



www.goshh.ie

2022 ANNUAL REPORT

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2022 AT A GLANCE



11,875 Service Users



Rapid Tests

560 HIV
526 Hepatitis C
560 Syphilis
60 Chlamydia
60 Gonorrhoea

907 Counselling Sessions

1,924 Personal Support Sessions



1,219 Helpline Calls, Emails, Social Media DMs



150 Support & Social Group Sessions



9 Podcast Episodes



19,884 Condoms Provided
36% postal service

Welcome to this summary of our work and celebration of our achievements in 2022.

January saw us all back in the office five days a week for the first time in nearly 2 years following a phased return that started in September 2021. We were finally back to normal – although, of course, this was a very different normal to before. There was an increased sense of general anxiety amongst both the staff and, particularly, our clients. We had members of staff who had joined us during the Covid years and so had never experienced the full team in the office, as well as clients who had only had a remote experience of GOSHH.

Whilst all staff now work on our premises, we still offer remote support sessions for those clients who prefer it or are too far away to access the office on a regular basis

Our achievements include:

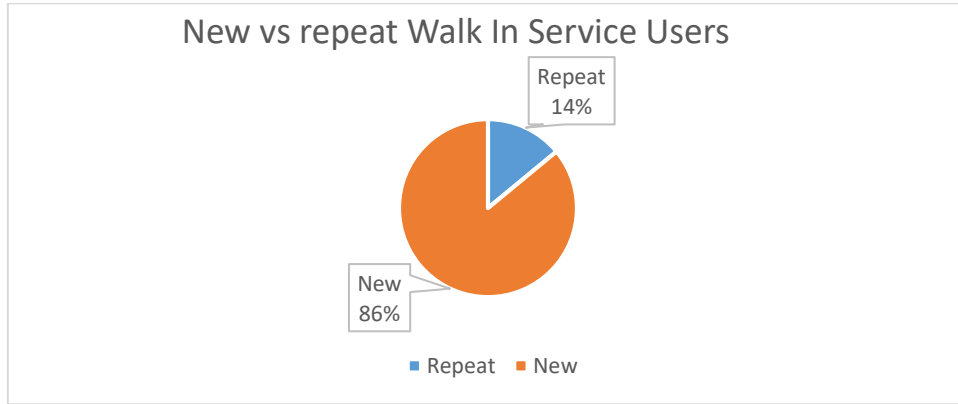
- G GOSHH facilitated 607 individual counselling and support sessions focussing on gender identity while working with 843 service users whom identify at Trans*.
- O 137 support groups for those who identify as Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual were facilitated, along with 580 individual counselling and support sessions.
- SH GOSHH provided 34 sexual health training workshops for a number of youth and community groups, as well as supplying 19,884 condoms free of charge 7,158 of which were distributed through our postal service. We also facilitated 131 individual counselling and support sessions on various sexual health topics.
- H 560 Rapid HIV Tests were performed; 127 support and counselling sessions were provided for people living with HIV.
The rapid testing programme also included 526 Rapid Hepatitis C Tests, 560 Syphilis Tests, 60 Gonorrhoea Tests and 60 Chlamydia Tests. 1,301 calls to our helpline were to discuss HIV and/or Rapid HIV Testing.

In terms of staff we said thank you and goodbye to Eóin Burke who left in October to return to his native Maynooth. We welcomed two new members of staff to the team – Róisín O'Connor as Receptionist, and Erica Noonan as Health Promotion Worker.

I would like to thank the staff team for their professionalism and hard work throughout the year; your commitment to providing the best possible service for our clients is admirable and much appreciated. The excellent way you work together as a team coupled with your enthusiasm for your work positively impacts both the welfare of our clients and the reputation of GOSHH. I also need to thank our funders for enabling GOSHH to deliver a service that has a beneficial impact on the mental, emotional, and physical health of our service users. Without their support we would not be in a position to keep our doors open. Thanks are also due to our sessional counsellors and the Board of Directors who devote time and energy to help GOSHH run effectively and efficiently.

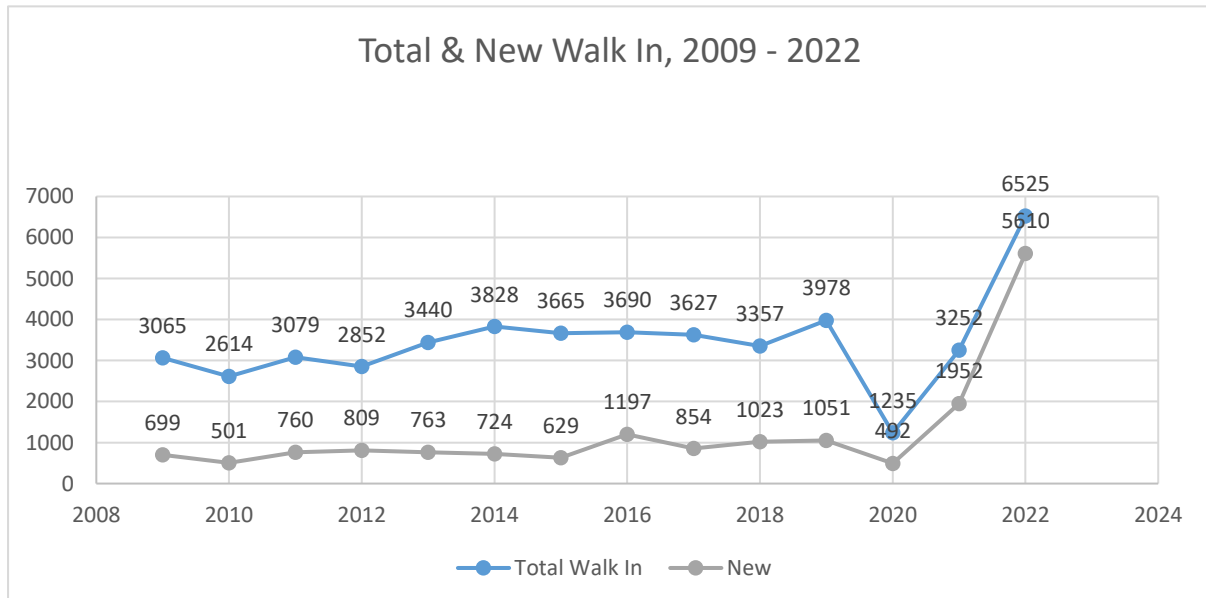
Walk In Service Users

6524 Service Users walked in through the doors of GOSHH, 86% (5610) of whom were new to the organisation.



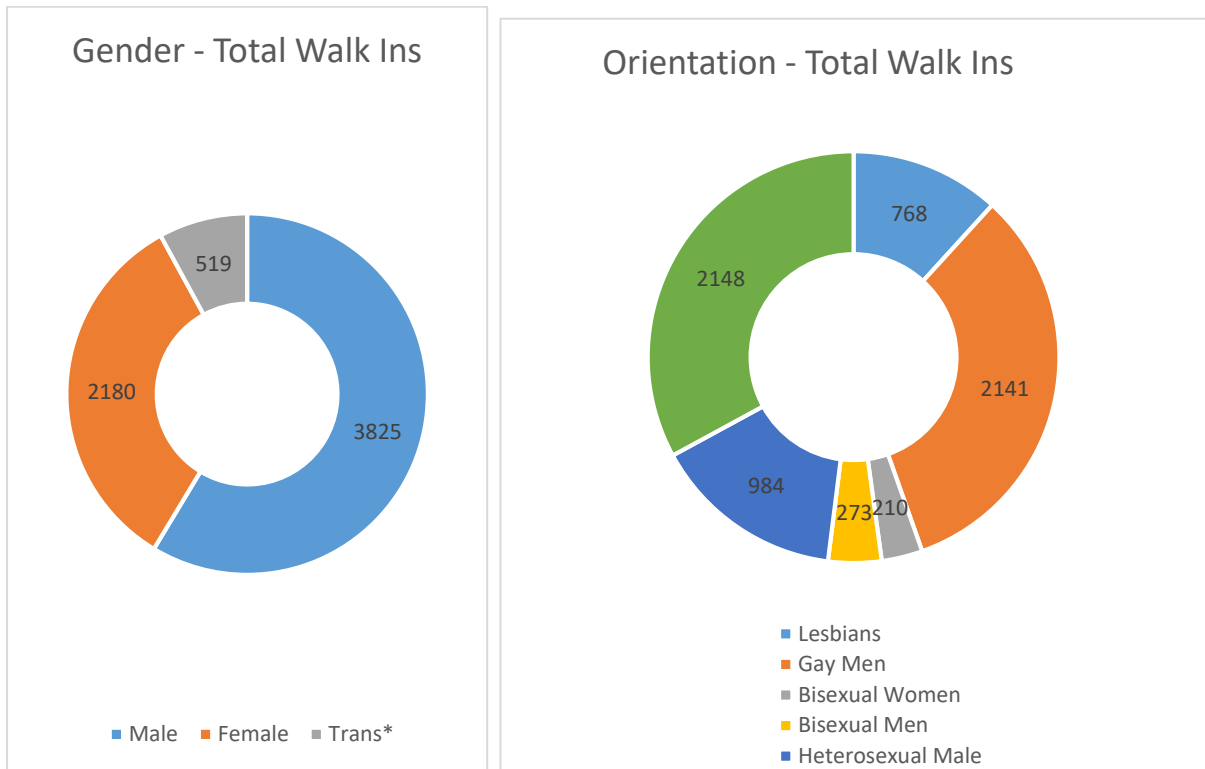
When compared to the figures for the last number of years, the total number of Walk Ins has increased by 3,272 people, while the total number of New Walk Ins increased by 3658 people.

	Total Walk In	New		Repeat	
2018	3357	1023	30.48%	2334	69.52%
2019	3978	1051	26.42%	2927	73.58%
2020	1235	743	60.16%	492	39.84%
2021	3252	1952	60.02%	1300	39.98%
2022	6524	5610	86.00%	914	14.00%

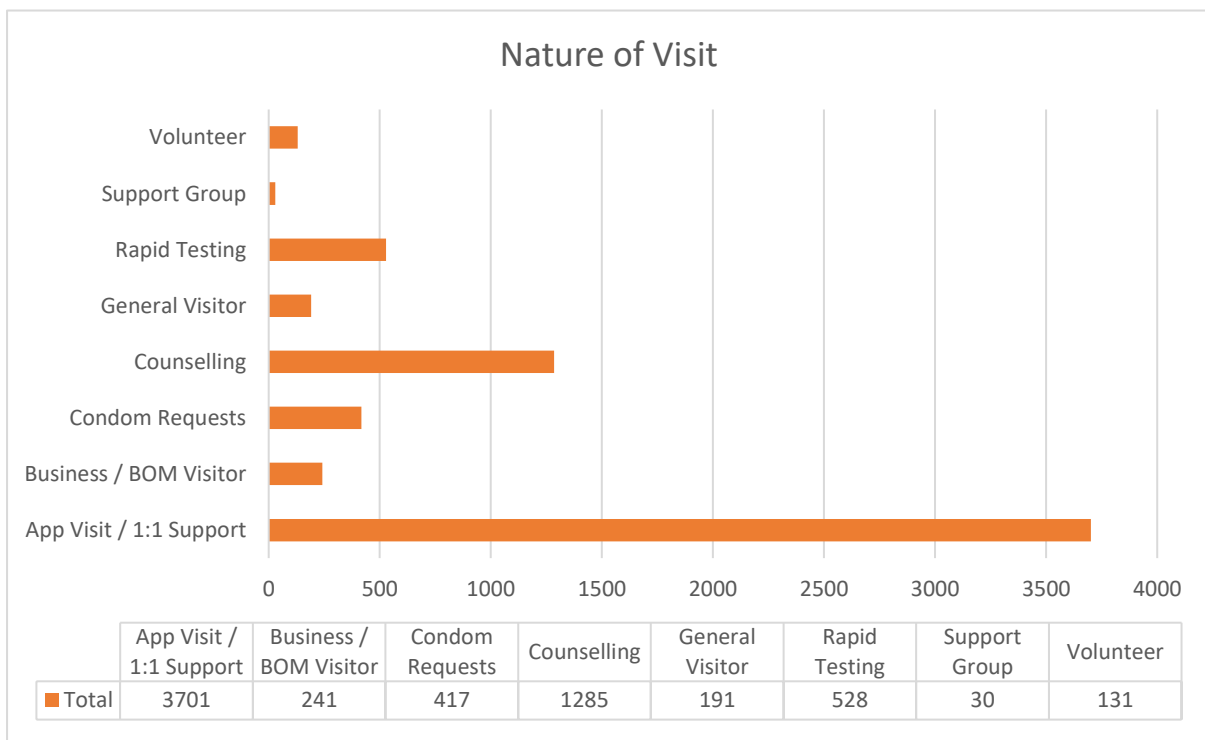


Our numbers have practically doubled this year no doubt due to COVID restrictions being lifted.

We saw an increase of 51% in those who identify as male, 47% in those who identify as female, as well as an increase of 58% in those who identify as Trans*.



Whilst the majority of service users (48%) identified as Heterosexual, Gay & Bisexual Men represent 37%, while Lesbian & Bisexual Women were the smallest group at 15% of the total.



The main reason people come through our door is to access support, with attending for a Counselling appointment second. A rapid test is the third highest nature of visit followed by condom requests.

81% of our service users are between the ages of 20 and 49, with the largest group (37%) being in their 30s. This means that less than 20% of our service users are under 20 or over 50. Of concern has been the reduction in numbers of the over 50s attending our service since the Covid-19 epidemic.

	0-12	13-19	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59	60 +
2018	13	134	895	932	746	477	160
2019	20	200	1055	1008	941	572	182
2020	2	149	371	309	255	117	32
2021	33	368	736	1239	651	175	59
2022	92	721	1548	2404	1359	337	63

Condom Provision

Our Walk In service was adapted so that people could access condoms from holders outside our door without coming into the office, 5,438 condoms were distributed this way.

Condom Distribution



GOSHH is a partner of the HSE National Condom Distribution Scheme which enables us to provide condoms to the public through a number of initiatives.

The aim of these schemes is to reduce the risk of sexually transmitted infections (STIs) including HIV and help prevent unplanned pregnancies. These schemes can also provide a good introduction to broader sexual health services and challenge the existing culture of taboo around talking openly about sexual health. GOSHH distribute free condoms and lubricant sachets in the following ways:

- Through our walk-in service. Condom and lube dispensers were introduced in our entrance hallway so people could avail of free condoms without coming into the building, therefore supporting people's right to privacy and discretion, and abiding by Covid-19 protocols.
- Through services in the region who work directly with different groups, especially those targeting young people and MSM. This includes outreach services, services running sexual health education programmes, and those running targeted events.
- Through our CD Card scheme for young people under 18 years of age together with training, education, and other support.
- Through the Rapid Testing Service.



- Through targeted events such as Irish and World AIDS Day, European Testing Week, Limerick Pride, and Freshers week. We also supply condoms in our training packs.

We developed a postal service where people could call, email, or DM on social media to get free condoms sent to them by post. This postal service is available to any address in the Republic of Ireland. GOSHH also provide sexual health information and resources in all of our packages in order to further our message of sexual health and wellbeing. Orders are posted in discreet packaging to guarantee confidentiality and accessibility of this service for all users.



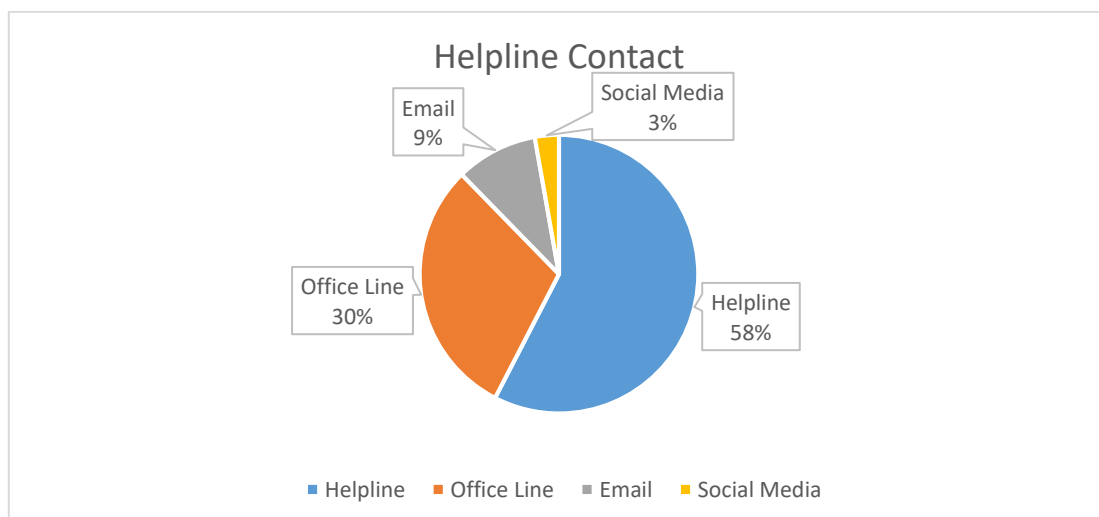
In total, GOSHH provided **19,884 condoms** and **10,432 sachets of lubricant** in 2022, **36%** of which were provided by postal service.

Helpline

The GOSHH Helpline is a completely confidential helpline operated by trained staff. We answer questions and have conversations regarding any issues including Gender, Sexual orientation, Sexually Transmitted Infections (STI's), HIV and Sexual Health, and we will refer callers to the relevant agency in total confidence.

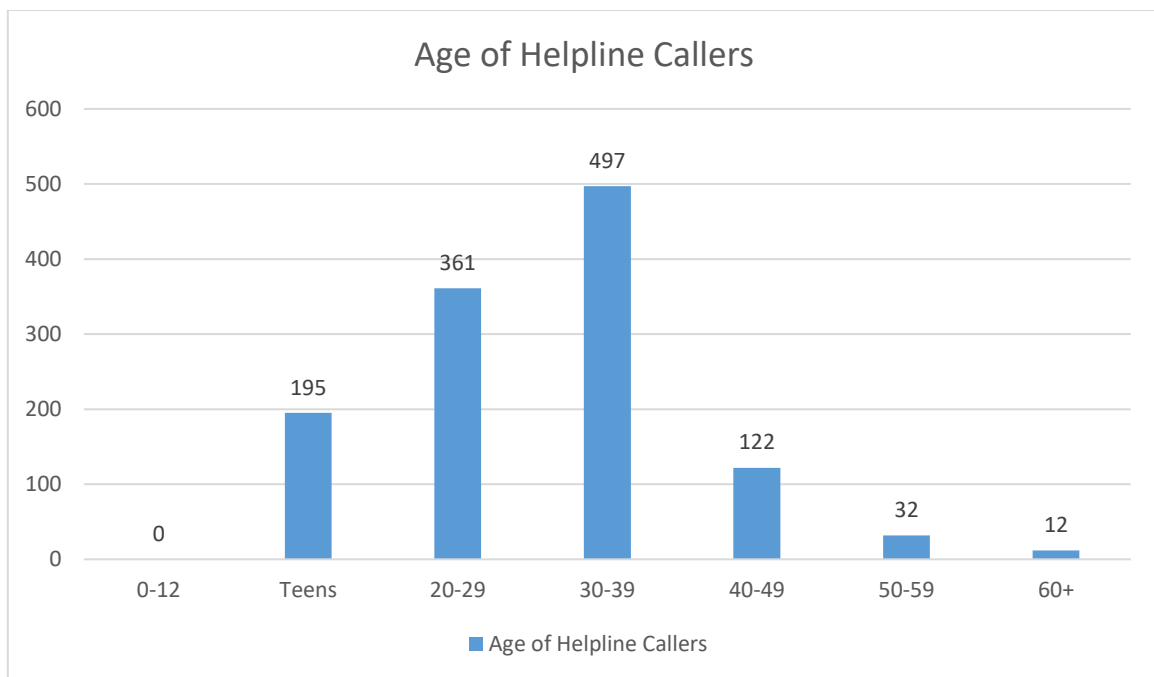
We had a record number of 1,219 callers contact the helpline. This is an additional 291 calls above the high of 928 in 2021. Service users contacted the GOSHH helpline in a variety of ways including ringing the helpline directly, referral through the main office phone line, email and social media DMs.

The helpline is often the first time a person may interact with any of our services. Following speaking to the helpline, many referrals took place, with 356 referrals being made for GOSHH's various groups and services. Additionally, other referrals included connecting service users with GP and medical services, the STI clinic, and other HSE services. The issues raised while speaking with the helpline inform these referrals. Due to the diverse nature of GOSHH's services, topics raised while speaking to the helpline vary, including, but not limited to, Coming Out, Mental Health, Housing/Homelessness, Family Issues, Sexual Health, Advocacy and many more.



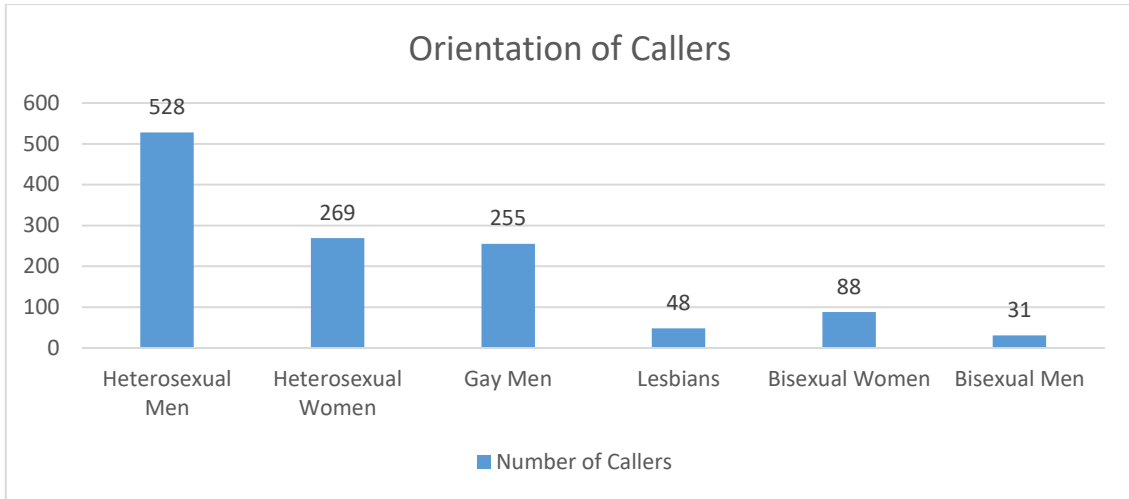
The most frequent types of helpline calls received are those concerning sexual health and the Rapid Testing service offered by GOSHH. A huge majority of 883 calls were recorded as being calls concerning, or mentioning Rapid Testing. The confidential nature of the GOSHH Helpline means that this may be a place where callers feel they can safely ask any questions concerning their sexual health.

There is no one standard helpline caller. Statistics show that the age range of callers spans from teens right through to the 60+ age group. Callers may also be phoning on behalf of someone else, so often calls may be received from concerned parents discussing their children. We have also received calls from teachers and healthcare professionals looking for advice and resources for younger children. As such, although our youngest callers are in their teens, we also received plenty of calls concerning younger children.



The orientations of callers also prove to be very diverse, with the highest volume of calls coming from people identifying as heterosexual men. These service users amounted to over 43% of total helpline calls for 2022. Separately, 130 of the helpline callers identified as Trans, amounting to just over 10% of all callers.

The geographical origin of helpline users can also be described as varied. Although 679 users are originally from Ireland, the helpline received calls from people originating from Eastern and Western Europe, North and South America, Asia, the Middle East, and Africa. In total, only roughly half of helpline callers originally hail from Ireland.



A total of 44 hours and 23 minutes of total engagement with the helpline was recorded. The GOSHH helpline proves to be a vital asset to users. The GOSHH staff are always on hand to help users with their queries in the moment, or to refer them on to other relevant services. The aim of the helpline is always to help to the best of our ability in a confidential and effective manner.

Events

How to be an LGBTI+ Ally: 24 May

GOSHH took part in the annual Limerick Lifelong Learning Festival by hosting an event ‘Teatime talk – How to be an LGBTI+ ally.’

This was an in-person chat in the GOSHH office on Davis Street for anyone who wanted to learn a bit more about the LGBTI+ community and how people can become better allies. The talk discussed what it means to be an ally in general and how this can be impactful for anyone who feels ‘other’, especially for the LGBTI+ community.

**Teatime talk
HOW TO BE AN LGBTI+ ALLY**

**TUESDAY
24TH MAY
11AM - 12:30PM**

GOSHH, Redwood Place, 18 Davis Street, Limerick

Tea and coffee provided. Spaces limited so please email/call to book your place below

OUTREACHWORKER@GOSHH.IE 061 314354



Limerick Pride Week: 4-10 July

GOSHH ran a number of events to coincide with the Limerick Pride celebrations.

We hosted a drop in café so that young people could learn about our services and facilitated a sexual health workshop for young people in cooperation with Limerick Youth Service. We also offered additional appointments for testing.

Our community development worker co-ordinated many community activities some of which were in partnership with other LGBTI+ community groups such as a ‘Pre Pride Parade’ coffee social.

LGBTI+ Quiz in University Limerick: 6 July

GOSHH partnered with the University of Limerick EDI to host an LGBTI+ quiz as part of Limerick pride.

The aim of the event was to promote more visibility of the LGBTI+ community and GOSHH services and to provide a social space for community members and allies in U.L to come together.

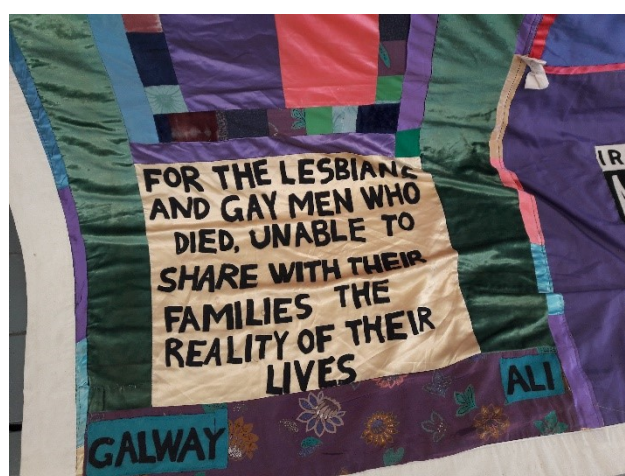


The Names Project AIDS Memorial Quilts: 4–22 July

The Irish Names Quilt Exhibition first began touring Ireland on 13 January 1991, visiting Dublin, Cork, Galway, Limerick, Belfast and Derry as a way to honour the memories of those lost to AIDS and to break stigmatization and secrecy around their deaths.

<https://gcn.ie/aids-memorial-quilt-irish-names-project/>

As part of Limerick Pride month 2022 the Limerick City Gallery of Art (LCGA) exhibited 'The Irish Names Quilt'. The co-ordination of this was supported by GOSHH who procured the quilts from Queer Culture Ireland for the exhibition and after co-ordinated their handover to other organisations around Munster for display as part of their own cultural events.



The LCGA estimated that 2597 people visited the gallery to see the quilts.



Limerick Pride parade: 9 July

The 2022 Limerick Pride parade was a particularly special celebration for all involved. The Covid-19 pandemic meant many LGBTI+ folk had been isolated from the wider LGBTI+ community and deprived of the vital support it provides. So to be back out on the streets surrounded by a sea of rainbows, smiles and love



on what turned out to be a glorious sunny day was fantastic and the lift we all needed. The atmosphere from start to finish was electric with LGBTI+ folk and allies' alike showing up for the celebrations.



Thurles Pride Parade: 30 July

GOSHH were delighted to be asked to support Thurles Pride for their Pride March on 30 July. GOSHH proudly walked with the GOSHH banner during the parade and provided free condoms and information leaflets for the organised events after the march.

Thurles Pride
Saturday 30th July 2022

2pm, Parnell Street Carpark

GOSHH is delighted to announce that we will be joining our friends at Thurles Pride for their Pride March this year

Hope to see you there!





European HIV – Hepatitis testing week: 21-28 November

During European testing week we ran a large social media campaign aimed at educating people on HIV and Hepatitis C as well as raising awareness around the importance of getting tested. We did more testing outreach in homeless hostels and direct provision centres.

World AIDS Day Run in Mungret: 26 November

To mark World AIDS Day we partnered with Mungret parkrun to take part in the Sexual Health Centre’s park runs. The aim of the run was to raise awareness and fight stigma by spreading the **U=U** message which stands for **Undetectable = Untransmittable**. Although the day itself was very windy and blustery it wasn’t enough to deter the runners who turned up and gave it their all. Some of our lovely GOSHH team were waiting at the finish line to give the runners well deserved goodie bags containing sweets, condoms, lube, a red ribbon pin, GOSHH information, information about testing. Runners also got a World AIDS Day t-shirt.



‘How to tell a secret’ screening in the Omniplex cinema: 1 December.

On 1 December - World AIDS Day - the GOSHH team took a break from the office to attend the cinema premiere of ‘How to Tell a Secret’. The hybrid documentary is ‘a creative exploration of HIV disclosure using experimental storytelling methods to represent the experiences of people who are HIV positive in Ireland today.’ ‘The film featured contributions from people who had never spoken publicly about their HIV status before and who were using this film as a platform to come out for the first time. From young men to migrant women, drag artists to

activists, the documentary took audiences through a myriad of experiences and stories capturing a modern perspective on life with the HIV virus.’



Community Development

Swimming for LGBTI+ Community



To kick off the New Year we were delighted to introduce Ireland's first LGBTI+ swimming programme in January and February. These lessons took place over 6 weeks in the Shannon Leisure Centre in Clare and were led by the experienced swim coach Rory Ryan. The feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive and this programme has since been successfully replicated with other LGBTI+ groups across Ireland.

Online Personal Development Courses

In February we launched two separate online personal development courses for community members - one forGBT+ men and one forLBTI+ women. We partnered with The Switchboard for the men's course which was led by John White - an experienced leader in the area of personal development. The women's course was facilitated by Laura Louise (LL) Condell. LL has facilitated this course numerous times in the past and brings ample knowledge to her work. Feedback obtained from participants highlighted the importance of offering this space to learn and develop with peers.



LGBTI+ Coffee Socials

GOSHH ran a number of meet and greet socials for the LGBTI+ community throughout the year. The purpose of these socials was to provide an opportunity for community members to get together and make connections in a laid back environment, and to offer an alternative activity for people looking to socialise at the weekend.



LGBTI+ Running Programme



In May GOSHH launched a 6 week running programme to get LGBTI+ community members outdoors and active. Rosemary Ryan, Limerick's famous Olympian, took the group through their paces on the grounds of the University of Limerick. A few members subsequently took part in the Dublin Fronrunners Pride 5k, and the programme finished with a 5k at Mungret Parkrun alongside a few friendly visitors from the Cork Fronrunners.

LGBTI+ Book Club

GOSHH introduced an LGBTI+ book club in August and has hosted a monthly meeting ever since. The books are chosen by those attending and we do our best to include a diverse range of topics and identities from month to month. The book club acts as another fun social space for community members to gather but it's also a nice way to engage in healthy discussions on issues relevant to the community.



Limerick Sports Partnership Grant July - October

GOSHH was successful in securing funding from the Limerick Sports Partnership to engage more members of the LGBTI+ community in sports and physical activity. We worked alongside a broad range of partners and organisations to deliver the best programmes possible over the course of four months.

Limerick Pride Walk 10 July

As part of the Limerick Pride celebrations GOSHH enlisted the services of walking leader Liam from Siul Eile, a Tipperary based social enterprise, to lead us through a section of the Lough Derg Way. As a group we walked a lovely flat riverside route, just over 11km in length, before finishing up in Limerick city.



Beginners Kayaking Course 24, 31 July and 6 August

LGBTI+ community members were invited to sign up for two days of kayaking training, provided by the wonderful volunteers from Limerick Kayaking Academy. The group subsequently took part in a Charity 10k Paddle on Saturday 6 August – starting at Shannon Rowing Club in Annacotty and finishing in Limerick City.

Limerick Greenway Cycle - Ride with Pride 20 August



We partnered with Cycling Ireland's Community Bike Rides Programme to take on 37km of the Limerick Greenway, cycling from Rathkeale to Abbeyfeale. Qualified cycle leaders Mark and Des kept the group safe and entertained on what was a great day out.

Yoga Course 13, 20, 27 September and 4 October

Yoga teacher Jen Edwards took participants through four weeks of Vinyasa flow at the newly refurbished Angel Times studio in Limerick City centre.



Hike in Ballyhoura 18 September

GOSHH enlisted Siul Eile once more to lead us from Ballinaboola Forest for a 13km hike to Ballyhoura Forest. We had some spectacular views of the Galtees as well as the patchwork quilt countryside below.

Tennis Taster 25 September

We hosted a fun and social tennis event at the Catholic Institute Athletics Club to introduce beginners to the sport. Coach Mike was on hand to offer support and advice throughout.

Rumble Boxing Class 11 October

As part of Limerick Mental Health Awareness Week a Rumble Boxing class was organised. Research has shown that exercise can release feel good hormones in your brain which is why we encouraged LGBTI+ community members to get involved.

OH MY GOSHH Podcast



2022 saw the return of the OH MY GOSHH Podcast, with some new hosts!

The Podcast comes out once a month, with the topics varying from month to month. The aim of the Podcast is spreads awareness of the services that are provided by GOSHH, discuss upcoming events, and talk about different topics which we feel are important to be heard.

We released 9 podcast episodes which have been listened to in a total of 21 different countries. The podcast is available on various different streaming platforms.

Youth Work

There has been a steady increase in young people reaching out for one to one support – a total of 73 young people in 2022.

One to one support sessions

The main themes to come out of one to one support with young people are the following:

Gender identity, Self-harm, Coming out, Self-esteem, Self-acceptance, Lack of Trans* Healthcare, Mental health, Sexual health, Coping strategies, STIs, External and internal anatomy, Friendships, Schooling, Acceptance, Bullying, Rejection by friends/ family, Isolation.

Whilst some of these themes are experienced by all the young people in one to one support, they are experienced differently and uniquely to each individual. The main theme across the board was isolation and the lack of Trans* healthcare in Ireland for young people. We were surprised by the lack of basic knowledge around sexual education and anatomy in the young people seeking support around their sexual health.

Trans* healthcare

The lack of Trans* healthcare in Ireland for young people has caused a lot of distress, hopelessness and helplessness. There is nowhere for these young people to turn, some of them have even considered buying their hormones online – not a practice that we recommend. One young person has said they feel they are stuck and they are not able to move forward because of the lack of healthcare available to them.

Remote sessions

Zoom appointments have enabled young people who were restricted by location, time, transport to access our services. Once they had a secure confidential space in their home we could facilitate support sessions on request.

Glub is an LGBTQI+ youth group for young people aged between 14-18. GOSHH, in collaboration with Limerick Youth Services, run this group every week from Lava Java's youth café.

A total of 50 Glub group sessions took place. It was great that in person groups could take place again as it meant that the group members could build on connections that they have made. At the beginning of the year, the group went bowling for the mid-term break.

January saw the beginning of an over 18s group, a total of 38 young adult group sessions took place.

The group has grown in numbers since it first began with a lot of the young people who were part of the youth group joining the young adults group once they reach 18. In June, we travelled to Dublin for Pride. This was a joyous occasion for the young people as for many of them it was the first pride that they attended.



The young people marched in solidarity with other youth groups from across Ireland. July saw the return of Limerick Pride. We held a pre-pride party the day before Pride, this was an opportunity for young people to come together and have a space to meet others before Pride. On the morning of Pride, we held a Pride breakfast where young people could drop in to get ready to the parade. It was great that both groups could march in the Parade together. We finished off the year for the youth group with a Christmas party in Lava Javas. The young adults group had a takeaway night to mark the end of the year.

Genderwise is a group for young people aged 13-18 who identify as Trans*, non-binary, or are exploring their gender identity, and is held once a month. A total of 11 Genderwise sessions took place initially online, then returned to in person meetings in July. The aim of the group is to allow young people to come together in a non-judgemental setting which is free from discrimination and social exclusion. The main topics of discussion were gender identity, relationships and peer support.



The main topics of discussion across the support groups, are coping strategies, relationships, peer support and supporting others. This shows how these groups are fundamental for growing on connections and supporting others.

It was great year for these support groups and social support events.

The lifting of COVID-19 restrictions meant that these events could take place more often than previous years. It has been a turbulent time for many, having supports across the Mid-West is fundamental in people meeting each other, socialising and building on connections. A special thank you to all who attended events throughout the year as well as those who attended the support groups.

Training and Education

The team delivered a range of training and education services including workshops, programmes, and information sessions for professionals and practitioners as well as for community groups.

Our training supports professionals to respond to the needs of their clients in relation to gender, orientation, sexual health, HIV and Hepatitis and many other related areas.



We delivered to groups across the region, and worked with many new communities, participants and organisations.

We delivered a total of 91 workshops, most of which – 64 – were in the areas of gender and orientation and the vast majority were delivered in person. Over the course of the year, 1182 people participated in our training workshops and programmes. Our workshops range in length from 2 hour

sessions to full day workshops.

We have seen a significant increase in the number of workshops we provide to practitioners. In 2022 we provided over 265 hours of training in total – up from 140 hours in 2021. This included 187 hours to professionals and practitioners and 78 hours to community groups.

We provide workshops for practitioners working with people of diverse genders and orientations, with young people in schools during Stand Up week, for practitioners supporting sex workers, for residents of direct provision centres, for new migrant communities, for young people in youth work settings and for practitioners who would like to integrate sexual health promotion into their core support services. Our training not only provides participants with information, knowledge and skills but also provides an opportunity for practitioners and communities to learn more about our service and our referral pathways.

We support schools during Stand Up week with workshops which give all the necessary information around being LGBTIQ+ in school and how to be an ally to those who are part of the LGBTIQ+ community. We also provide the information that will help and guide them if they need additional supports such as one to one support or to partake in youth groups we facilitate.



We continued to deliver the Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion (FPSHP), and piloted the new 6 day programme in the Spring and repeated it in the Autumn.

Our full day training for practitioners working with young people with diverse genders and orientations who feel the need for increased awareness is one of our more requested workshops. Participants in training ranged from professionals in the education sector, youth and community sectors, corporate, students, therapists and Gardaí as well as social workers and young people in education settings. The training this year was mainly delivered in person with information sessions delivered over zoom. The model of information sharing for zoom and personal development for in person training has proved effective with feedback being overwhelmingly positive about the training. Feedback included “excellent transferable skills and knowledge from the training”, “really enjoyed how experiential the workshop was”, “the presentations worked well and the facilitators were excellent with huge knowledge and skills in holding the group”. People also felt they left the training with “ a sense of hope for the future”.

New Training Courses

Sex Work and Harm Reduction: We developed this workshop to support the training, information and knowledge needs of practitioners working with sex workers. We worked with the Limerick Homeless Action Team and ADAPT House to deliver this workshop and received very positive feedback.

Working with LGBTIQ+ Refresher Training: We developed a new half day refresher workshop for professionals that previously completed the day long training in ‘Working with the LGBTIQ+ Young People’ that were now seeking to build on their knowledge and awareness in the area of gender and orientation to increase their confidence when working with LGBTIQ+ young people.



Participants from the Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion



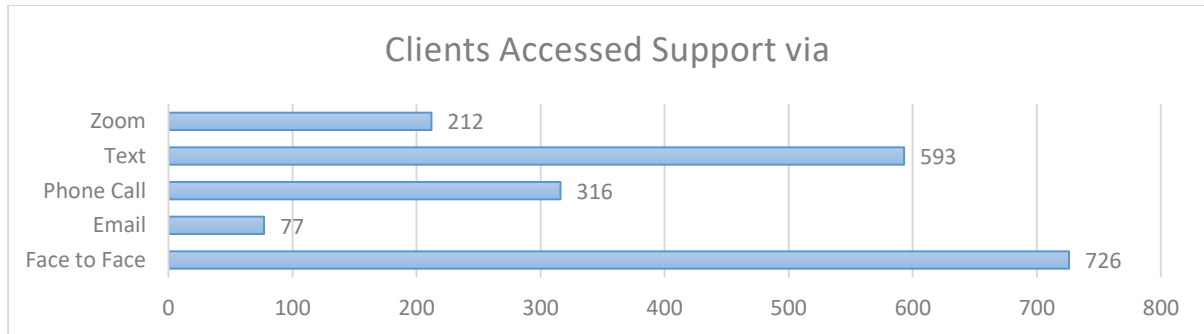
GOSHH continued to collaborate with students and with Institutes and Colleges of Higher and Further Education in the Midwest to provide opportunities for students to prepare for professional practice, to build on their college-based learning, to develop on-the-job competence, to demonstrate their progress in meeting the standards relevant to their profession and to acquire a more integrated understanding of the application of knowledge and theory in professional practice.

- We partnered with the Department of Nursing and Midwifery, University of Limerick to provide an observational placement experience for 3rd year BSc Nursing & BSc Midwifery students. Three students from the undergraduate 3rd year BSc Nursing (General) and the BSc Nursing (Mental Health) completed 6 days of observational placement experience with GOSHH in the Spring.
- We hosted a 3rd year student, Jennifer, from the BA Social Care Programme in TUS Midwest. Jennifer was given the opportunity to gain practical experience and knowledge in the areas of Gender, Orientation, Sexual health and HIV. For Jennifer's intervention she prepared care packages for clients who used our Rapid Testing service.

Personal Support

Personal support is accessed through email, phone call, text, zoom, and face to face. 150 of our clients were female, 106 male and 69 people had diverse genders, which means 325 people accessed personal support this year.

We provided 1,924 sessions of support in the areas of Gender, Orientation, Sexual health and HIV, which is a 16% increase on 2021. The majority of this work was in person (726 sessions) or over text support (593 sessions) with phone calls (316 sessions) and zoom (212 sessions) being the next highest means of accessing support.



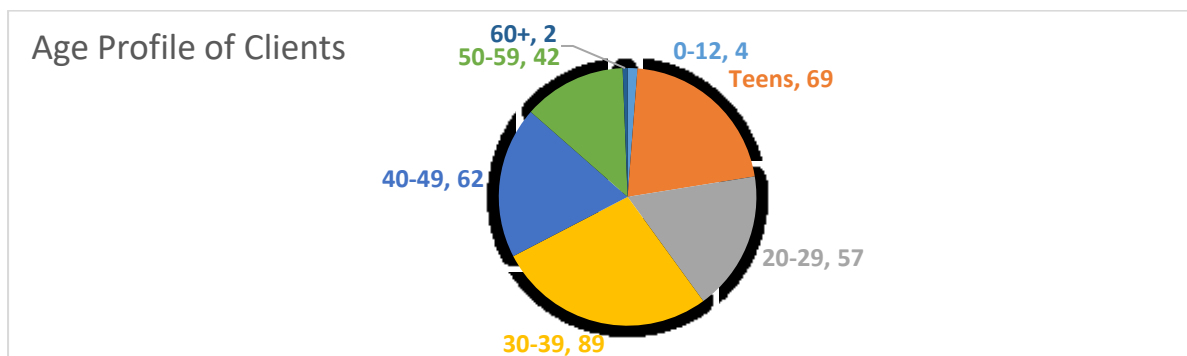
The vast majority of our service users were Irish (256) with the next highest being African in origin (19) then eastern European (14). This shows there is still more work to be done in promoting our support services with migrant populations.

From a regional perspective, Limerick has the largest numbers of service users at 178, followed by Clare at 91 and North Tipperary at 32. 24 clients from locations outside of our remit have travelled to access our services.

LGB people continue to be the highest number of service users at 137, followed by professionals at 97, then young people at 85 and parents at 84. Trans people and MSM are the next largest with 79 and 77 followed by People Living with HIV (PLWHIV) at 54.

People aged between 30 and 39 were our highest cohort for accessing support, followed by those in their teens and then people in their 40s.

Mental health (362 sessions) is still the biggest pressing issue for individuals, closely followed by gender identity (355), coping strategies (348) relationships and family issues (both 282) and emotional distress at (250). Of the remaining sessions, isolation (237), orientation (249) and self-esteem (185) have significant impacts on our clients.



Gender and Orientation:



Our clients tell us they feel unsafe, rejected or are being treated differently at home, work, in social settings or in academic situations like school or college. They continue to feel confused, worried and anxious about people judging them and possibly questioning who they are, while having to continually navigate the process of coming out in all facets of their life, including with family members, and others they come into contact with.

For young people this is amplified further if they are living in a rural area or don't have safe or easy access to transport, or have family members or people in their life who don't 'believe' them or support them. Supports like a youth group become difficult to access. This has come up specifically with those accessing support over zoom.

Caregivers, family members and parents continue to seek support around our areas of work. With concerns about the personal safety of those in their care and wanting the best for their children or young people in their care as the main motivations for contact. It is typical that they experience some confusion and would like clarity for both themselves and those around them.

For people we work with, academic situations, home, work, and social settings continues to dominate discussions, with some either avoiding these situations completely, nonattendance, isolation or in other cases, leaving jobs, dropping out of or changing school/college. Coming out to people and having to manage lack of understanding or rejection is continuing to have a detrimental effect on people we work with.

One example of this is a client who has been engaging in support for several years, they have been deeply hurt by those in influential positions, such as, school, family, work, and in helping professions. Through their ongoing support with GOSHH, they have been able to identify the way they have been treated, and how it has limited their ability to engage in seemingly normal social settings. Through support, they have been able to return to the workforce, and begin to assert themselves with their family and social circles to allow their authentic self to emerge. They describe their experience with GOSHH as 'life saving' and 'feeling like they've woken up from a deep sleep'.

If we focus specifically on our clients exploring their gender, their mental health is being drastically impacted by the current situations around accessing gender affirming healthcare in Ireland, with exhaustive waiting lists of over 3 years, and a disparity between the young people and adult services. This is resulting in feelings of loss, hopelessness, fear and isolation which often quickly translates into "I've spent so long having to be ok with this and now I feel like I will never be able to be myself".

We are also seeing how treatment of LGBTI people globally is impacting clients personally, with violence, and blanket discrimination in countries, including Ireland, further amplifying and feeding their fear, shame or anxiety. This is particularly difficult when they hear violence and direct phobic acts such as the 2 murders in Sligo, or narratives from Irish perspectives demonising, questioning or criticising their experience.

Sexual Health and HIV:

There is an increase in the lack of basic knowledge and information around sexual health including HIV. This is evident among our clients and professionals we are in contact with, who are working with clients.

General sexual health information, reproductive anatomy, safer sexual practices, Information about PreP, U=U, and also pleasure are being described as difficult to approach by the professionals we are

working with, particularly if the client has additional needs. We see this with communities such as migrants and LGBTI+ people.

There has been a rise in number of new people accessing HIV support services. Most clients came through self-referral or from other HIV agencies in Ireland, from diverse communities. They are reaching out to GOSHH because the STI clinic here in Limerick is not taking new clients so GOSHH is having to refer them to other STI clinics for their care continuum. The situation is causing immense stress and anxiety for clients.

Clients tell us their anxiety subsides when we answer the questions that their medical professionals are not answering. We hear often how they feel misunderstood and unwelcome by the medical professionals they are speaking to. This is particular evident with clients who are migrants.

One such example is a client who was diagnosed with Hepatitis C and had been to the doctor twice and the STI clinic once. They came to GOSHH after being referred by a concerned support worker. We helped them clearly and simply understand what being diagnosed with Hepatitis C means. When leaving the office the client expressed their gratitude and said how valuable this space was. They shared that we listened to them more in that hour than they had been listened to in 3 appointments with the doctor and the clinic, and that they now understand their diagnosis much better.

We see the value and need for continued psychosexual support and education with care givers/ service providers who can foster a space for sharing and openness, where conversations become less taboo or scary. We do this in line with our vision and mission statements, where we challenge stigma and promote positive supportive approaches. This also creates a long term reliable support network for people to garner support from. We see this acutely with young people where stigma, fear or embarrassment often limits their ability to have an authentic, honest conversation with adults.

Client experience:

While there are many difficult conversations happening, we are hearing overwhelmingly positive experiences from clients who engage with GOSHH. Clients describe GOSHH as a comfortable space to be in, with clients commenting on the safety of the physical space and the warmth of the staff.

Our clients have told us how, while they may not be in crisis every time they come in, the safe space helps build their resilience. They have said it's a time just for them, a moment of calm, and a space where they are understood, seen and trusted. They appreciate that there is time and space to adjust and figure things out without constraints on how many sessions they can access.

While Limerick, Clare, and North Tipperary are our main catchment areas, we sometimes work with people outside this area. We have seen the benefit of tools like zoom, or phone calls, where people who can't physically access support, or don't have support in their area, are now able to reach out and find support.

They see themselves represented in the organisation and feel respected, with appropriate and honest signposting when needed. Clients tell us that we answer their questions clearly and succinctly.

Sexual Health

As the topics of sexual health, sexuality and sexual wellbeing have become more prevalent in public consciousness during 2022, we saw an increase in individuals, organisations and practitioners looking to develop their knowledge and understanding of these subject matters.

In order to meet these requests and contribute to the public discourse we provided a number of services and contributed to different local and national campaigns.

These involved:

- Information stands at community events, Institutes of higher education, sports events, interagency information days etc.
- Inclusive sex positive sexual health and wellbeing workshops with youth organisations and schools.
- 1:1 support for individuals of diverse ages, needs and abilities via our counselling, 1:1 personal support, outreach and rapid testing services.
- Helpline support.
- Psychosexual education and support for care staff and community based workers.
- Support for disability service users.
- Free Sexual Health and HIV training for professionals.
- HSE Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion (FPSHP).
- Promotion and distribution of information booklets, including but not limited to; those to support parents, members of the LGBTI+ community and young people.
- Promotion of national sexual health campaigns such as the National Sexual Health Strategy, the nationwide roll out of HSE's SH:24 home STI testing kits, free contraception for people aged 17 – 25, and the HSE condom distribution service.

Throughout 2022 we regularly distributed tailored information packs to professionals in various organisations upon request and were always available to answer queries or offer support via phone, Zoom and on-site so as to ensure accessibility for all. Comprehensive information packs were also provided as part of all our Sexual Health and HIV training days.

We also provided support and education to professionals working in disability services via regular support meetings with key-working teams we provided literature, exercises and guidance on how to engage service users in the topics.

The use of Information stands at different events throughout the year also supported this effort by providing visibility and awareness about the services we provide and distributing information to members of the public on a large scale.

Support and education carried out in community based settings and/or with carers and professionals is an effective intervention when seeking long term positive outcomes for service users and the wider community to promote more positive attitudes and behaviours in sexual health, sexuality and wellbeing.

Foundation Programme in Sexual Health Promotion (FPSHP): 3 October – 6 December

Having taken a hiatus from all face to face HSE training in 2021 due to Covid-19, the FPSHP was able to resume in 2022. The course was 6 days in total which were spread out over 3 months.

The calibre and diversity of participants and their experiences created a space for meaningful peer to peer learning through the exchange of different points of view and knowledge. It also provided important critical feedback for how the course may be revised and updated going forward.

Overall feedback from participants throughout the course and after indicated that they found the training overall very useful and empowering.

We continue to house the FPSHP Resource Library, which is a library of sexual health resources and training tools and support professionals in the region to use the resources to support sexual health promotion initiatives and projects

Promotion of national sexual health campaigns:



2022 saw the nationwide delivery of the HSE free home STI testing service in partnership with online provider SH:24. GOSHH promoted this service through social media posts, providing information in our office, as part of our information stands and sexual health trainings.

In September the HSE launched a new service to provide free prescription and emergency contraception for 17 to 25 year old people. This service covered the cost of GP or doctor's appointments pertaining to contraception, any prescriptions given by your doctor, choice of contraception, fittings and removals of implants and IUDs or IUSs (coils), any check-ups or other follow up care needed, relating to an implant or coil and emergency contraception (morning after pill). GOSHH participated in the promotion of this new scheme through social media post and sexual health trainings.



Some of our other sexual health promotion work included:

We contributed to the ongoing NCCA Review of SPHE and RSE through our submission to the review.

Healthy Clare Strategy & Action Plan 2023-2025



We joined the Healthy Clare Working Group and contributed to the consultation on the Healthy Clare Strategy and Action Plan.

Information Stands



'Be Well Fair' Northside Youth Space - May

Organised by the Be Well team in Limerick Youth Service, GOSHH had an information stand as well as a Gender and Orientation workshop on the day.

Southill FRC 'Health Information Day' - 21 June

GOSHH was invited to have an information stand at the Community Health Information day hosted by the Southill family resource centre in the Southill Men's shed.

TUS Thurles 'OAP Interagency Day' – 23 June

GOSHH took part in the Age friendly EXPO hosted by Tipperary Age Friendly. The event showcased a range of services and supports available for positive ageing in County Tipperary. The 2022 Showcase was acknowledged at the 2022 National Age Friendly Recognition Awards winning the Community Innovation Award. GOSHH had an information stand where we showcased the supports we offer to older members of the LGBTI+ community.



Southill Family Pride Day – 8 July

We were delighted to be asked to be a part of the Southill Hubs first ever Pride event. The community showed up in force to show their support and fun and games were had by all.

Treaty United vs. Longford at Treaty Football club – 8 July



GOSHH proudly teamed up with local Limerick football club Treaty United to sponsor their game against Longford FC which played during Limerick Pride week. The aim of this partnership was to show that football should be a safe, inclusive and accepting space for everyone regardless of gender or sexual orientation.

The players and their management team proudly represented what it means to be an ally by using their platform to increase visibility and acceptance of LGBTI+ folk in the sporting community.



Northstar Interagency Day – 13 September

We attended the Northstar Interagency day where we had an opportunity to meet representatives from other organisations in the area and speak about the services GOSHH provide.

Sexual Health and Wellbeing awareness in Institutes of higher education - Oct & Nov

Throughout the months of October and November GOSHH was asked to set up our information stands on the campuses of the leading higher education institutes (TUS, Mary I and University Limerick) in the Limerick, Clare and North Tipperary regions. These outreach events were part of larger campaigns led by the institutes themselves which aimed to encourage more students to engage in safer sexual activity practices including regular testing and to highlight GOSHH services.



Counselling

We provided 907 counselling sessions throughout the year, that is an increase of 190 sessions. In total, 55 clients attended the counselling appointments which reflects the same number as the previous year. To ensure the service is as accessible and person-centred as possible, we provided a flexible approach, therefore, we provided 564 in person appointments; 340 zoom appointments and 3 phone appointments. In regards to the gender of the clients that attended the service, 24 were male, 18 were Trans and 13 were female. With regard to orientation, majority of the clients that attending counselling appointments continue to be LGB (43) and 12 were heterosexual. Of the total 55 clients, in terms of geographical origin, 45 people were from Ireland and 10 people were from the rest of Europe. As a further insight, 42 clients live in County Limerick, 9 live in Clare and 4 live in North Tipperary.

In terms of age profile, 25 people between the ages of 20-29 attended counselling, this continues to be the highest age profile of people attending counselling, there were 15 people between the ages of 30-39, 7 people were between the ages of 40-49, 5 people were between the ages of 50-59 which is comparable to 0 from the previous year and finally, 3 teenagers attended the counselling service.

The most prevalent themes that counsellors explored in counselling throughout the year were relationships, coping strategies, self-esteem, family issues and orientation. Most of our clients have diverse genders and orientations, often clients struggled living in a world that doesn't see them for who they are as a person, the emphasis is often placed by others on their gender, orientation, or gender expression, instead of the many other aspects of any individual. This can be very reductive and shaming; and can cause a lot of emotional distress and low self-esteem. We live in a world that is heteronormative and gender normative where there are many unchecked assumptions that are the social norm in society which are very limiting and isolating for people, often there's no space to verbalise this so it is often internalised. Working with people that are LGBTI+ is often quite complex as they have often experienced high levels of shame, trauma, rejection, fear and loneliness, which usually activates their defence mechanisms for self-preservation and emotional regulation. We

work at a pace that is comfortable for each individual client to explore their experiences and learn new coping strategies that work for them.

Clients have described how valuable the counselling sessions are to them, they have expressed how beneficial it is to have a space that is not limited to a number of sessions so the therapeutic process and growth can continue. They have described the relief they felt and how they felt more like themselves when they are ending the appointment and share how they looked forward to their next appointment. They describe the positive impact the work had on their lives and how they could slowly begin to see and acknowledge that.

Finally, there were unprecedented numbers of people seeking counselling support in 2021 and this has been consistent throughout 2022, this has been significant challenge to the counselling service, unfortunately this led to considerable waiting times for people accessing counselling support.

Fast Track Cities Limerick



Members of the Fast Track Cities Limerick Steering Committee along with representatives from the HSE and the other three FTC Cities in Ireland attended the Fast-Track Cities 2022 Conference in Sevilla, Spain, from 11-13 October, 2022.

It was the third in-person gathering of cities and municipalities that are accelerating their responses to HIV, tuberculosis (TB), and viral hepatitis – three conditions cited as urban health priorities in the New Urban Agenda as well as the *Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities*. The conference was organized by the International Association of Providers of AIDS Care (IAPAC), in collaboration with the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) and the Fast-Track Cities Institute (FTCI). The aims of the conference were to highlight successes achieved across the Fast-Track Cities network; address cross-cutting challenges to accelerating HIV, TB, and viral hepatitis responses; and share best practices in urban HIV, TB, and viral hepatitis responses.

Building upon the successes of the past three global gatherings of the Fast-Track Cities network, this year's conference provided space for interactive dialogue to support a network of 'connected cities', facilitating the collaborative development of innovative approaches to attaining the goals, objectives, and targets to which all Fast-Track Cities are committed.



The conference featured plenary sessions, panel discussions, oral abstract and e-poster presentations, and city and municipal case studies. In partnership with the Stop TB Partnership and the World Hepatitis Alliance, the conference also featured topics related to ending the HIV and TB epidemics and eliminating HBV and HCV.

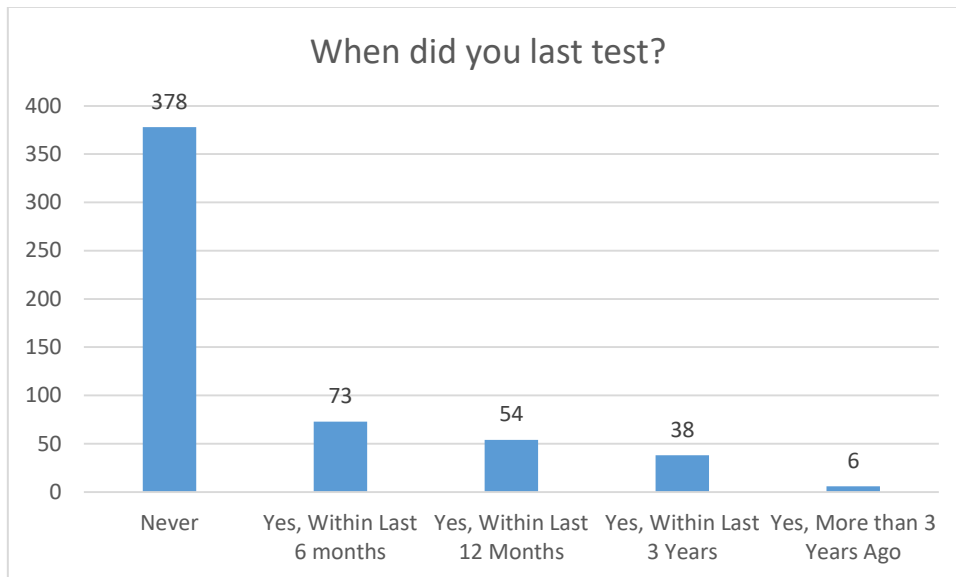
The event also saw the launch of the Sevilla Declaration on the Centrality of Communities in Urban HIV Responses, a commitment by signatories of the Paris Declaration on Fast-Track Cities to centre communities in their HIV, TB, and viral hepatitis responses.

In closing the *Fast-Track Cities 2022* conference on October 12, 2022, Dr. José M. Zuniga concluded, "I would encourage us all to reflect on how we will take what we have learned from each other to optimize the work we do on behalf of the people we serve, to whom we deliver services, and for whom we advocate."

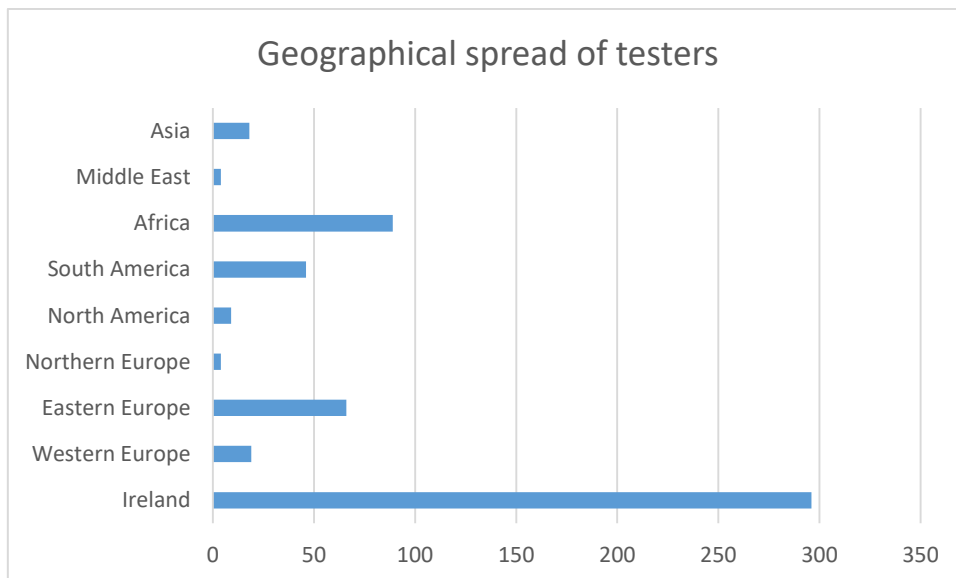
Rapid HIV and Syphilis testing



GOSHH community HIV and syphilis testing occurs in settings that are not clinical with in-house trained staff and volunteers. The rapid testing programmes are generally combined with education and outreach events. Conducting screening in a community setting can help reach a broad set of people who are at risk and may be less likely to visit a clinic for a test. It can also be used to target screening efforts by going directly to places where people live or work.

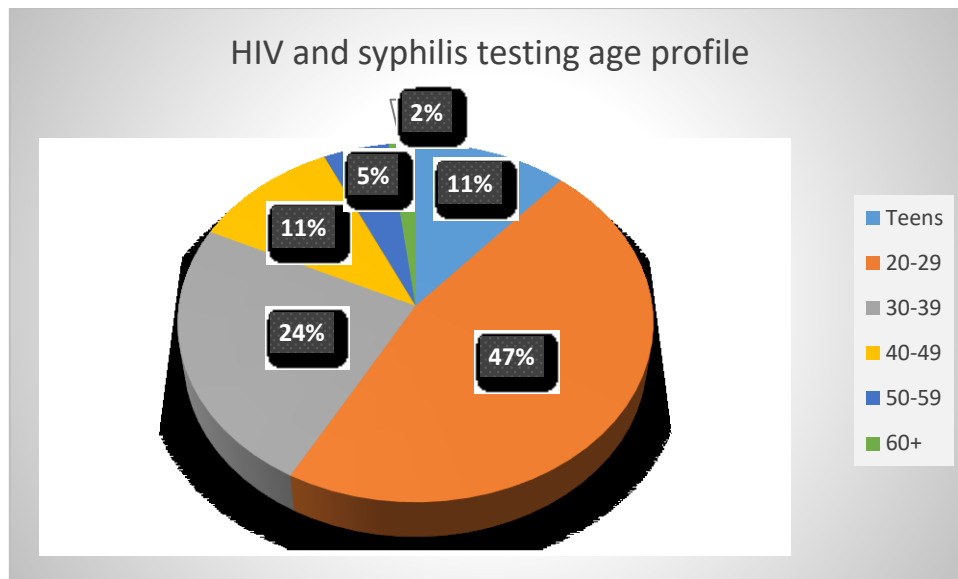


In 2022 we focused our work on reaching out to GOSHH designated communities in and around Limerick, North Tipperary and Clare promoting rapid testing and the awareness of HIV and syphilis in the community. This promotion helped us reach 546 individuals and 560 rapid tests done some being repeat tests. There were 378 new testers and 73 who came back after testing within the last six months.



The majority of clients availing of our rapid testing services were Irish at 296 followed by those coming from Africa and Eastern Europe.

GOSHH also provided rapid testing to third level institutions in Limerick and Clare. Our stats reflect the national statistics which recorded the highest increase of STIs amongst 20 to 29 year olds. There were a total number of 256 constituting to 47% first session rapid testing clients at the age between 20-29 and 133 at the age 30-39.



We also brought the rapid HIV and Syphilis testing services to direct provision centres and accommodation centres that are housing refugees and internationally displaced people. Acknowledgment goes to the collaborating stakeholders who are always accommodating in facilitating the outreach work.

During European Testing Week, we had the privilege of using a testing machine lent to us for the purpose of testing week. The machine tested for gonorrhoea and chlamydia and the uptake was very good. The machine took about two hours for the results to be available which lifted tremendous pressure and anxiety off the clients who did not have to wait longer to get their results.



Test Result	Total Sessions	
	Reactive	Negative
HIV	3	557
Syphilis	6	554
Gonorrhoea	1	59
Chlamydia	7	53

Rapid Hepatitis C Testing



The Rapid Hepatitis C Testing Service is an important and necessary part of the hepatitis service provision. It is an access point to support for people living with hepatitis C and also provides community education and prevention information.

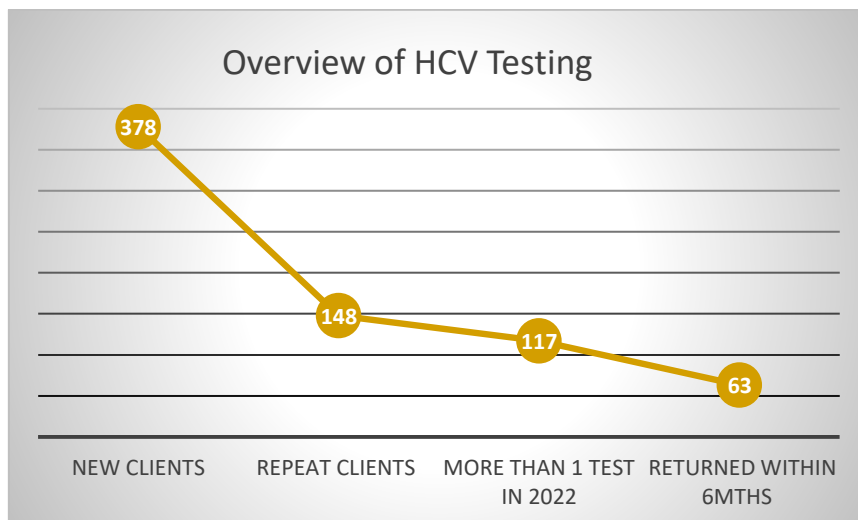
In 2022 we provided 526 Rapid Hepatitis C tests in various community settings to a variety of populations. We had 2 reactive results and referred clients to follow on care at our local University Hospital, Limerick.

The rapid HCV testing system is designed according to international best practice and as with our HIV testing we have follow on referrals for all reactive results in place. We also offer peer support and personal support for people who are thinking of testing or receive a HCV diagnosis.

The testing programme includes an educational and community aspect also. Through these services we are meeting people who are living with HCV in the community, some of whom may have opted out of medical services some time ago and may not have the knowledge of the new treatments available. Part of our service includes support so that people who may need treatment can access it.

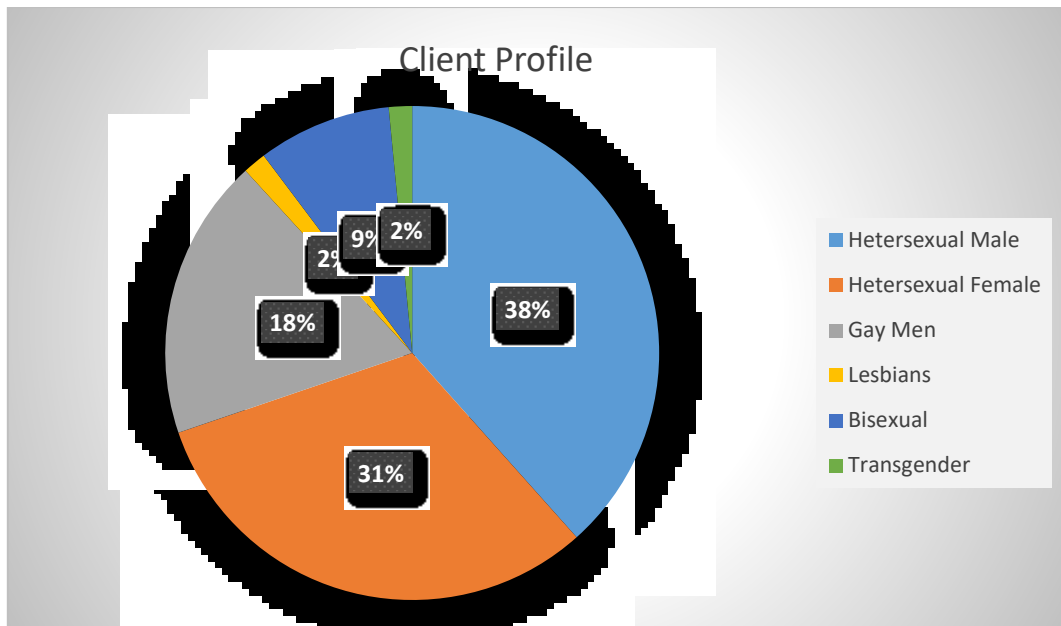
Good news is that, after actively advocating alongside others in our community for HCV treatment within the Mid-West region, 2 HCV nurses have been employed by UHL specifically for this role and a clinic for HCV is actively being established in UHL. Prior to this patients who are living with HCV had to travel to Galway, Cork, Dublin or Kilkenny for treatment.

In total we provided 526 Rapid HCV Tests; of these 378 individuals were new to our service, 148 were repeat clients to our service. 117 clients returned for more than one test throughout the year while 63 returned within 6 months.



The client profile of the hepatitis tests we provided were as follows:

202 were heterosexual male clients while 165 were heterosexual females. 97 identified as gay men, 8 identified as lesbians while 46 of our clients testing identified as bisexual and 8 were transgender.



This year saw us visit centres where Ukrainian people are living after fleeing war in their country. This was a bitter sweet experience while it was lovely to meet all the Ukrainian people, it was very sad that they were living in Ireland due to war in their own country. Most had left loved ones and friends behind, an experience that no one wants to be part of. While this was quite an emotional situation at times, we were privileged that we could help in some small way.

Sex Worker Service Provision

GOSHH provided personal support to 57 sex working clients throughout 2022, an increase of 27.

Most support offered to Sex Workers was around sexual health and coping strategies alongside advocacy. A number of sex worker clients are living with drug or alcohol addiction, either in recovery or in active addiction. Our issues of concern for sex workers are homelessness, poor health, debt, suicide ideation as well as supporting their partners financially. We also provided bulk buying of condoms to sex workers for a very small fee to help prevent STIs.

Our online profile was viewed 3,315 times. Most discussed topics were sexual health and safety. Conversations we were involved in included sexual health and sex worker discussions.

Our blogs posted concerned European testing Week, World Hepatitis Day, STI screening and our trial testing of Chlamydia and Gonorrhoea which has been very successful. We received thank you 1,479 times suggesting that our posts are very relevant to forum users. Since sex workers have direct access to our services through mobile, what's app and email, the private messaging on social media is less frequent now

We have been developing our services for indoor and outdoor workers separately as their needs are very different. We work in partnership with SWAI, McGarry House and Ana Liffey Drugs Project in order to provide the best possible service for sex workers. This year we also developed and provided a new training for professionals working with sex workers in various organisations.

Evaluation of Current Programmes

An evaluation of current programmes was undertaken internally by staff. The process began with discussions with facilitators who deliver each programme around their experiences of what does and doesn't work well, the aims and outcomes of each programme delivered, and how they are currently evaluating if these outcomes are met. Recommendations were then drawn up based on these initial findings.

Working with LGBTI+ Young People Workshops

Anonymous feedback from participants is always gathered in paper format after each 'Working with LGBTI+ Young People' workshop. Feedback from 42 participants who took part in five separate workshops was collated. The purpose of this process was to provide facilitators with a clearer understanding of the participants' experiences of the training programme as a whole as well as the opportunity to review the feedback in an easy to read format.

Workshops delivered at Youthreach Tumagrane

In April and May five GOSHH staff members were involved in the planning and delivery of workshops relating to Gender & Orientation and Sexual Health to both staff and students at Youthreach Tumagrane. The training was delivered over four separate workshops. In order to gauge the effectiveness of this project feedback was obtained from GOSHH staff, teachers and students via an anonymous online survey to determine whether it is worth repeating such a large scale project with other groups.

Talking with Young People about Sexual Health & HIV Workshops

A new one day workshop relating to upskilling professionals around talking with young people on the topic of sexual health and HIV was first delivered in October. It was subsequently delivered a second time in November. A total of 20 participants provided feedback via an online survey. As this is a new programme the insights contributed by participants is invaluable. It gives the facilitators an opportunity to tailor the content and structure as needed and to evaluate the effectiveness of the training on an ongoing basis.

Stand Up Awareness Week

During the week of November 14-18th GOSHH youth workers delivered a total of 10 workshops across the Midwest. An anonymous online survey was emailed to each school on completion of the training with a request that at least 5 students and 1 teacher provide feedback on the training they received. 8 schools completed the survey, consisting of 8 teachers and 59 students. This feedback supports the youth workers in their efforts to evaluate the training and prepare for future workshops with new insights on the processes that support their work.



STAFF TEAM & COMPANY DIRECTORS

STAFF TEAM

Manager	Ann Mason
Operations Manager	Cillian Flynn
Community Development Worker	Karina Murray
Gender & Orientation Support Worker	Patrick McElligott
Gender & Orientation Worker	Shauna Moloney
Health Promotion Worker	Erica Noonan
Outreach Worker	Eóin Burke
Personal Support Worker	Ann Piercy & Martina McKnight
Receptionist	Sarah Curtin & Róisín O'Connor
Sexual Health Project Worker	Gráinne Woulfe
Youth Worker	Jessica Curtin, & Edel Mitchell
Counsellors	Joan Condon, Patrick McElligott, Shauna Moloney, Hazel Mulcahy, Natasha O'Keeffe, Orla Sheedy, Veronica Sheehan, Kathryn Wilusz

COMPANY DIRECTORS

Noel Gavin - Chairperson
Andrew Gebelin - Secretary
Claire Flynn, Bernadette Kenny, Joe O'Meara,
William Ring, Martin Ryan

COMPANY DETAILS

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Company Number: 237659
Charity Number: CHY11363
Charities Regulatory Authority Number: 20030957



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TÚSLA

An Ghníomhaireacht um
Leanaí agus an Teaghlach
Child and Family Agency



**MID WEST REGIONAL
DRUGS & ALCOHOL FORUM**

Clare • Limerick • N Tipperary



etb

Bord Oideachais agus Oiliúna
Luimnigh agus an Chláir
Limerick and Clare
Education and Training Board



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An Roinn Leanaí, Comhionannais,
Míchumais, Lánpháirtíochta agus Óige
Department of Children, Equality,
Disability, Integration and Youth



**National LGBTI+
Inclusion Strategy**
2019-2021



An Roinn Dlí agus Cirt
Department of Justice



ciste na
gcuntas díomhaoin
the dormant
accounts fund



An Roinn Forbartha
Tuaithe agus Pobail
Department of Rural and
Community Development



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