**Guest Speakers**



**Deirdre Ryan, Chronic Pain Ireland (CPI)**

Deirdre Ryan is the current Chairperson of Chronic Pain Ireland. Ten years ago Deirdre was diagnosed with fibromyalgia and rheumatoid arthritis. Fibromyalgia is a neurological syndrome. Symptoms include widespread chronic pain and sensitivity in tender points on the body, cognitive dysfunction or 'brain fog', fatigue and poor quality of sleep. Deirdre has followed a journey through the pain and depression of her condition to living well.

Deirdre is currently completing her studies as a Psychotherapist and Counsellor and has for many years played an active volunteering role within the mental health sector. She delivers talks around the country on chronic pain and self-management strategies that can help people better cope and manage their condition.

Research has found that 13% of the Irish population and 27% of Irish households are affected by chronic pain. Deirdre says *“I would encourage anyone on this journey to be their own advocate and fight. Exhaust every avenue you can, because no one else will do the work for you.”*

Chronic Pain Ireland (CPI) is the national charity providing information, education and support services to people living with Chronic Pain, their families and friends. CPI advocates on their behalf and works closely with all stakeholders.



**Meredith Raley, Disability Federation of Ireland (DFI)**

Meredith is DFI’s expert on the U.N. Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (UNCRPD). She joined DFI in 2016 having completed her Ph.D in NUI Galway and worked at the University’s Centre for Disability Law and Policy. There she worked on a joint project with the University of Leeds to create an in-depth analysis of the UN Convention for a Committee of the European Parliament as well as a report on the Convention for the Irish Human Rights and Equality Commission.

Meredith believes the Convention can, and will be, a force for positive change for people with disabilities in Ireland and her native USA. Meredith has a flair for bringing clarity to the UN Convention when she speaks to groups for DFI.

There is much more to Meredith however than the UNCRPD. She has many other responsibilities including the areas of transport, older persons and Personal Assistant (PA) provision and she compiles the DFI News Bulletin.