

The Red Ribbon Project Limited

Annual Report

2012



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Manager's Report

2012 was a year of great change within the Red Ribbon Project: there were a lot of personnel changes as well as a change in the structure of the organisation.

Working chronologically then Gráinne Woulfe left on maternity leave in February and Teresa Normile joined the team in her absence. The post of Office Administrator was created to replace the Receptionist role and Cillian Flynn was appointed in July. The HSE requested the Red Ribbon Project take over the services provided previously by Rainbow Support Services and Patrick McElligott was appointed Rainbow Development Worker at the end of October. Gráinne returned, following a few months at home with her son, in December but we didn't say goodbye to Teresa entirely; she continues to work part-time with us on Saturdays with the youth group.

In addition there were changes to our Board of Management: Karen O'Donnell O'Connor, Aisling Murray, Jennifer O'Brien and Cillian Flynn retired at the 2012 AGM in May. I would like to thank them all for their hard work in steering the Red Ribbon Project during their tenure. As a result of the merger with Rainbow Support Services, Lou Dennehy and Marianne Mulcahy – both Directors of Rainbow Support Services – joined the Board of Red Ribbon Project.

There were also key developments regarding the needs of our service users: as Rainbow Support Services had closed its doors in December 2011, we saw an increase in the number of people who identify as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Trans (LGBT) using our services. There was an increase in the amount of street sex work so we re-instated our street outreach programme, working in conjunction with Doras Luimni. We also launched a rapid HIV test service on 1st December in support of the World Health Organisation (WHO) getting to zero campaign.

In addition, as is evident in the following pages, a great deal of work was completed; I would like to take this opportunity to thank the staff team for their support and commitment throughout 2012.

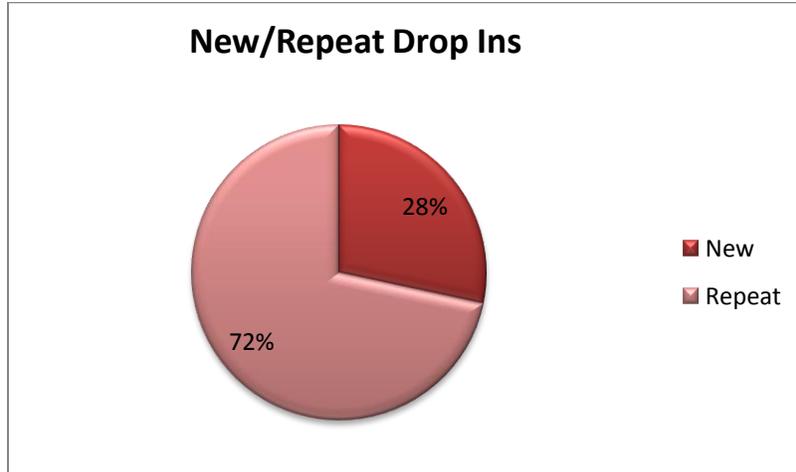


National Condom Week 2012 Window Display

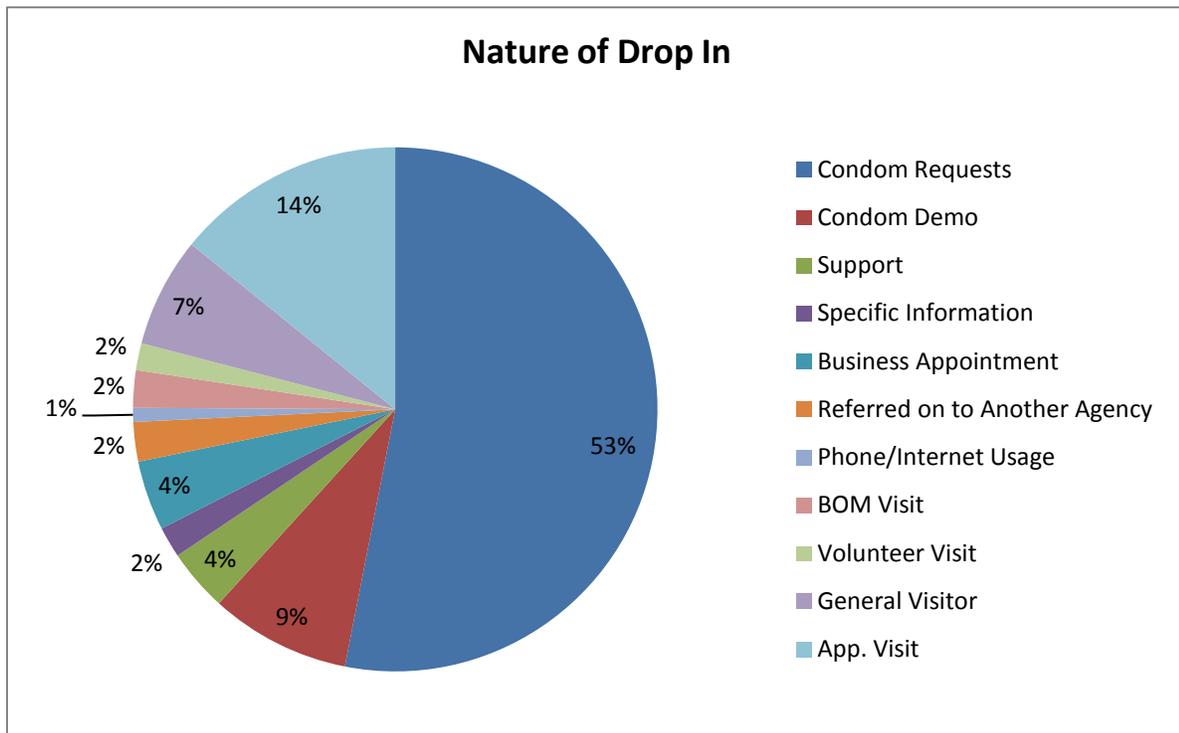
Drop Ins

Since the appointment of the Office Manager, the clients now see a familiar face each time they attend for an appointment and any service user that avails of the free condoms provided are now meeting the same person thus eliminating a feeling of embarrassment each time they visit the office.

2852 people dropped in to the Red Ribbon Project office during 2012; of these 809 (28%) were new people to come through our doors.



The nature of drop ins varies throughout the year with our free condom service being the most popular at 53%. Other issues include appointments with members of the support team, visits by volunteers, or referrals to other agencies.



Geographical Breakdown of Drop Ins

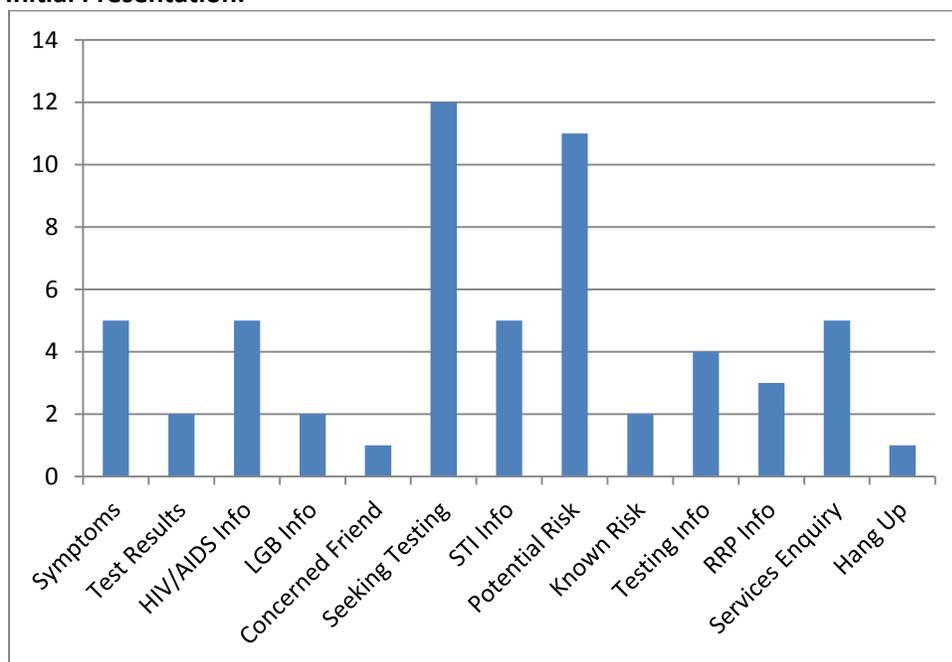
Irish people make up the majority of our service users followed by Africans and then Europeans; this statistic is repeated throughout our service provision.

Ireland	2608	91.44%
Eastern Europe	29	1.02%
Western Europe (excl. Ireland)	23	0.81%
Northern Europe	0	0.00%
North America	0	0.00%
South America	11	0.39%
Africa	178	6.24%
Middle East	1	0.04%
Asia	2	0.07%

Helpline

The Red Ribbon Project helpline received 51 calls during 2012. These were received on the dedicated helpline number, or the office line, and a few via email. Of the 51 calls received 88% were making contact with us for the first time. Below is a graph showing the reason for the call.

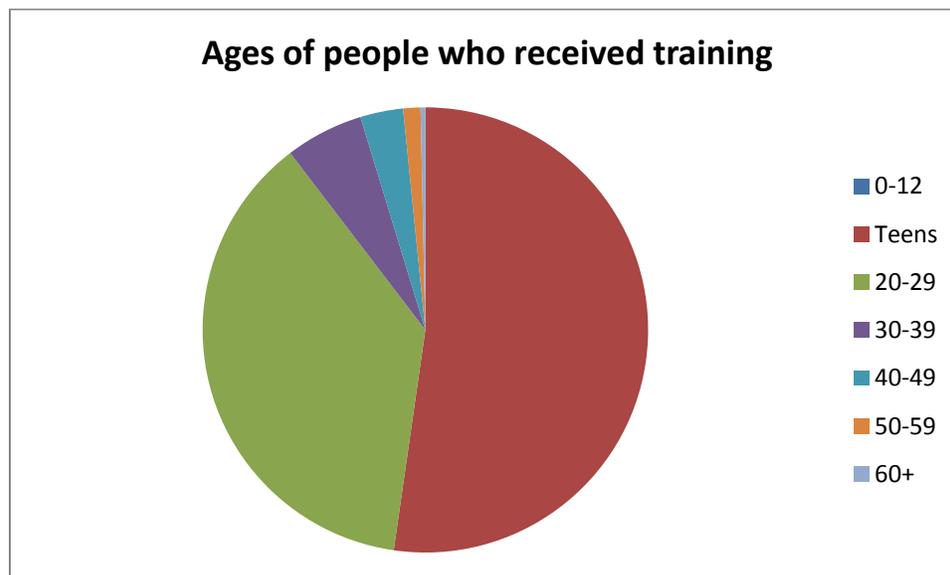
Initial Presentation:



Sexual Health Training

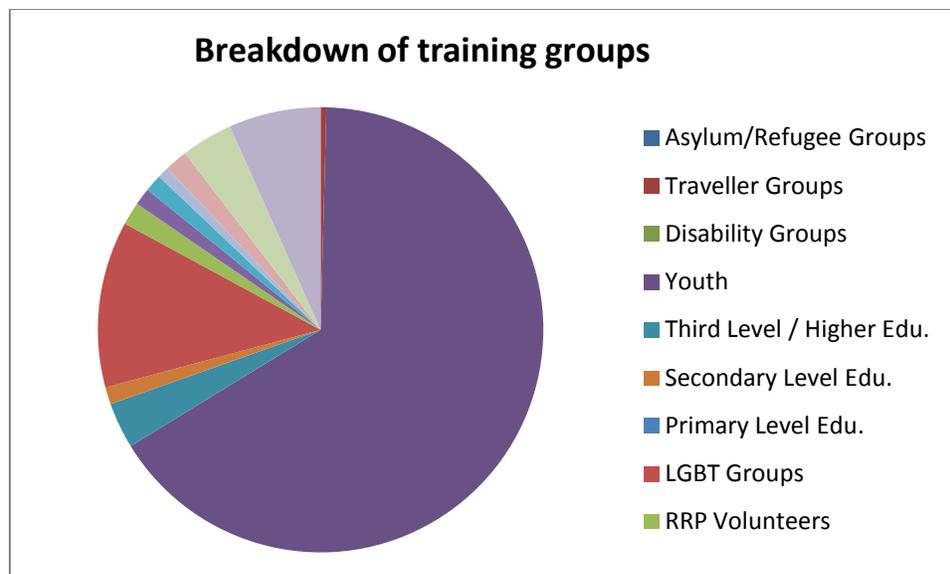
The Sexual Health Project Worker (SHPW) carried out the following education and prevention activities in line with the Red Ribbon Project Strategic Plan and the education and prevention actions of the National HIV and AIDS Education and Prevention Plan (2008-2012):

- Sexual Health Education and Training was provided for a variety of population groups including young people, adults, Travellers, parents and carers, homeless, LGBT people and health professionals. The training included workshops in the areas of sexual health and sexuality, sexual language, messages, values and behaviours, STIs, HIV and contraception. The SHPW continued to capacity build with people working in the youth, education and health sectors in the area of sexual health. The Red Ribbon Project provided a total of 235 workshops to 2313 participants with ages ranging from 13 to over 60.



Trainee Comments

- 🚩 'I really enjoyed the talk, it was good craic and interesting'
- 🚩 'I love how you're so open about everything'
- 🚩 'Thanks for being honest with us'



- The Project continued to provide an accessible and appropriate sexual health service for young people through the provision of the Condom Demonstration (CD) Clubs. A total of 358 new members accessed this service in 2012. The CD Clubs also provide a mechanism whereby young people have improved access to sexual health information as well as condoms.
- The SHPW worked with a number of third level institutions including Limerick Institute of Technology and Trinity College Dublin to co-ordinate and provide practice placements for social care and social work students.
- The SHPW continued to work in partnership with the third level and further education institutes in the region to provide awareness raising days and workshops with students and student representatives. This included the distribution of HIV and sexual health related information and free condoms and lubricant, as well as capacity building work with the Student's Unions Welfare Officers.
- The Project also supported national events and awareness raising campaigns including Durex National Condom Week, the USI Sexual Health Education Roadshow, and www.man2man.ie (the national HIV programme for MSM).

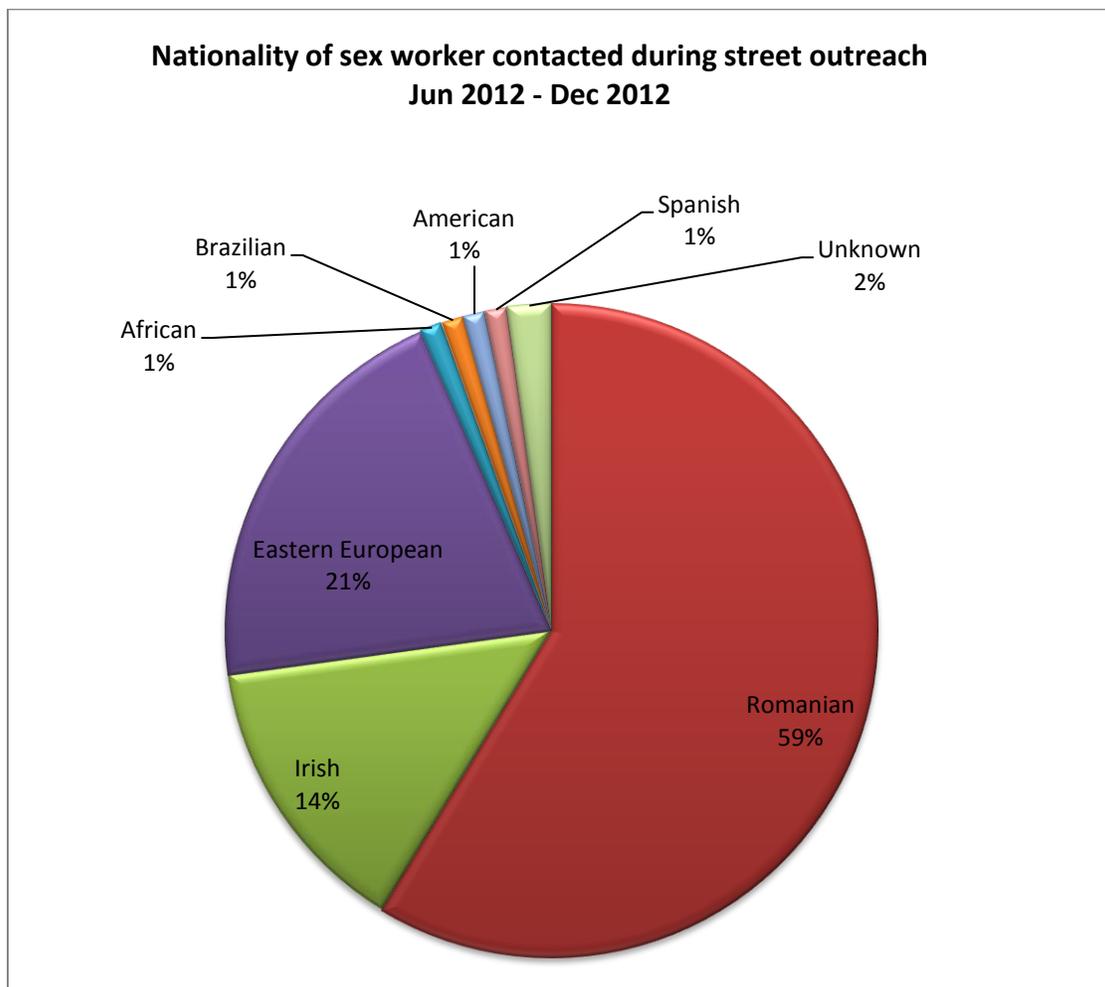
Sex Work Outreach Programme

June 2012 saw the launch of our new Street Work Outreach Team. We have recruited and trained a team of 8 volunteers, in conjunction with Doras Luimni, as part of an anti-trafficking initiative. Working in pairs we supply free condoms to street workers and hope to engage them in conversation in order to build up trust and potentially provide them with further support services.

In the 6 months of 2012 the sex work outreach programme was running (June through December) we:

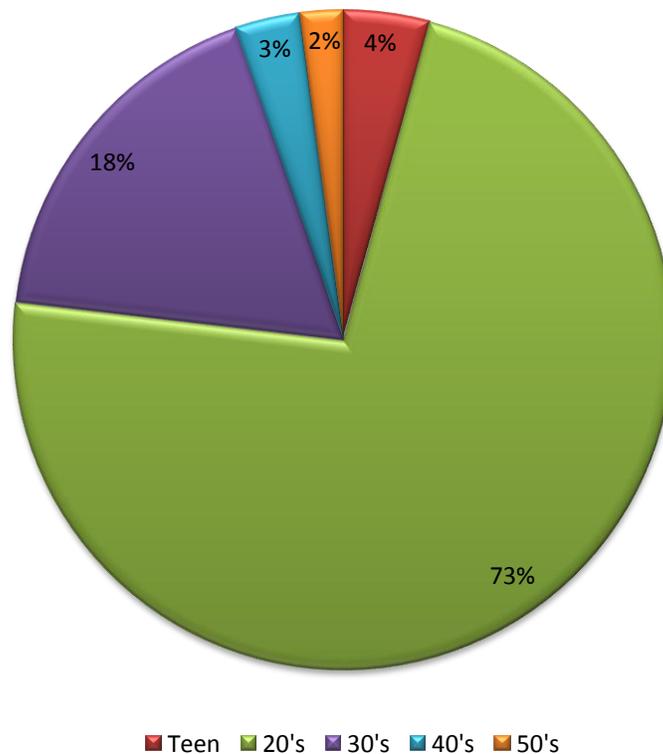
- ✂ Handed out 92 packs of condoms (6 per pack)
- ✂ Conducted 26 sessions of street outreach to sex workers
- ✂ Had 98 separate face to face contacts with sex workers on Limerick City streets

These contacts were mainly with women; the majority of whom were Romanian speakers.



4 were teenagers (18 or 19), 69 were in their 20s, 17 were in their 30s, 3 were in their 40s and 2 were in their 50s.

Age of sex worker contacted during street outreach June 2012 - Dec 2012



It is clear from our work that many of these women are being coerced and controlled by males and females in their families. Most of them have low levels of English, some are pregnant, and many have children at home to look after.

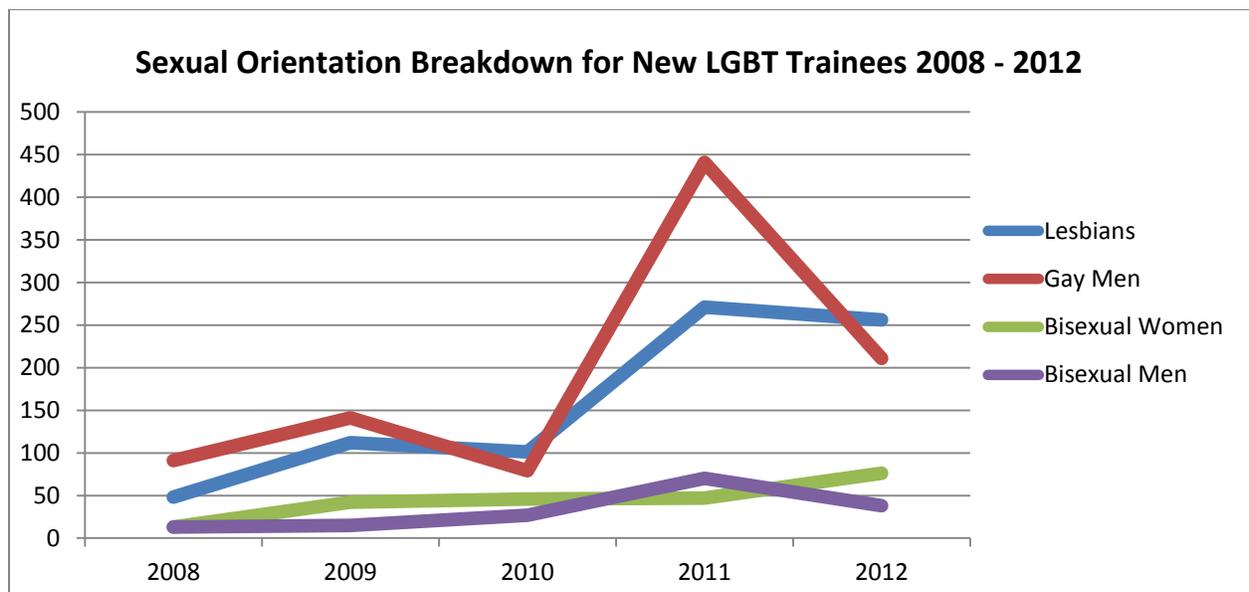
Our hope is that we can continue to do this work and also identify safety channels for women who may identify that they are either being trafficked or forced and therefore need to exit quickly.

We are aware that many sex workers in Limerick City work inside and the population we are meeting are not representative of the whole sex worker population in Limerick.

In addition there were a total of 143 visits from people who identified as sex workers who dropped into Red Ribbon Project, usually for condoms; these sex workers are working inside in apartments rather than on the street. Although 123 visits were from people we already knew, there were 20 who were new to the Project. The majority of these visitors were female (135 - 94%), with only 8 (6%) men; 103 identified as Trans female (72%). We provide bags of 50 condoms for sex workers; in 2012 sex workers visiting the Project took 84 bags, that is 4,200 condoms.

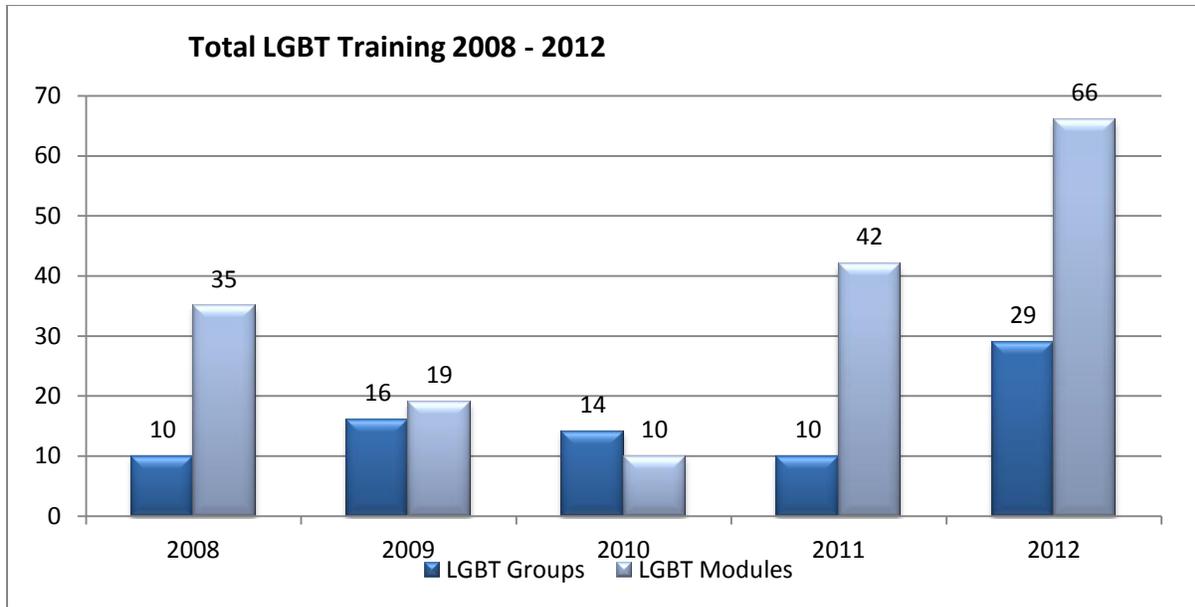
LGBT Community Support Work

2012 showed a change in how Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual, and Trans (LGBT) people accessed our service. Some of this must be attributed to the closure of Rainbow Support Services in January 2012, and also the addition of a Rainbow Development Worker post to the Red Ribbon Project team in October. Since 2008 when we strategically targeted improvement of LGBT inclusion, we have seen a steady increase of numbers of LGBT people accessing Red Ribbon Project through counselling, support, drop-in, or training. This year despite a decrease in the total number of people attending our training, we experienced a significant increase in both the number of LGBT training groups we accessed, and the number of LGBT training modules provided.

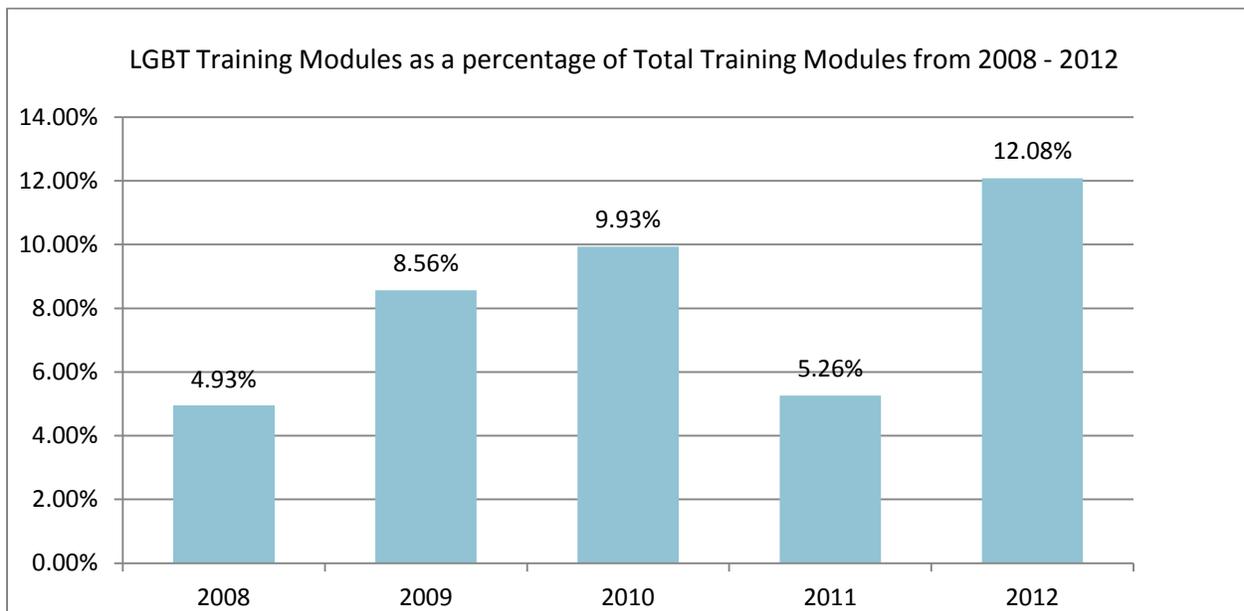


There was a decrease in gay men accessing our training, from 441 in 2011 to 221 in 2012, showing that we need to specifically target the at risk group of men who have sex with men (MSM).

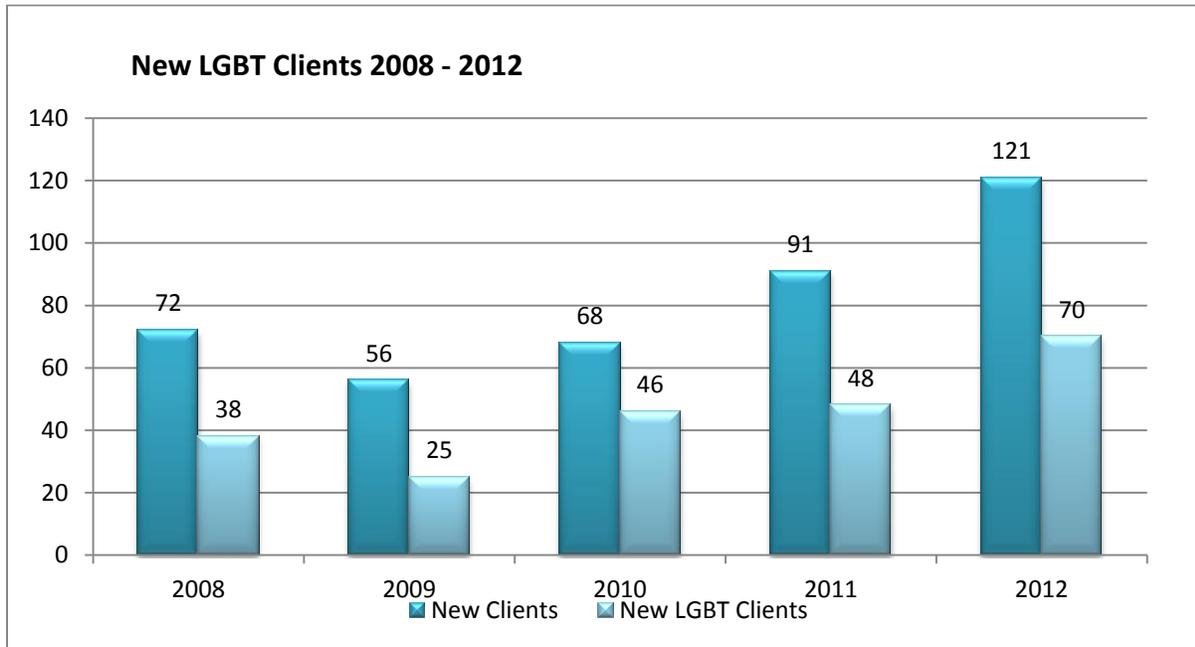
In 2012 the number of LGBT groups accessing our training increased by nearly 200% (29 groups) and we increased the number of LGBT training modules provided from 42 to 66. These figures suggest that our training is being provided to more LGBT groups of smaller numbers. The trend of LGBT groups receiving 'multi session' programmes rather than 'one off session' programmes seems to be continuing (enabling us to develop lasting, empowering, training relationships with LGBT people and the LGBT community).



The percentage of LGBT training groups within our training figures has increased dramatically since 2008; climbing from 4.93% in 2008 to 12.08% in 2012. This can be attributed to the increase in focus on LGBT training within our team.



Our total personal support figures for new clients were up this year from 91 new clients to 121 new clients. The percentage of new LGBT clients increased from 53% to 59%. 10 service users presented as having an 'unknown' sexual orientation for personal support; when examined further, this is indicative of people presenting for support whilst questioning their sexual orientation or gender identification. Throughout 2012 we have maintained our established reputation for working well with LGBT people.



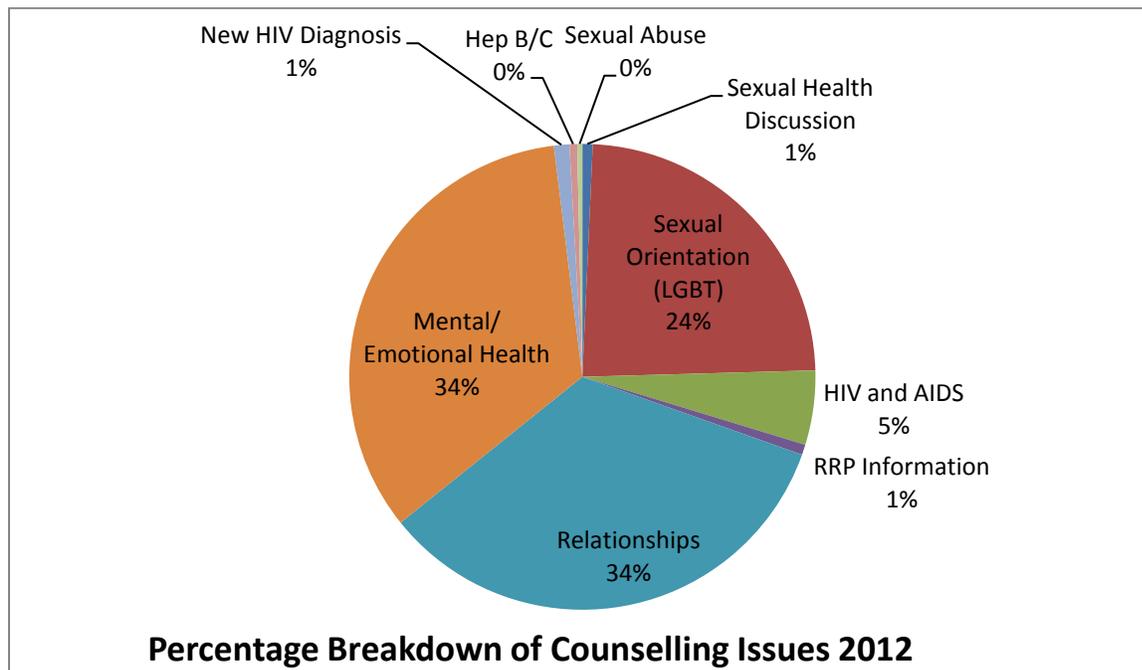
Our profile in Limerick Pride 2012 was even higher than last year. Once again we held an open day during the festival week, which was very well attended. We ran a health and well-being day where we provided over 44 sessions of complementary therapies to the LGBT community including Reiki, Massage, and Laughter Yoga.

2012 also saw our second set of LGBT Reiki Initiations. Three new people living with HIV (PLWHIV) who identify as LGBT were initiated into Reiki as a group. We were hoping to combine the supportive aspect of meeting others with the self supportive personal development nature of Reiki. Seemingly we were successful - since the initiation training these three clients have met up with each other to provide Reiki and support.

Counselling

From June, when Rainbow Support Services came under the umbrella of Red Ribbon Project, the Rainbow Counselling Service has been managed by Red Ribbon Project. Ingrid Wallace and Orla Sheedy were recruited to provide specialist counselling hours, on a sessional basis, for people identifying as LGBT.

During 2012 we provided a total of 194 counselling hours to 25 clients, the majority of whom were Irish. As with previous years a wide variety of issues were explored but predominately sessions provided support around sexual orientation, mental and emotional health, relationship difficulties, and coping with a HIV diagnosis.



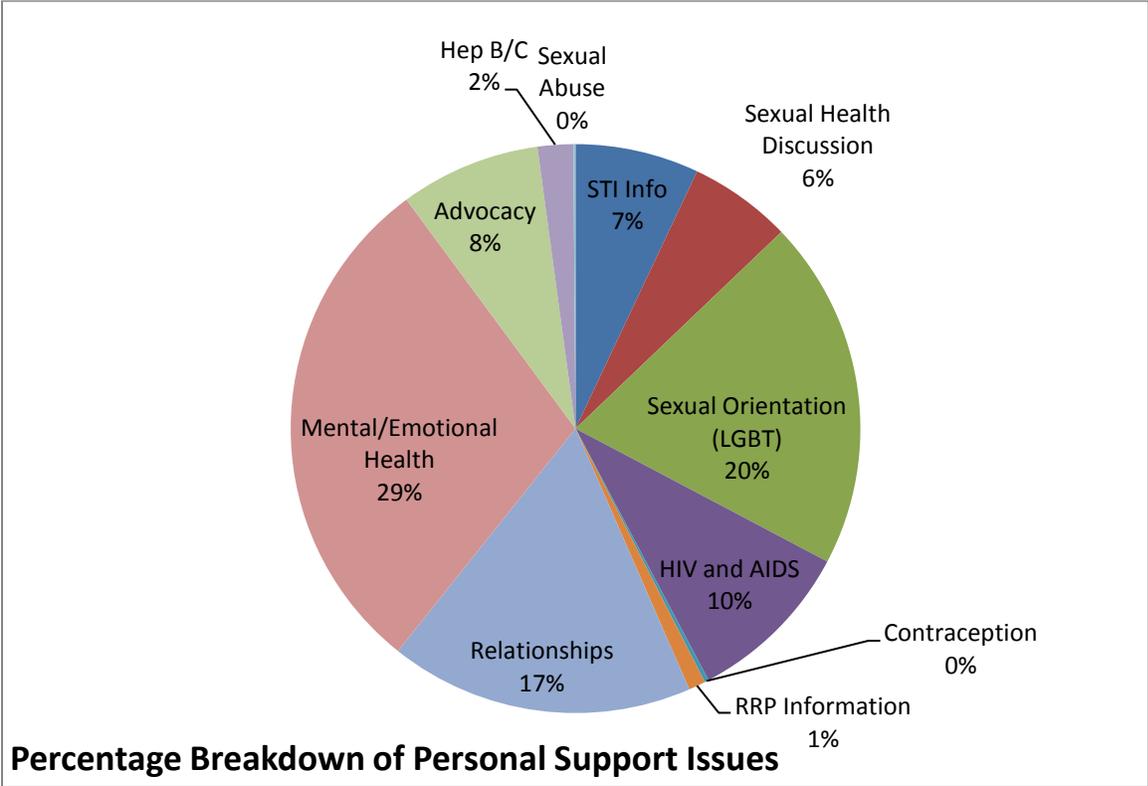
Client Comments

‘Between the months of February and July 2012 I received counselling from the Red Ribbon Project. I found this experience to have dramatically changed my life. Every time I entered the building I felt in a completely safe space and was always greeted warmly by every member of staff I came into contact with. The counselling itself was a nurturing gentle experience and I found my counsellor to be impartial, non judgemental and trustworthy. I would recommend the Red Ribbon Project to anybody who was looking for a safe space to talk.’

‘The counselling I received with the help of Red Ribbon Project is helping me so much. Without the help of Red Ribbon Project I wouldn’t be where I am today it has helped me through some rough times and I am truly grateful’

Personal Support

The Project provided a total of 294 Hours of Personal Support, these hours were provided in the majority by the Project Workers in the team. 121 Clients were supported in this way, through a variety of means including one to one sessions, text messages, phone calls, and emails.



Rapid HIV Tests

World AIDS Day – 1st December 2012 – saw the launch of our new Rapid HIV Testing programme.

Rapid HIV tests allow for a provisional result of HIV antibody and antigen status within 20 minutes of receiving a sample of blood. This blood is taken using a simple finger stick process. The blood is then collected in a capillary tube and added to test strip paper.

Reactive results are referred to the nearest STI Clinic for the service users’ comfort with full follow up for their support needs from our support workers. A negative result ensures an accurate screening for the service user up to one month prior to the test.

It is envisioned that this programme will fund itself by charging for the tests on a sliding scale. At certain stages throughout the year we hope to be able to supply free rapid HIV tests to individuals as part of our health promotion work.

Acknowledgements

Red Ribbon Project would like to thank everybody who worked with us during 2012, particularly our hard-working volunteers. Thank you, too, to the HSE, who provide the majority of our funding, and to everyone who organised a fundraiser for us, made a donation, or bought a Red Ribbon throughout the year.

Thanks are also due to the Directors holding office during 2012: Karen O'Donnell O'Connor (Chairperson), Lou Dennehy (Treasurer), Jennifer O'Brien, Aisling Murray, Cillian Flynn, Vanessa Cullen, Jacques Lobe, and Marianne Mulcahy.

Finally, thanks to the staff team:-

Manager: Ann Mason

Office Administrator: Cillian Flynn

Sexual Health Project Worker: Gráinne Woulfe and Teresa Normile

Community Support Project Worker: Billie

Support and Counselling Project Worker: Sharon O'Meara

Rainbow Development Worker: Patrick McElligott

Rainbow Youth Worker: Teresa Normile

Sessional Counsellors: Ingrid Wallace and Orla Sheedy