



ACET News

Autumn 2024

Peer Support: producing rewarding partnerships

The peer support work has produced rewarding partnerships in keeping with ACET's way of being "WITH" the people we serve as an organisation.

I was privileged to be part of the United Methodist Church women's fellowship revival with about 25 migrant women. We had a time of worship, sharing God's word, praying for one another and eating together.



Some brought their children because of the childcare challenges that many migrants live with. Creches and preschools have limited capacity and while settled Irish parents have challenges getting places, it is a mammoth task for a migrant mother. They are often asked why they didn't book a place for their child when the child was born, but it is difficult for them to be booked into childcare services early because:

1. they did not expect to find themselves living in Ireland, and
2. even the women who have been actively recruited for their professional skills face discrimination in access.

We discussed racism in their various places of work and the impact that has on their health, both physical and mental. Parenting is a challenge in a foreign land where societal values and norms are in conflict with home values.

Period Dignity

The feminine hygiene products were delivered to La Grace Fellowship, Trinity Church, Praise Tabernacle, The Salvation Army Kings Inn, St Thomas Indian Orthodox Church, and St George and St Thomas Parish Church.

A review of the pilot phase showed that the need is real and necessary. Some products were more popular than others and this will inform the restocking. A few ways are being explored on how the work can continue sustainably.



Thank you for being part of our work!

It's all go with **Peer Support**, **Period Dignity** (page 1) and the **Check and Chat HIV testing van** (page 3). Read about our **Care Work** on page 2 along with a message from Richard Carson. For some thoughts on community from **Migrant Plus**, the ACET team away day and trustee news, see page 3, with the latest on **Positive Youth Project** on page 4.



Above: Some of the contents of Period Dignity packs, with volunteers (left) assembling them and in place in a local church, right.





Recently I had a nasty fall off my bike that thankfully only resulted in superficial injuries. A colleague, having shown much empathy for my situation, said “Beware of a man who hasn’t got a limp.” It was a great reminder of our frailties, the importance of humility and not deluding ourselves that we are always, or ever, in control.

These lines from Micky Scott Bey Jones’ poem “An Invitation to a Brave Space” were recently used in a training event we delivered:

We will not be perfect.
This space will not be perfect.
It will not always be what we wish it to be
But
It will be *our brave space together,*
and
We will work on it side by side.

The stories in this newsletter are not about perfect spaces and they do not involve any perfect people. This truth is not a limitation, rather it gives us the freedom to allow love and trust to flourish. Paradoxically, it is only when this imperfection is embraced that real transformation occurs. We hope you enjoy reading the stories, thank you again for your support and we hope you are inspired in your own uneven and shuffling walk.

— Richard Carson is ACET CEO

Wholly Caring: support is needed no matter the season

Summer has had its familiar rhythms and rituals: schools are out and we are often adapting to meeting with families in a different way: supporting parents and young people through transitions, back to school needs and practical resources such as childcare when lone parents are seeking employment. Assisting with summer respite opportunities, such as the Dublin Family Outreach camp in Drewstown, are beneficial to families looking to take some time away from their environment, make memories with their family members and have some much needed fun.



Though summer can bring opportunities for light and laughter, it can also bring with it some disjointedness and disruption. Summer illnesses of bugs, viruses and Covid have caused their own level of disruption this year. One other theme that the care team have noticed is the impact on health inclusion and access during a season when many medical professionals are on leave, in flux due to internal changes, and seasonal or chronic illnesses cause missed vital appointments. Medications and access to them are changing, impacting some of our older clients, with minimal explanations or aftercare available. This can result in poor medication adherence, frustrations and confusion at appointments, and a need for a harm reduction approach in certain circumstances. Our best role in this is often the walk to or from the clinic, exploring what is most needed for the individual over a cup of tea and within a supportive relationship.



There has been a noticeable gap in holistically treating individuals in medical settings, where medication might be the only offered response, so bridging this gap by supporting the whole person and their specific lifestyle, environment, community and other realities, helps us provide a more client-centred and personalised approach in our care work. We often remind ourselves of the model of “taking more time to cover less ground” — by which we aim to support individuals wholly, relationally and collaboratively within their own unique context.

Our Care team have recognised the need for support with other challenges this summer, including:

- **Housing, homelessness and accommodation** concerns: helping to resource and advocate around these issues, including accessing welfare supports and exploring all options available.
- An increase in **mobility-related barriers**, such as housing needs and independent living: both impacting mental health and isolation.

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Is community enthusiasm declining?

Community activism can be defined in many ways, but the common element is community members coming together to address an issue pertinent to them.

This is a process which often starts with a few people taking initial leadership in order to motivate and mobilise the human energy available in the community to move into action. Issues to be solved need to be clearly identified and be of interest to the whole community or at least to some important components of it.

For community activism to be effective, voluntary community involvement is essential. This process is applicable to any community if a tailored approach is used.

Community activism may play a key role in addressing issues affecting the health of a community. Unfortunately, for many years now, we have noticed some signs of decline in migrant enthusiasm to participate in community initiatives. Many reasons can explain this, the most common being a change in priorities: people tend to focus on more pressing needs such as the housing crisis, financial hardship, precarious employment (low paid jobs, multiple jobs, more physically exhausting jobs), uncertainties around residency status, a study workload, the burden of child-rearing and so on. All this erodes migrant ability to participate in other activities. This changing reality requires adaptative approaches to mobilise migrant communities. Migrant Plus continues to explore new ways to engage and fully support these communities throughout Dublin.



— Yvon Luky, Migrant Plus

Team Away Day

Several times a year the ACET team gathers and gives a day to be renewed and to reflect on different aspects of our culture and work. In July we visited the Margaret Alyward Centre in Glasnevin, which was a beautiful space to be together in, reflecting on our values (drinking from the same cup; take more time, cover less ground; offer amazing hope; and beginning, middle, end, rest), discussing mutuality in our work, while focusing on “there is enough; we are enough”. It was a refreshing time of listening, sharing, walking, praying and eating together.



The Check and Chat Van

The Check and Chat Van testing service has trained and deployed volunteers to provide mobile testing to marginalised people groups. The service is tailored to suit the the venue where the service is required. It can be the whole van or unmarked cases brought into a space.

The Equal Check and Chat van recently in Dundalk Institute of Technology. Photo courtesy HIV Ireland.



Trustee News: We are delighted to welcome Dr. Caroline Munyi to our board

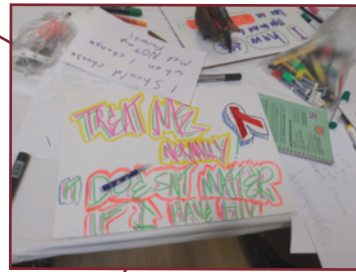
A gender, peace and development specialist, Caroline started her career in Kenya working on integrated rural development programmes with communities in the remote eastern part of the country. After coming to Ireland, she completed a BA in Development Studies in Kimmage Development Studies Centre (now part of Maynooth University) then went on to Trinity College where she pursued a Master of Philosophy and then a PhD in International Peace Studies, specialising in the area of Masculinities and Violence.

Here in Ireland Caroline has coordinated Female Genital Mutilation (FGM) projects for AkiDwA and ActionAid Ireland. Currently Caroline is the Coordinator of AkiDwA’s Migrant Women Health Programme.



Freedom 2 Be

Aishling McCormack accompanied five Irish young people from ACET's **Positive Youth Project** to Chiva's Freedom 2 Be camp in the UK this summer. With the theme, 'Know Your Rights', young people aged 11-17 came together for workshops on issues related to growing up and living well with HIV, creative activities encouraging self-expression, and outdoor activities to help build confidence and encourage teamwork.



Wholly Caring, continued from page 2

- Accessing and preparing for **further education, employment and managing finances**, especially for young adults entering the workforce for the first time.
- **Cost of living** concerns continue on: there is now no available financial excess compared to previous years, which is often set aside for funeral costs, back to school needs, household items, Christmas or occasional holidays. Day-to-day living costs are still impacted due to inflation and debt from previous winter months. This affects essential items such as food, clothing, transport to appointments, utilities, household appliances, over the counter medicines and other household needs.

We're also listening to the needs of the community, especially within HIV clinics and the North East Inner City, to help us best assess where ACET's care work can help address specific HIV-related care needs and increase our visibility within those spaces.

— Hansi Chisnall, Family Support



Scan the QR code for information on our care referral process and to access a referral form.

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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