

## ONCE UPON A TIME AT AN ARC NI FAIRYTALE CONFERENCE



In keeping with the theme of the conference TILII Roving Reporters gave themselves a name.

The 'King of Hearts', John McAlvenny, 'Queen of Hearts' Kim Atcheson, 'Mad Hatter' Alex Parkinson, 'Cheshire Cat' John Mullan & 'March Hare' Philip Foster were Roving Reporters through the looking glass at the ARC NI Fairytale Conference at the Armagh City Hotel in Wonderland.

A long time ago in a land far away, a professor named Bamford did a 'Review of Mental Health and Learning Disability'. He called it "a valuing of all who have mental health needs or a learning disability", and he suggested a lot of areas for research and improvement to promote their values, to support their right to be treated as equal, and to make life better for everyone. These recommendations were further developed in the Bamford Action Plan launched by the Minister for Health, Social Services and Public Safety in 2009.

2016 was the time to review the Bamford Action Plan to see if professor Bamford's dreams had come true. Leslie-Anne, director of ARC NI, decided to get a lot of people together to talk about what had changed and what still needed to be done.

The Fairytale conference was started by Health Minister Michelle O'Neill, who talked about her vision for services for people with learning disabilities and mental health difficulties.

Lorraine Brown from the Department of Health explained the findings of the recent evaluation of Bamford, and RQIA updated everyone on their review findings relating to community-based learning disability services.

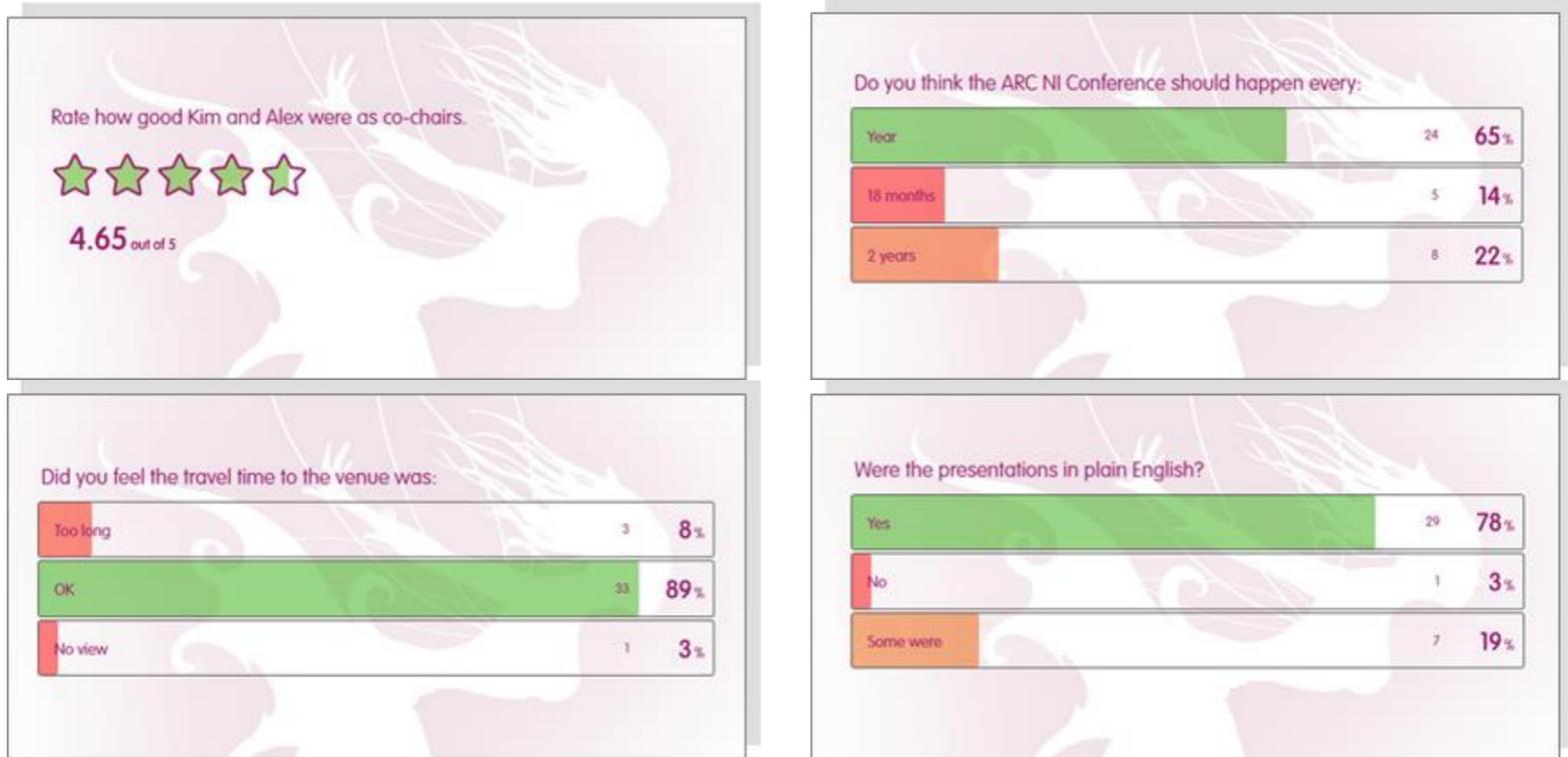
There was a lovely story with a happy ending from Clodagh Dunlop, who had been very ill but had never given up, and had turned into a beautiful butterfly. Everyone that the Roving Reporters interviewed said that they were inspired by her wonderful story and by how brave she was.

Roving Reporter Queen of Hearts Kim interviewed Sharon Butler from the Cedar Foundation, who said "I think the conference is really good and there are a lot of things we are all learning today, and I think it is especially brilliant that the TILII Group are involved. I've learned that it's very important to be patient and to listen to everyone's opinion." Sharon felt the conference was well organised, and having the TILII Group and other services users meant that it was more service user-led, which she considered very positive.

Iolo Eilian, Social Care Commissioning Lead for Mental Health and Learning Disability said, "I have learned loads. It was great to listen to RQIA because their report is due out and also the department because they are doing an evaluation.

I was really struck by Clodagh Dunlop talking about locked-in syndrome and it was great to see the co-chairing by yourself and Alex. There has already been a lot of feedback received today, which is great because it allows you to see what changes are still required."

The King of Hearts John McIlvenny, Queen of Hearts Kim Atchenson, Mad Hatter Alex Parkinson, Cheshire Cat John Mullan, and March Hare Philip Foster asked delegates what they thought of the conference, and they used a special app to collect the evaluations. Here are the results:



TILII members were really pleased that everyone scored The Queen of Hearts Kim Atchenson and Mad Hatter Alex Parkinson very highly for being co-chairs, and said how good they were.

Everyone made very positive comments about the workshops and the keynote speakers and said the Fairytale conference was a great opportunity for everyone to share good work and learn from each other.

The goals of the Bamford Action Plan have not been completely achieved, but many good things have happened, and life is improving for people with learning disabilities like us. There are still things to be done to make sure we have all the help and support we need to have the best life possible and this fairytale has not yet ended, it is still going on. ARC NI and its members with TILII will keep working together to make things better. Leslie-Anne was very pleased that everyone is working together to make sure the Bamford fairytale will have a happy ending, like all good fairytales should.

Agnes Lunny, Chair of ARC NI finished off the first day of the conference and thanked everyone for coming.



 WE HOPE YOU ENJOYED A PEEK THROUGH THE LOOKING GLASS AT THE ARC NI FAIRY TALE CONFERENCE

