

ACET News

Summer 2023

Collaborating in Hope: a new season of care

Hardships continue no matter the season — the weariness and financial impacts of the winter still linger on in the spring and as we peer into summer, but there have been some helpful shifts along the way. Care work has been able to open up more into outdoor and other community spaces,



where privacy and micro-respite can thrive. Ongoing pieces like housing/accommodation supports, finances, health management, addiction recovery and other mental health resources have been primary themes this season.

Another main challenge that has arisen during this time is family and relationship dynamics, with much of the pandemic impact seeing its toll on intergenerational relationships within households. Boundaries, communication strategies and emotional resourcing through a trauma-informed lens are work that is ongoing, yet a highlight of care support at this time. These are just a slice of how care work is presenting at the moment, magnifying the ever-present need for respite (whether a half day or longer) going into the summer months.

Helping clients to create and be grounded by anchors in their life, with whatever or whoever their resources might be, are also very accessible tools and instruments of self care and regulation that can be introduced every time we meet, as well as in their own spaces daily. With the emerging sunshine, there seems to be more capacity for hope and possibilities, so together with clients, we continue to collaborate in hope for whatever shifts the rest of the year might bring.



We are continuing to welcome new appropriate care referrals from hospital clinics and other partnering agencies. If you wish to learn more about how to make a referral or referral criteria, please feel free to contact the care team at any time for more information, or check out our referral form on our new website.

— Hansi Chisnall, Care Team

Thank you for sharing our work!

We are welcoming the summer with sunnier days and brighter nights, and hopefully much respite for our clients (*pages 1 & 2*). We are also paying tribute to two key people from ACET's early days (*page 3*) and sharing education and Migrant Plus news (*pages 2 & 3*). In other stories: podcasts currently on our playlists (*page 4*).



“Here Comes the Sun”: ACET trustee news

We are pleased to introduce our newest trustee, Church of Ireland cleric **Rev. Philip McKinley**.

Philip's relationship with ACET started in our office in O'Connell

Street when the intercultural Discovery Gospel Choir (Philip is a founding member and chair) rented one of our rooms for office and rehearsal space. From 2012-15 he worked as a Family Support Worker and Migrant Project Researcher for ACET. Philip has a keen interest in intercultural and interfaith dialogue and we are delighted that he will once again have an active role in ACET life.

Seasonal Changes

I've noticed a different pace as we exit the winter months. There is a slight shift in some of the client's mental health as the days become brighter and evenings are longer. However, individuals are still faced with emotional triggers by the spring anniversaries and birthdays of loved ones they've lost.

There have been many changes within clients' family homes as some family members are released from prison and treatment centres and returning home. These experiences can be both positive and challenging. It can also change family dynamics and add a lot of emotional and financial stress. During this season, moments of relapse have been more prevalent; however, in these examples, the relapse does not last, and the individuals continue to fight and work hard to overcome their addiction.

Poor physical health remains a strong theme; new health diagnoses and decreased mobility have been ongoing.



Some highlights this season include a client who successfully transitioned from independent living to supported housing which is a positive change for them. Other clients have been proactive and beginning to engage in activities like cooking and health classes, gardening, and personal development. Each individual has their journey, which may resemble or have similarities to others who participate in the ACET care project, but each journey has its own pace, challenges, and highlights.

Two new young client referrals have occurred this spring, and I look forward to working with them. I also anticipate a different rhythm as we enter the summer season and the warmer and brighter weather. I hope to carry out more client visits in outdoor settings, travel out of the city, and be in nature.

— Aishling McCormack, Care Team

Anti-Racism Training: getting to the heart

Over the past couple of years we have realised that a robust antiracist response is necessary in addressing migrant health and indeed for all of our projects. Training project workers on antiracism principles is a named action of the National Drugs Strategy and so we were delighted to receive funding from the **Community Services Enhancement Fund** to this end.

We are partnering with the **Institute for Antiracism and Black Studies** and we have had the opportunity to deliver a full day's training to workers from many agencies around Dublin North City and County. A smaller group have joined us for some extra days' training on the themes of storytelling and counter-storytelling.



It has been a joy to return to the setting of formal training since it was so much a part of our work for the first two decades. Delivering and receiving antiracism training is not for the faint-hearted. Our principal facilitator, **Dr. Ebun Joseph**, leads us deep into the systemic and structural aspects of racism and the challenge to develop an antiracist response. Our early findings are that most participants enter the room with an individualised understanding of racism that leaves little scope for its pervasive presence in our systems and institutions. We steadily challenge that view with dialogue and teaching that gets to the heart of what has happened in Ireland in the past few years. We are looking forward to further opportunities to deliver the training in the future.

A big thank you to Trinity Church Network for the use of the library in the Exchange.

— Richard Carson, ACET CEO

Hearing from the participants:

I found that this training, through the questions asked and the information provided, really helped me to see my own and structural biases... The relaxed non-judgemental setting and small group really helped us to be honest and open, which was imperative for learning. It made it more comfortable to ask uncomfortable questions in order to really understand and move forward.

"It was valuable to hear specific examples of racism in action and practical ways to change that."

"I want to challenge my discomfort and fear around having healthy conversations in white spaces and remind myself that racism was not created by me or the other person in the room today. It was something that was created over 500 years ago and something that is inherited."



Farewell and Thank You: we are grateful for the legacies of Trish Conway and John Thompson

Recently we said farewell to two people who passed away within weeks of each other. Both John Thompson and Trish Conway had a huge impact on the work of ACET, particularly in the early days when things were so difficult for us all. Interestingly enough they never crossed paths but their contributions live on.

John Thompson was our first accountant. **The work he did in helping us to set up the accounts with integrity and enabling us to navigate the system can never be underestimated.** He was a busy family man yet he gave freely of his time making sure that every detail was in order. All of this was done in a quiet way as John would never be one to draw attention to himself. This work freed those of us who were on the coal face to focus on our clients and other important issues knowing that our organisation was safe in his hands.



Trish Conway was the staff nurse in the respite centre in Cherry Orchard Hospital where so many of our early clients were cared for and died. **She was one of the most remarkable people in the field at the time as she demonstrated complete unconditional care to patients and their families, particularly when they were nearing end of life.** Every time I went to the hospital she had time to welcome me into her office and fill me in on what was happening, always with a smile and a great sense of humour. Without her input it would have been far more difficult to get to know people as everyone trusted her: if she gave you the heads up you were accepted. As a result ACET became known and respected and many new people were referred for care.



So to both the Thompson and Conway families as you grieve the passing of your loved ones be assured that they are a huge part of the ACET story and their legacy lives on today as ACET celebrates over 30 years of working in the community. Without people like John and Trish this could never have happened.

—Terrie Colman-Black is one of the founders of ACET Ireland

Drug abuse among migrant youths

Drug abuse is not rare in certain migrant communities in Ireland, even though more data is needed to figure out the importance of the phenomenon.

We have anecdotal accounts of young people falling into the trap of drug abuse and drug trafficking, especially carrying or selling on behalf of drug dealers. As a vulnerable sub-group, some migrant youths are particularly exposed to the risk of drugs abuse.

Studies are needed in order to paint a full picture of the situation of drug misuse and understand the underlying factors.

From our own observations, we have identified three factors that are worth being mentioned and further explored:

- Family conflicts or divisions, absence of a father figure (e.g. case of divorce or single parenting).
- Youth's search for sense of belonging, often pushed by peer's influence.
- Acculturation, which occurs as a result of exposure to a new culture. Young people, whose personalities are still being constructed, tend to adopt practices and behaviours of the mainstream culture. As we know, bad practices are easily copied, especially in deprived areas.

Further observation or research are needed to capture other critical factors. In the meantime, there is a need to start thinking of tailored efforts to prevent the spread of drug abuse among migrant youths, for instance the provision of information on drug abuse prevention and rehabilitation.

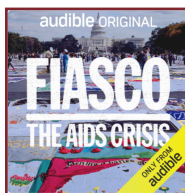
— Yvon Luky, Migrant Plus

Listen Up!

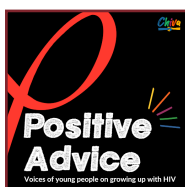
The ACET team have been listening to — and speaking on — a few podcasts recently that we want to share with you:



Poz Vibes is an Irish podcast for people living with HIV, their friends, family and allies, offering a safe place to share their stories. With a blend of empathy and humour, the hosts, Robbie Lawlor and Veda Lady, interview special guests on each episode. Now in season four, so there's lots to catch up on!



ACET founder **Terrie Colman-Black** has been listening to **Fiasco's fifth series, The AIDS Crisis**, which she describes as "an honest and accurate account of the emergence of the HIV/AIDS pandemic" when a diagnosis was tantamount to a death sentence. This American podcast explores what it took to make the public and the government care about the crisis.



Aishling McCormack recommends **Positive Advice** a podcast from Chiva, a UK-based organisation working to enhance the lives of young people living with HIV. In it "we hear from young people around the world who are growing up with HIV, exploring their experiences of family, mental health, healthcare environments and treatment, school and education, navigating relationships, and HIV activism".



Suicide or Survive host a podcast called "Connections: Conversations Worth Having" which explores themes of stigma in Irish society. **Richard Carson and Ann Piercy of GOSSH joined Paula Lawlor of SoS** for a wide-ranging discussion on HIV-related stigma that covered the positive impact of improved medication, the challenge of adherence and much more. Watch out for this yet-to-be-released episode.

ACET 2022 Care Work	
895 adult care visits + 52 volunteer-led visits	83 clients Eldest 81 years, youngest 15 months
283 family sessions + 24 youth sessions	62 counselling sessions
Easter packages, small gifts & cards + 27 Christmas hampers	48 times of respite, including 1/2 day outings and family camp

2022 In Review

Our 2022 Annual Report and audited accounts are now available to read on our website. If you would like a paper copy of either or both of these, please contact Lynn at dublin@acet.ie or on 01 8787700 and we will post them to you.

ACET 2022 Migrant Plus	
90 1:1 information sessions	66 group information sessions
5 topical presentations	115 personal support sessions
27 Q & A online sessions	43 networking & partnership meetings + 5 training sessions

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