience and poor educational outcomes. Many young people also have lower self-esteem and confidence than their peers as a result of their care experience. A lack of appropriate internships, workshops and skills training are among the concerns that EPIC is working to address.

In a moving and eloquent contribution, Suzanne shared her own personal journey into, through and post-care at Fórsa's recent conference of health and social care professionals. Participants were also treated to some fantastic EPIC videos that brilliantly



Care day events took place across five nations.

"People see them as lost, or without any family, or unable to achieve as much as another young person. There are lots of negative stereotypes. The expectations of them aren't as high as for, say, another 16-year-old in their class," says Suzanne, who is EPIC's participation and development coordinator.

Stubborn

Care Day, which took place on February 16th, celebrates children and young people with care experience, increases awareness of the issues they face, and tackles the stubborn stigma that they live with.

Organised with equivalent advocacy organisations in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland through the '5 Nations, 1 Voice' (5N1V) Alliance, it has an international feel. And EPIC rightly believes that this year was our most successful year to date.

"We had a major drive to reduce the stigma. We went on various radio stations and spoke about our



Spreading the word via radio.

As the biggest initiative encouraging people with care experience to share their positive memories and experiences, Care Day provides a perfect starting point for EPIC as it strives to achieve its long-term goals.

Because the work continues during the other 364 days of the year for EPIC's 17 staff in Cork, Dublin, Galway and Limerick. The organisation, which helps children and young people who are – or who have been – in care, and dealt with nearly 600 cases in 2017. They help anyone with care experience on a wide range of issues.

communicated the issues to a wider audience. You can check them out at epiconline.ie.

"Our job is being there in their corner, supporting young people to use their voices to address the issues they have," she says.

Diarmaid Mac a Bhaird is a Global Legal Studies masters student in Maynooth University who is currently a part-time intern at Fórsa. Additional reporting by Bernard Harbor ■



Daniel Devery.

Food on television has gone through few evolutionary changes since the pioneering efforts of Fanny Cradock and Julia Child. DANIEL DEVERY writes that, while some terrestrial food programmes are stuck in outdated formats, the streaming services are tearing up the rule book and putting fun, philosophy and eclecticism back into the mix.

TV dinners

I THINK we have a slightly weird relationship with TV cooks. I mean weird in the sense that I can't imagine why any of us would happily watch somebody cook a dish on television that we have no intention of ever making ourselves.

But that view suggests the purpose of TV cooking is instructional, which it's clearly not. The bulk of food programming transitioned from education to entertainment a very long time ago.

The only TV cook who ever truly mastered the instructional approach was Delia, whose no-nonsense, step-by-step reassuring approach built a huge audience of devotees from the 1970s onwards. Delia is to be commended for her strict rule about never being filmed tasting her own food.

By contrast, Nigella has built an audience largely on her audience's fascination with the sight of her stuffing her face while sauce, butter and other assorted fats dribble through her fingers.



Delia Smith.

That both women need only a first-name introduction is testament to the fact that they have firmly established themselves in the collective consciousness.

Post-war

The origins of food on television have very strong roots in post-war Europe. Fanny Cradock was hired by the BBC to educate and inspire British home cooks not long after rationing was lifted in 1954.

Cradock's inspiration was the great French chef Auguste Escoffier, producing cost-effective yet extravagant looking food for an audience hard-wired by wartime austerity.

Similarly, Julia Child attended the famous Le Cordon Bleu cookery school while stationed in Paris with the US Foreign Service from 1948, and debuted on US television with *The French Chef* in 1963.



Julia Child.

Both women boosted the confidence of the home cooks in their audience, while at the same time generating an aspirational mood. This still characterises much of the food programming we see today on Irish television, with chefs like Neven Maguire and the various stalwarts of Ballymaloe House (Darina and Rachel Allen, Rory O'Connell).

Screen stories

Cradock and Child have had their stories dramatised for the screen and make for compelling, if uneven, viewing. *Fear of Fanny*, the BBC's 2006 treatment of Cradock's story, featuring Julia Davis, is available on YouTube. It's a bleakly comic take on Cradock's eccentricity and well worth viewing.

Nora Ephron's 2009 film *Julie & Julia* stars Meryl Streep as Julia Child. The film contrasts the life of Child in the early years of her culinary career with

the life of contemporary New York food blogger Julie Powell, played by Amy Adams. This affectionate film works best in the segments focusing on Child and her husband Paul, played by Stanley Tucci.

Man enters, bearing food

When it came to men in the kitchen, the focus on instruction was almost immediately abandoned, and the focus instead was on blokey boozy fun.

This was very much the case with Graham Kerr, best known for his 1969-1971 television cooking show *The Galloping Gourmet* and later with the various BBC shows featuring Keith Floyd in the 80s and 90s.

Floyd appeared to demolish all the established rules of TV cookery. With a theme tune by punk legends The Stranglers and an anarchic sense of



Phil Rosenthal.

local food in *Far Flung Floyd*. This is a format that has been faithfully adhered to by Floyd-disciple Rick Stein, who continues to be flown around the world by the BBC despite his on-screen awkwardness.

Nigel Slater too, has done well with this approach, and his recent BBC series focusing on the food of Lebanon, Turkey and Iran is highly recommended.

But by far the most watchable and enjoyable show to combine food and travel (in my own humble opinion) is the new Netflix show *Somebody Feed Phil*. Phil Rosenthal's six part series visits Bangkok, Saigon, Lisbon, Tel Aviv, New Orleans and Mexico City to reveal the people, the food and the culture of hospitality in each location.

I can't recommend it enough. Rosenthal, the producer responsible for the sitcom *Everybody Loves Raymond* is possessed of a child-like wonder and unassuming charm. In an anxious world, he reminds us all of how much we have in common, and how that shared experience finds expression through the simple breaking of bread. Even in Tel Aviv, where at first he seems to gloss over the obvious complications, he travels out of the Israeli city to find unexpected harmony.



Keith Floyd.

bacchanalian fun, he may well be solely responsible for the well-established trend of cooking outdoors at a makeshift and windswept improvised TV kitchen.

While Kerr and Floyd concentrated on *bon viveur* entertainment, fast forward to 1999, and the arrival of Jamie Oliver brings a new dimension. Suddenly it's cool for men to cook, and domestic kitchen design has, ever since, veered toward an expanse of stainless steel. He's also made outdoor wood-burning ovens the current status symbol of choice.

Food and travel

Keith Floyd was wise enough to get out of the confines of the studio, and the kitchen, and was at his best sampling

Philosophy

What Netflix brings to the mix, apart from a desire to discard the overcooked (sorry) and outdated TV formats that still, somehow, find favour with terrestrial commissioning editors, is a desire to explore what food means to us.

If you enjoy Rosenthal, the next logical step is David Chang's *Ugly Delicious*, an entertaining and casually insightful look at food culture and ethnicity, while Michael Pollan's *Cooked* is a four-part series exploring the elemental processes of food and cooking.

Finally, check out the slow-motion opening credits on Netflix's *Chef's Table*. It may seem an excessive starter, but stay for the main course, as the world's most renowned chefs explain their life's work. Bon appetite ■



Una-Minh Kavanagh

Vietnam is renowned for its friendly people, mouth-watering food and picturesque countryside and attracts millions of tourists every year. If you're planning your first Vietnam adventure, UNA-MINH KAVANAGH has a guide to get you started.

Land of the lotus flower

WITHOUT A shadow of a doubt, Vietnam's capital city Hanoi is well worth a visit. Its centuries-old architecture oozes intrigue and the city holds a fascinating mix of Chinese, French and Southeast-Asian influences. At the heart of Hanoi is the brilliant Old Quarter by Hoan Kiem Lake where the streets are arranged by trade and motorbikes are everywhere. There's incredible street food to be found, and an atmosphere like no other, as the smells of fresh coffee, barbecues and spices weave their way to your nostrils.

Ho Chi Minh City

Also known still by its former name, Saigon, this is the largest city in Vietnam. The city is known for its French colonial landmarks, including the

incredible Notre-Dame Cathedral, made entirely of materials imported from France, and the 19th-century Central Post Office. A city of discovery that's bursting with energy, you'll marvel at the gorgeous temples, street stalls and markets but also its modern skyscrapers and boutique shops.

Hoi An

Famous for its handmade lanterns, this charming town caters well to children too, with the riverside all lit up at night and boasting games for all the family. Unfortunately, there's no airport in Hoi An, so you will need to either fly to nearby Da Nang and get a bus or private car from there. While incredibly touristy, the city still manages to keep its historical ancient town well-maintained

and preserved. Set around a canal, the former port-city is graceful and saturated in history with a mix of French colonial buildings, Chinese-style shopfronts and an iconic Japanese covered bridge.

Huế

Huế, the Imperial City (Hoàng thành) is situated near Hoi An in central Vietnam. One of the main attractions here is its incredible 19th century citadel with its royal palaces and shrines surrounded by moats. This city was also the battleground for the Battle of Huế, one of the longest and bloodiest battles of the American War. More than 5,000 civilians were killed.

One standout experience in Huế is its incredible food, which is known to be spicy but luxurious. There's also a focus on vegetarianism which stems from the influence of Buddhism.

Sapa and the far north

Sapa is an amazing town close to the Chinese border, head out of the town to lush rice paddy fields to experience the real countryside, perfect for trekking. Sapa is close to the Phang Xi Pang peak (3,143metres), which is climbable via a steep, multi-day guided walk. The area is known for its ethnic minorities, such as the Hmong, Tay and Dao tribes, who make up much of the town's local population.

To get to Sapa you can either go by overnight train or bus, but I think that you should splash out on the train if you're looking to get any kind of decent sleep (see 'The basics').

Ha Long Bay

This UNESCO world heritage site, surrounded by karst towers of limestone, is astonishing. Ha Long Bay can be very busy, which sometimes takes away from its natural beauty, but it's a place that will stay in your memory for years to come. It's quite often covered in mist, much to the disappointment of tourists, but skies are usually clear during March and May. Some of the best times for cruises can be during spring and autumn.

I'd also recommend you consider its quieter sister location, Bai Tu Long Bay. It looks the same, is nearby, but has far fewer tourists. A cruise will allow you to see the bay without the clutter ■

The basics

Travel

Considering how far away it is from Ireland, it's worth spending at least two weeks in the country. Internal flights are very affordable and worth checking out if you want to get from North Vietnam to the centre and to the south. If you're going by train, it's worth noting that each carriage is owned by a different company and can vary in quality. Check the options online, Livitrans is one that I would recommend.



Photo: Una-Minh Kavanagh

Visas

Paper ('loose leaf') visas are only available through the UK as there's no Vietnamese Embassy in Ireland (check out vietnamembassy.ie). You can order an e-visa online (it's cheaper) and collect it at the airport once you arrive. However, there's a certain amount of risk with this so you should research which companies are best to order from before you buy.

Vaccines

There are no compulsory vaccines but, if you're visiting more rural parts of the country, it makes sense to get vaccinated against Typhoid and Hepatitis A. Check out the advice at Tropical Medicine Bureau (tmb.ie) for more.

When?

Depending on your love of the heat or not (25°C is just perfect for me!), I would say that the best time to visit Vietnam is after Tết from February to April, or during autumn from August to October. The temperatures during this time are far more bearable, and rainfall is lighter.

While visiting during festivals might seem like a good idea to catch the atmosphere, flights to Vietnam and internal flights during key events like Tết Nguyên Đán (Vietnamese New Year) can be far more expensive.

Tết usually falls on a date between late January and February and during this time most Vietnamese take their holidays, so transport and accommodation options are often full, and prices rise significantly.

Cash

The Vietnamese Dong can't be bought in advance outside of Vietnam and, in truth, it's an awkward currency. One euro is around 28,000 Dong (a large bottle of water should be between 10,000 and 15,000 Dong, about 30 to 50 cent), and be aware that some denomination notes can look very similar to one another.

Vietnam is obsessed with bargaining and if you're not used to it, you may be in for a shock. Apart from restaurants, bargaining is a way of life in Vietnam with tourists and so you need to be on your toes. The general rule for gifts and things like that is to halve the asking price and work from there.

Remember also to tell your bank that you're heading to Vietnam so that your card won't accidentally get locked while abroad.



Photo: Una-Minh Kavanagh



Photo: dreamstime.com



Against type



Morgan O'Brien

It is a universal rule of storytelling that villains usually have more fun, at least until the good guys catch up with them. The same is true for the men and women that portray them on screen. MORGAN O'BRIEN looks at some of the great performances that have come from movie stars playing against the expectations of their audience.

WHEN HENRY Fonda arrived on the set of *Once Upon a Time in the West*, director Sergio Leone was unimpressed with the actor's attempts to make himself over as a villain. The actor, who had traditionally played the part of the virtuous and heroic, had made himself over with a beard and dark contact lenses, however Leone declaimed that he wanted the audience to see the blue-eyed Fonda gunning down an innocent family in the opening of the film.

There is something thoroughly enjoyable about watching actors playing against type and breaking out of what is often a carefully created mould or, indeed, the straitjacket of typecasting. It is often comfortable for audiences, and possibly performers, to maintain associations with actors in specific, unchanging roles. To watch an actor move away from their stock-in-trade performances can yield memorable results.

A notable example is the late Robin Williams. Originally making his name in stand-up and the *Happy Days* spin-off *Mork & Mindy*, his acting career in the 1980s and 1990s saw him in comedy roles, such as *Good Morning Vietnam*, *The Birdcage* and *Mrs Doubtfire*, or as sympathetic characters in dramas like *Dead Poets Society*, *The Fisher King* and *Good Will Hunting*.

However, in 2002 Williams performed something of a volte-face by taking roles in Christopher Nolan's *Insomnia*, where he played a murder suspect pursued by a jaded detective (Al Pacino), and *One Hour Photo*, in which he played a lonely photo technician who suffers a psychological breakdown.

In both, Williams assumes a familiar smiling persona but glosses this with a slick veneer of menace that successfully jars with audiences expectations and

earned him some of the best reviews of his career.

Like Fonda before him, Tom Cruise has traditionally occupied roles that position him as heroic and appealing characters – what Roger Ebert classified as 'Tom Cruise Pictures'. However, in Paul Thomas Anderson's *Magnolia* Cruise plays off his charming persona in the role of a bombastically misogynist pick-up artist in a performance that earned him a Golden Globe. Subsequently, Cruise played the dispassionate and menacing hitman, Vincent, in Michael Mann's thriller *Collateral*.

Dark

In this regard, it is very often that characters playing against type take on the role of the villain. Other examples include the usually avuncular Albert

Brooks' cameo as a vicious gangster in *Drive*; and similarly, Ben Kingsley as underworld enforcer in the darkly funny *Sexy Beast*.

Although slightly lighter in tone, Ralph Fiennes was enjoyably unhinged as a criminal boss in *In Bruges*. Fiennes also took on an uncharacteristic comedic role as the camp hotel concierge in Wes Anderson's *Grand Budapest Hotel*. The comedic opportunities of playing against type can also be seen in Val Kilmer's wry performance in Shane Black's excellent *Kiss Kiss Bang Bang*.

Colin Farrell has delivered two of his best career performances, shedding his screen idol sheen under the direction of Yorgos Lanthimos, in both *The Lobster* and *The Killing of a Sacred Deer*.

Taking a similar approach, and with some considerable physical transformation, both Halle Berry and Charlize Theron won Oscars for their performances in *Monster's Ball* and *Monster* respectively. Theron's performance as serial killer Aileen Wuornos, who was executed in Florida in 2002, is shockingly good.

Downbeat

Subsequent to *Magnolia*, Paul Thomas Anderson cast Adam Sandler in the romantic comedy *Punch-Drunk Love*. In opposition to the broad, formulaic humour of his usual roles Sandler's performance won him plaudits for displaying touches of vulnerability mixed with dark obsession.

Sandler has tried to repeat the trick of playing dramatic roles, somewhat less successfully, in *Reign Over Me* and *Funny People*. In 2017 he was convincing as the beleaguered son of Dustin Hoffman in Noah Baumbach's *The Meyerowitz Stories (New and Selected)*.

Elsewhere, Sylvester Stallone, in *Cop Land*, played against type, with the actor shedding his usual star turn in favour of a forlorn characterisation of the overweight and ineffectual sheriff. Jack Nicholson equally played in contrast to his traditional, familiar image in *About Schmidt* as a lonely retiree seeking meaning.

While movie stars sometimes draw fire for the predictability of their usual roles-based on the desire of audiences to see them repeat past glories – it is great to see them work outside of their comfort zone... or are they working outside our comfort zones?

Either way, magic happens ■

New releases

Tully (20th April)

Following on from their collaboration on *Young Adult*, director Jason Reitman, screenwriter Diablo Cody and star Charlize Theron reunite for this comedy-drama about the relationship between a mother and her children's nanny.



Avengers: Infinity Wars (26th April)

A further instalment from the seemingly inexhaustible, and potentially interminable, Marvel Universe involves the Avengers and the Guardians of the Galaxy uniting to, one imagines, get the girl, kill the baddies and save the entire planet.



The Leisure Seeker (4th May)

Helen Mirren and Donald Sutherland star as a couple on a travelling holiday in an old RV. One can expect elderly hijinks in another attempt to cash in on the "grey pound".



How to Talk to Girls at Parties (11th May)

Adapted from a short story by Neil Gaiman, the film tells the tale of an alien touring the galaxy who meets two young guys at a London house party.



Deadpool 2 (16th May)

Sequel to the knowingly, ironic comic adaptation *Deadpool*. Whether the continuing reliance on arch references to pop culture continue to wear well remains to be seen.



On Chesil Beach (18th May)

Ian McEwan adapts his own celebrated novella for this big screen treatment. Saoirse Ronan and Billy Howle star as the couple that must reflect on roads not taken and chances missed.



Solo: A Star Wars Story (25th May)

One of the ongoing side-project/spin-offs in the revitalised *Star Wars* series, which, as the name suggests, follows the early adventures of fan favourite Han Solo.





Raymond Connolly.

Yoga master Sting once said that, in pop music, you must “burn from the first bar.” Indeed, some burn so brightly as to burn out into the wastelands of the one-hit-wonder. Others show some staying power and manage to crank out a second hit before obscurity. This latter group receive very little attention. RAYMOND CONNOLLY stayed up all night on YouTube to explore the lesser known two-hit-wonders of the world.

Jimmy two times

I SHARE two connections with author Nick Hornby. The first is, of course, my abiding love of the Arsenal. The second is that I prefer to measure my age in seasons rather than years.

A few seasons ago I was trundling out of an Arsenal v Everton game with an Everton mate of mine. Everton had just scored a late equaliser through a young Spanish player named Gerard Deulofeu. As we left the stadium we were greeted by hordes of scousers chanting “Deulofeu is magic/You know-ow-ow/Ger-ard Deu-lofeu-oh!” to the tune of Scottish band Pilot’s 1974 hit single *Magic*.

Oh, ho, ho, it’s magic you know

Industrial strength anorak that I am, I gleefully pointed out that Pilot were a two-hit-wonder outfit. They followed *Magic* with another smash hit *January* and then disappeared without trace. The remaining two main players in the



Yazz: Pop-sweetened acid house.

band became subs for Bay City Rollers, the zenith of musical ambition.

The two-hit-wonder is an entirely different phenomenon than the often eulogised one-hit-wonder.

“If an apology is followed by an excuse or a reason, it means they are going to commit the same mistake they just apologised for,” according to author Amit Kalantri. It’s a good explanation of

the two-hit-wonder, despite ending with a preposition. A grammatical double standard that I just can’t get on board with.

The custodian of The Peter Principle himself, Mr Laurence J Peter observed “if two wrongs don’t make a right, try three,” which could explain the career of Norwegian ‘80s heartthrobs A-ha (more on that later).

Still, the poor old two-hit-wonder artists must find it troubling that they are not as celebrated as their one-hit cousins. This is despite having had twice the success. They’re certainly more difficult to find, but they’re out there.

Cheese lovers

Let’s namecheck a few. In 1987, lovers of cheesy music drooled over Cutting Crew’s *Died in your arms tonight*. As if that wasn’t enough middle-of-the-road camembert for one year, the follow up single *Been in love before* was a huge hit.

A year later, Ms Yasmin Jones (better known as Yazz... causing no end of grief for fans of Yazzoo) stormed the charts with a pop-sweetened take on acid

house with *The Only Way Is Up* quickly followed by *Stand Up For Your Love Rights* and then disappeared like an election promise.

In the US, *Wild Thing* and *Funky Gold Medina* were hits for Tone-Lōc, a sort of gravel-voiced



Tone-Lōc: Guitar-driven hip-hop gravel.

and guitar-driven Barry White for the hip-hop generation. Lōc went on to have a cameo role with Al Pacino in *Heat* as police informant Richard Torena. We can probably also give him some credit for inspiring Eurovision superstar Dustin the Turkey’s *Funky Ford Cortina*.



“At first I was afraid, I was petrified...” Gloria Gaynor immortalised by 1978 classic *I Will Survive*.

In the early ‘90s, even Mark Wahlberg got in on the double-hit act as Marky Mark and The Funky Bunch with *Wild Side* and *Good Vibrations*. Checking the archives, I’m relieved to see the legendary Lou Reed is credited as a writer on *Wild Side*, as it mercilessly samples most of Reed’s classic *Walk on the Wild Side* while Wahlberg unconvincingly tries to channel Eric B. & Rakim’s pioneering hip hop sound.

Borrowed clothes

Moving on from the musical mercenaries, there’s a very compelling argument to support the view that two artists – who would be considered as greats – also wear the two-hit-wonder badge with great distinction. Soul diva Gloria Gaynor really only had two big hits, a cover version of the Jackson 5 hit *Never Can Say Goodbye* in 1974 and (of course) the glorious hen-night anthem *I Will Survive* four years later.

As part of The Communards (formed with dancing clergyman the Right Rev Richard Coles) Jimmy Somerville also had success with *Never Can Say*

Goodbye and *Don’t Leave Me This Way*. An earlier UK top ten hit, *So Cold The Night* has, sadly, not stood the test of time as successfully, so they still qualify for my two-hit theory.

Walk... in silence

At this point I need to give a strong advisory note to my editor. His beloved Joy Division (highly overrated, endlessly eulogised) had two successful singles (neither of which appeared in their entire two-album collection) namely *Love Will Tear Us Apart* and *Atmosphere* (not to be confused with the Russ Abbott song of the same name). In fairness, it’s difficult for a band – who had more drummers in one calendar year than hit singles – to earn such misplaced reverie.

I had to disqualify Darts and The Rubettes from this column as it turns out they had many more hits. How bad did you have to be to only have two hit singles in the UK? Ricky Gervais explains: “Americans applaud ambition, they openly reward success. Brits are more comfortable with life’s losers.”



A-ha: Hunting high and low for a third US hit.

Stiff upper lip and tolerance I say. The Americans, for example, deride the magnificent Fine Young Cannibals for only having two hits, *She Drives Me Crazy* and *Good Thing*. What about *Johnny Come Home*, one of the great post-ska revolution tunes?

Winners vs losers

As for A-ha, the Americans claim that they had only two hits; *Take on Me* and *The Sun Always Shines On TV*. I am hunting high and low to find a third.

Speaking of Gervais, he was the lead singer and lyricist for an outfit called Seona Dancing in the early 80s. They released two singles, *Bitter Heart* and *More to Lose* which left little impression on the UK charts. The latter song, however, became a surprise hit in the Philippines in 1985. Who knew? ■



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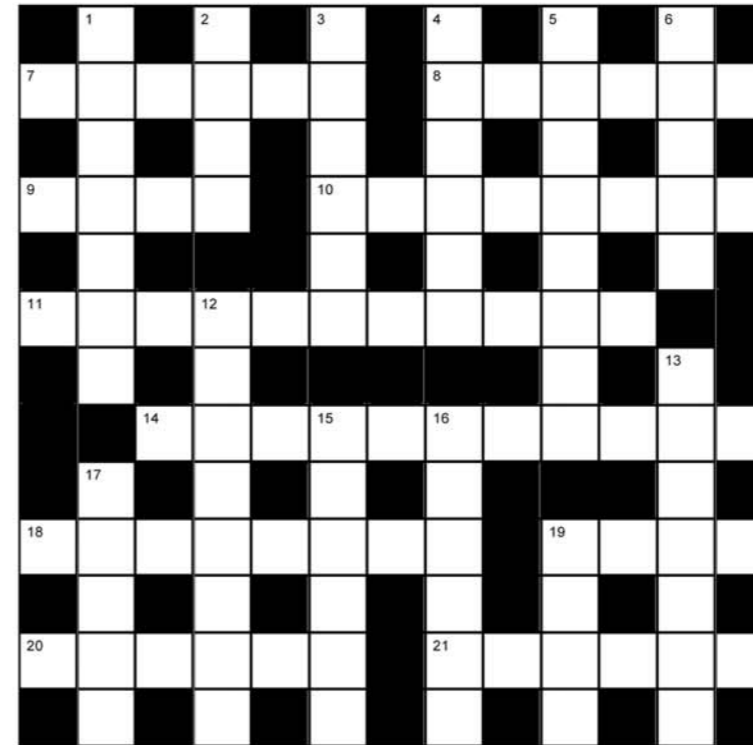
WARNING: If you do not meet the repayments on your credit agreement, your account will go into arrears. This may affect your credit rating, which may limit your ability to access credit in the future.

*Variable Rate of Interest. Loans are subject to approval. APR means annual percentage rate. Terms and conditions apply. CIVIL SERVICE CREDIT UNION LTD. IS REGULATED BY THE CENTRAL BANK OF IRELAND.

Win win win

WIN €50 PRIZE CROSSWORD

Win €50 by completing the crossword and sending your entry, name and address to Patricia Callinan, Fórsa crossword, Fórsa, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1, by Friday 1st June 2018. We'll send €50 to the first correct entry pulled from a hat.



ACROSS

- Domesticated goat, named after the former name of the Turkish capital (6)
- Brian -- aka Myles na gCopaleen and Flann O'Brien (6)
- Small purple fruit - doesn't sound fast (4)
- A widespread outbreak of pied mice (8)
- Gogglebox friends from Hull (5, 3, 3)
- Chewing insect found in Zurich (11)
- Champagne bottle equivalent to 3 litres (8)
- This after Trump, race and red (4)
- In golf, scored one over par on a hole (6)
- LXXX (6)

DOWN

- See 13 down (3, 4)
- Be gloomy over a bad poem (4)
- Low-income informal urban area in Brazil. (6)
- Imitated or reproduced (6)
- A person employed to assist someone in their own house (4,4)
- ...on the streets of London (The Smiths) (5)
- Addictive drug, often illegal (8)
- And 1 down, TV series starring Juliette Lewis, and film starring Timothy Spall (7)
- Weapons in North Dublin (6)
- The Prince of Denmark (6)
- The capital of Liguria (5)
- 1970's Manhattan new wave venue, associated with The Ramones, Blondie and Talking Heads (1, 1, 1, 1)

ISSUE 1 WINNERS:

Prize quiz: Concepta Guthrie, Ennis. Crossword: Caroline Foley, Carlow. Survey: Aishling Crossan, Portlaoise.

ISSUE 1 CROSSWORD SOLUTIONS:

Across: 7. Ordain 8. Acetic 9. Isle 10. Mufflers 11. Savoir Faire 14. From me to you 18. Islander 19. Diaz 20. Belize 21. Havana. Down: 1. Crystal 2. Nate 3. Ingmar 4. Raffia 5. Key Largo 6. Libra 12. Our Man in 13. Roxanne 15. Mad Men 16. Earthy 17. Aspen 19. Diva.

PRIZE QUIZ

WIN €50

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

YOU COULD have an extra €50 to spend by answering five easy questions and sending your entry, name and address to Patricia Callinan, Fórsa prize quiz. Fórsa, Nerney's court, Dublin 1. We'll send €50 to the first completed entry pulled from the hat.* All the answers can be found in the pages of this magazine.

- Which one of these is NOT a president of Fórsa trade union?
 - Ann McGee
 - Niall McGuirk
 - Tom Geraghty
 - Pat Fallon
- Playwright Lisa Walsh is a Fórsa member in which profession?
 - Education psychologist
 - Social worker
 - Special Education Needs Organiser (SENO)
 - Architect
- The Fórsa launch event took place on 15th March in which prestigious Dublin location?
 - Restaurant Patrick Guilbaud
 - The Mansion House
 - Crumlin Shopping Centre
 - Liberty Hall
- What does HSCP stand for?
 - Hospitals Scare Certain People
 - Helpful Steps Charter Performance
 - Hello Sean Care for a Peanut?
 - Health and Social Care Professionals

The small print*

You must be a paid-up Fórsa member to win. Only one entry per person (multiple entries will not be considered). Entries must reach us by Friday 1st June 2018. The editor's decision is final. That's it!

YOUR VIEW

WIN €100

How do you like *Fórsa*?

WE HOPE you enjoyed this issue of *Fórsa*, the magazine for *Fórsa* 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 Patricia Callinan, *Fórsa* survey, *Fórsa*, Nerney's Court, Dublin 1. You can also send your views by email to pcallinan@forsa.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 spring-summer 2018 issue of *Fórsa*?

- Excellent
- Good
- Okay
- Bad
- Awful

Comments _____

2. What did you think of the layout, style and pictures in the spring-summer 2018 issue of *Fórsa*?

- 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 *Fórsa*?

- 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 _____

Fórsa branch _____

The small print*

You must be a paid-up *Fórsa* member to win. Only one entry per person (multiple entries will not be considered). Entries must reach us by Friday 1st June 2018. The editor's decision is final. That's it!

You're better off in Fórsa

FÓRSA

Fórsa members can save a lot of money with our enhanced package of financial benefits provided or negotiated by the union. Some of these are free to all Fórsa members. Others are optional benefits, available only to Fórsa members, which can mean savings on insurance, salary protection, additional pension coverage and more.

Fórsa members are entitled to*

- €5,000 illness benefit when out of work for more than 12 months
- €5,000 personal accident insurance
- €5,000 critical illness or death benefit
- €5,000 death of a spouse or qualifying partner
- Evacuation or repatriation expenses of up to €250,000 for members who die or are seriously ill abroad, including emergency medical expenses incurred for members temporarily abroad as a result of death/illness
- Free legal help in bodily injury cases
- Free 24/7 legal advice helpline
- Free 24/7 confidential counselling helpline
- Free 24/7 domestic assistance helpline.

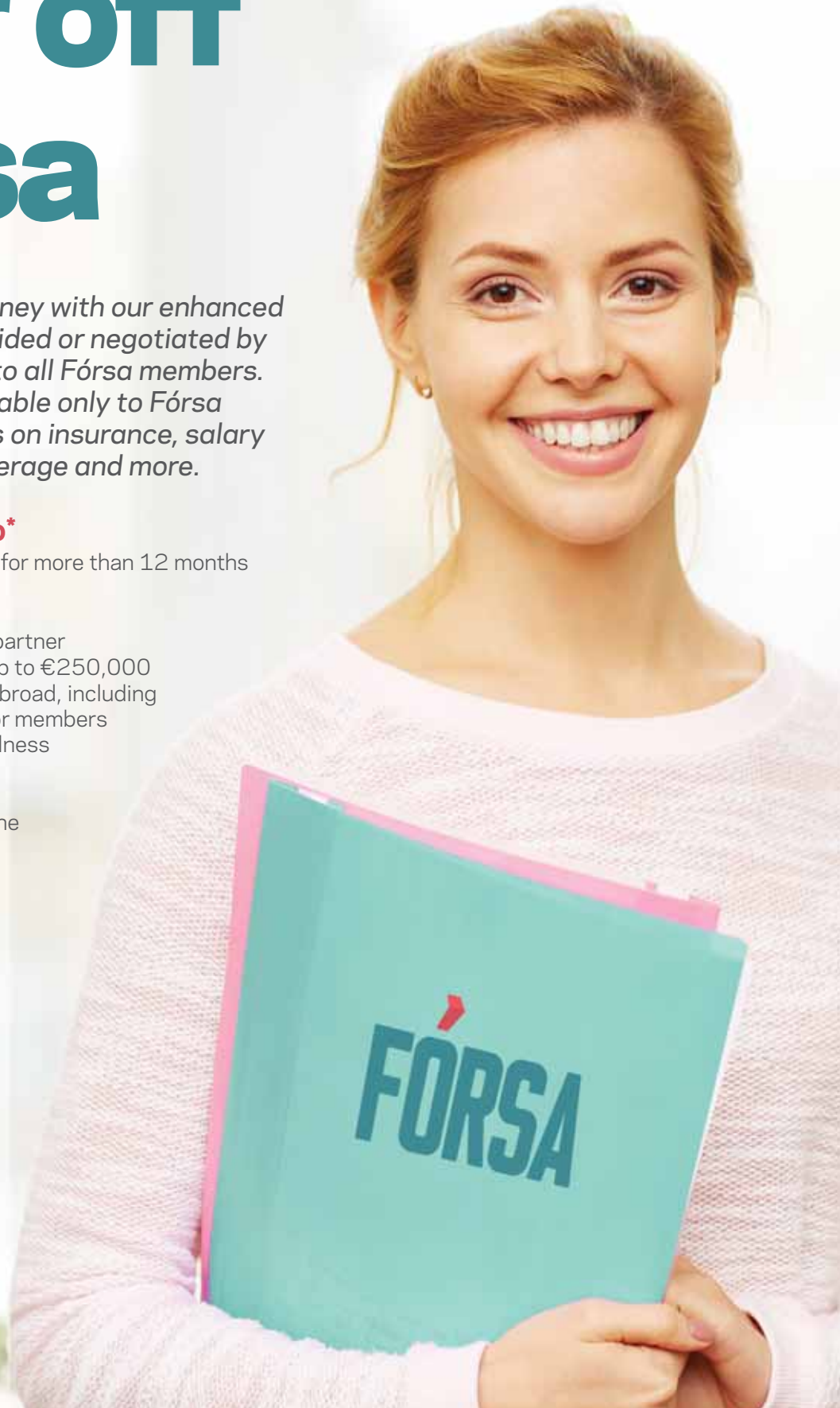
Members can opt in to Fórsa-facilitated financial benefits

- Car insurance
- Home insurance
- Travel insurance
- Additional pension benefits
- Salary protection and life cover.

Fórsa members can also apply for

- Gaeltacht scholarships for their school-age children
- Industrial relations scholarships
- Benevolent grants for members in financial distress.

*Six months continuous membership is required to avail of services. Financial benefits are strictly subject to policy, terms, conditions and exclusions. See www.forsa.ie for details.



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