

## New CEO for An Cosán

An Cosán, the leader in empowerment through education, is pleased to announce that Heydi Foster-Breslin has taken up as the new Chief Executive Officer. Heydi brings to An Cosán significant senior leadership experience across human rights advocacy, social justice campaigning, education and the management of social services.

Heydi's appointment marks the opening of a new chapter for An Cosán as it seeks to expand the reach and impact of its services nationwide 20 years after opening its doors in Jobstown in 1999. An Cosán provides people of all ages with pathways to learning, leadership and enterprise, offering a variety of programmes in early years education and care, parenting, community, further and higher education.

**Heydi Foster-Breslin said:** *"I'm honoured and excited to lead An Cosán into the next stage in its further development. It is a hugely respected organisation with a tremendous team and a great track record of making a difference for individuals and communities in providing educational opportunities. Like everyone in An Cosán, I believe passionately in the transformative potential of education, particularly in breaking the cycle of poverty and promoting social inclusion. There are people and communities across Ireland who need the supports and services An Cosán is so good at providing. We can evidence the difference our programmes are making and I would like to grow our resources, capability and partnerships to support more and more of those who can benefit."*

Heydi Foster-Breslin succeeds Liz Waters as CEO. Liz retires from An Cosán at the end of 2019. In her 24 years at An Cosán, Liz has blazed a trail in educational innovation and helped the organisation scale up from a local to a national organisation.

**Liz Waters said:** *"This is an exciting time for An Cosán as we bring our local experience and capacities to a much wider constituency across the country. I am confident that Heydi is the leader An Cosán needs to grow this development. Her experience will prove invaluable and will drive the organisation forward with energy and purpose."*

**Anna Durkan said:** *"On behalf of the board and myself I am delighted to welcome Heydi to An Cosán as incoming CEO. Her experience and dedication to education and social justice will ensure the continued success of An Cosán. On meeting Heydi the first thing that struck me was her warmth and compassion and I look forward to working with and supporting her when she steps into the new role."*

*It has been an honour and a privilege to work with Liz, her impact and contribution to An Cosán and community education are immeasurable and we are most grateful to have had the opportunity. The Board and I wish her all the very best in her retirement and the next exciting phase for her."*

### **About Heydi Foster-Breslin**

Heydi Foster-Breslin is a Commissioner with the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission. Most recently she was the Chief Executive Officer of Misean Cara, a development agency with an annual budget of €16 million that supports missionary development work in over 50 of the poorest countries around the world. Prior to this Heydi was the CEO at Exchange House Ireland National Travellers Service. Originally from Guatemala, Heydi has extensive global experience advocating for human rights and providing social and educational services to minority groups including children, women, refugees and IDPs, members of the Traveller community in Ireland, Latino and African-American communities, Sinti and Roma. She co-founded a school to address educational disadvantage among refugees, and Latino and African-American children in inner city Boston, USA. She has a Masters in Public Administration from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government.

### **About An Cosán**

An Cosán was founded by Dr Ann Louise Gilligan and Dr Katherine Zappone TD, Minister for Children and Youth Affairs, in 1986. It is a life-long learning initiative offering adult community education nationally and early years education and care locally and regionally to people on low incomes who could not otherwise avail of educational opportunities. An Cosán offers a supportive and holistic environment, rooted in the philosophy that 'Education is the key to eradicating poverty and social injustice'.