



"You loved me without wanting to fix me and that's what saved my life"

ACET News

Summer 2024

Rhythms and Seasons: the ebb and flow of care work

We never know what the rhythm of a care call will hold until we walk through a door and are present with someone in their space. It is so important that when we enter these spaces we are well resourced, present and have energy and time.

Sometimes the need is for practicality. We read medical letters, fill out social welfare forms, explain directions for prescribed medication or help clients make a phone call for a new or missed appointment. These practical things are often part of a care plan, something a client has asked for help with on an ongoing basis. At other times they emerge or are prompted during our time together.

The care space can also be therapeutic as we listen and help clients navigate through challenges that often are without quick or straightforward solutions. We spend time together when people feel isolated, stuck and need to talk through sensitive and personal issues.

Just as we adapt within care calls, care relationships also have rhythms that change overtime. There have been many times we receive a call or text for immediate support; sometimes it is only when we arrive to a scheduled care call we find out that there is an emergency. We can have a set care plan with a client that lays a foundation for the support we offer but when a crisis occurs or the level of care needs change significantly, that client or family are prioritised.

In the spring we responded to a crisis with a family we have worked with for many years. The family had significant concerns for their adult child's mental health and safety. This had been something that had become an increasing worry for a long period of time. They said they felt lost and didn't know where to turn. They sought help within a trusted longterm relationship with an ACET volunteer and a staff member.

Together we agreed a plan which prioritised safety and intervention. The response had to be immediate and each family member needed individual care and
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Thank you for being part of our work!

Here we bring you into the rhythms of our care work, and the latest from **Positive Youth Project** (page 2). To read about some of our strategic planning, **Migrant Plus**, new funding and trustee news, see page 3, with the latest on **Matilda Project** and food packs on page 4.

If you are interested in more information on our care work, including our referral process or receiving a referral form, please contact either Hansi Chisnall, 085 7468447 or Olivia Corbett, 085 7722992.

ACET Care

Support for those living with HIV



Health advocacy:

- Accompanying to hospital appointments or HIV clinics
- Supporting around medication adherence and testing
- Linking with medical teams



Practical support:

- Supporting based on a personal care plan
- Helping with referrals to other appropriate agencies: welfare, education, addiction, housing, finances



Emotional support:

- Meeting at home or in a community space to confidentially discuss issues relating to HIV
- Addressing topics such as stigma, family dynamics, addiction, grief and loss
- Offering occasional times of respite



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ACET referral form

Positive Youth Project Launch:

In April, we proudly held the official launch of the Positive Youth Project (PYP). The event included speeches from **Richard Carson**, ACET CEO; **Aishling McCormack**, PYP coordinator; **Professor Ellen Crushell**, Paediatrician Consultant of Children's Health Ireland; and a virtual appearance from **Abi Carter**, the participant manager from Chiva. The event featured the short film "Life Growing Up", created from the real-life stories of young people who have grown up with HIV. It aims to increase awareness and understanding of the experiences and needs of these young people. **Malunga Yese's** stunning voice and beautiful performance closed off the successful event.



The Positive Youth Project continues to develop at a slow and steady pace. The project supports current service users through appointment accompaniment, one-to-one work, and home visits. Throughout PYP's work, we notice the repercussions of the lockdown on those who've experienced the COVID-19 pandemic during essential development years and how this plays out during their early adult years after the lockdown.

PYP continues to take on new referrals and will hold its first peer meet-up event for those 18 years and older this August. PYP is successfully creating a space where young people talk openly about their HIV outside of a clinical setting and can give voice to their challenges, such as medication adherence, self-acceptance around their HIV and sharing their HIV status with people in their life.

— **Aishling McCormack, Positive Youth Project**



Thank you to the **RTÉ Toy Show Appeal** for their funding for Positive Youth Project. **Acet Northern Ireland** also received funding from the Toy Show Appeal for their mental health and emotional wellbeing educational programmes for disadvantaged young people in training and employment programmes across Northern Ireland.

Rhythms and Seasons, continued from page 1:

support. Together with their family GP an immediate referral was made for inpatient longterm assessment and care.

The emotional toll this had on the family was significant. The practical implications around visiting and finances also had to be worked through. The reality of immediate interventions is that their impact still takes time, families still need longterm care and support, and emergency responses are just one part of a journey.

In navigating our response to these care needs we have to be acutely aware of our capacity, expertise and the times when new referrals are appropriate while we also respond to the rhythms and seasons that will continue to impact the lives of the clients we work with.

— **Olivia Corbett, adult care support**

Strategic Planning

The challenge and chaos of Covid meant that carrying out detailed strategic planning for our projects has been unrealistic or impossible for a number of years. However, we are now rectifying that and are currently carrying out a strategic review of all our work.

At the highest level, we are reflecting on our mission and vision as we look to articulate the story of HIV and our place within it.

At the middle level, we are exploring the objectives of each of our projects and the hope we hold for those we serve.

At the lower level, we are developing project goals that give confidence to our team while avoiding the traps of measurement and managerialism. Keep an eye out for the launch of a new strategic plan later this year.



In May the ACET team spent a day reflecting and strategising in the lush surroundings of The Sanctuary in Dublin 7. It was refreshing to soak up the peace and the beauty in this north inner city oasis while spending time together articulating our values and goals.

We are grateful to Benefact Trust for their recent grant for Positive Youth Project.



Trustee News: We are delighted to welcome Maria Katanga Noble to our board

She has over seven years' experience in comprehensive management of HIV/AIDS in her home country of Uganda, with a focus on coordinating clinical and community nutrition services. Her work led to a deeper

understanding of the complex interconnections between HIV, malnutrition, poverty, discrimination and self-stigma.

She is currently researching nutrition product development addressing malnutrition given compounding challenges such as HIV/AIDS, lactose intolerance and supply chain disruptions.

She has recently relocated to Ireland with her husband and enjoys exploring Ireland's countryside and history.



Check and Chat Van Update

The Check and Chat mobile testing van volunteers had a brain storming session as well as providing testing services at Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre and the Health and Wellness Fair in June in the LinkedIn building.

Altogether 59 rapid tests were done.

Volunteers, *above*, with **Chipo Harper** on the right, at Outhouse LGBTQ+ Centre.

— **Chipo Harper, Migrant Plus**

MATILDA PROJECT



Matilda Project Update

On 14 June Unicef reported that less than 1 in 10 children in Zimbabwe consume a daily diet containing 5 or more food groups, with the frequency required to ensure optimal growth and development*. Matilda Project provides 287 children with a food pack (containing 4 food groups) each month: 104 of the children have lost both parents, 73 are living with HIV, 110 are termed “vulnerable” due to their household’s poverty, often because their remaining parent

is unable to work, or because they stay with a grandparent while their parent(s) migrated to find work, or other reasons.

Praise (*on right*), aged 9, is in Grade 4 of primary school and Matilda pays his school fees and funds a food pack for him each month. His father and mother passed away long back. He has no one to take care of him except his grandmother, Ebbie, who is now old and not able to work for him. He faces difficulties with school uniforms, clothes and food, especially this year: there is too much drought.



The school principal of a primary school in a neighbouring village to those our partner, **Willard Ndlovu**, serves with his community care project, wrote to ask for help: “The current drought situation has made life difficult for the learners as they are failing to get decent meals at home.”

When Willard has collected the numbers of extra children in need, we want to see if we can extend the feeding programme, even until the drought ends, to prevent these children from becoming severely malnourished. Food packs cost approximately €15; primary school fees

cost \$35 per term; secondary cost \$70.

— **Wendy Phillips**

* See <https://www.unicef.org/zimbabwe/press-releases/580000-young-children-zimbabwe-are-living-severe-food-poverty>

The Matilda Project is a project of ACET Ireland, set up in 2001 as a response to HIV in Zimbabwe. We help fund home-based care, food packs and support groups for adults living with HIV.

I am in Form 4. I would like to thank you for helping me for paying school fees. I live with my grandfather, grandmother. My mother died when I was 8 years. I did not know my father, he left when I was so young. I have difficulties in buying uniforms and books. I want to become a professional scientist so that I can support my family financially. I realised that my family is poor, so I want to pass [O levels] and make it more better.

— **Mzingaye, 14 years**



ACET’s 2023 audited accounts and 2023 annual report are both available to read on our website. Please contact the office if you would like a hard copy of either: dublin@acet.ie or 01 87 87 700 to leave a message.

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