

AIDS WEST
ANNUAL REPORT 2010



JULIE FEENEY IN CONCERT FOR AIDS WEST

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BACKGROUND

AIDS West is a charity operating at local and national level working in the area of HIV and sexual health. Based in Galway, we offer a free, confidential information helpline, support services to people affected by HIV and to those concerned about their sexual health, as well as education and prevention services in Counties Galway, Mayo and Roscommon. Our services are completely confidential. We are funded primarily by the HSE, donations and fundraising.

This is our 24th year in operation having been established in 1987 as a response to the growing world epidemic of HIV/AIDS. It was initially a voluntary group but has expanded from a small group of dedicated volunteers who had gathered together to assist HIV positive people in their final days, to a team of professional and committed people who strive to offer care and support to HIV positive people, their families and carers.

A major part of what we do now is providing education in the areas of sexual health, drugs and alcohol with the aim of preventing the spread of Sexually Transmitted Infections (STIs) and HIV.

Stigma remains a huge barrier for those who are affected by HIV. Major advancements have been made in medical treatment for HIV and people's life spans have increased dramatically but still isolation, loneliness and stigmatisation are common for those who are HIV positive. The demand for the services offered by AIDS West continues to grow year on year. Most recent information from the clinic at UCHG, Galway indicates that over 20-25 new cases of HIV were diagnosed in the past year. This year we had 13 new clients avail of our services at AIDS West.

The most recent National figures from HPSC (Health Protection Surveillance Centre) show for the full year ended December 2009 there were 395 new cases of HIV reported , also for the first six months of 2010 there were 168 new cases, leading to a cumulative total of 5,805 to the end of June 2010. Other sexually transmitted infections such as Chlamydia and Genital Warts continue to rise at alarming rates , year on year.

OUR MISSION

At AIDS West our mission is to work at improving the conditions of and delivering the highest quality of support to people living with HIV/AIDS , their loved ones, partners and caregivers.

AIDS West promotes positive sexual health and HIV/STIs awareness without prejudice or discrimination to all communities in the West of Ireland.

OUR OBJECTIVES

- To **OFFER SUPPORT** to people with HIV/AIDS and their loved ones
- To increase the **PUBLIC AWARENESS** of HIV/AIDS & STIs
- To enhance sexual well-being through **EDUCATION**
- To provide **opportunities for people living with HIV** (PLHIV) to have healthy lives
- To **influence POLICY** development in areas that impact HIV/STI's
- To work with the staff at the **Infectious Disease Clinic at UCHG** in providing support
- To provide particular focus and support to **MARGINALISED GROUPS**
- To provide a confidential **HELPLINE**
- Working with the Western Regional Drugs Task Force (WRDTF), to deliver holistic educational programmes on the **link between Sexual Health and Drugs/Alcohol.**

SOME KEY ACTIVITIES in 2010

Service/ Support to Clients /Families

Number HIV + Clients (13 new in 2010)	126
Contact/Meetings with Clients	708
Helpline/Information Calls	150
Website Visits	13951

Education, Sexual Health Programmes in Schools

Number of schools visits	40
Number of Programmes delivered	84
Number of Sessions delivered	243
Number of Participants	2077



Mayor of Galway is welcomed by Ciara (a volunteer) at our World AIDS Day Concert 2010

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

On behalf of the board of AIDS West, I am pleased to present the Annual Report for 2010. This report is an opportunity to reflect upon the work undertaken by AIDS West over the past year. It also gives an overview of the services that the organisation continues to provide and develop, highlighting responses to changing needs.

As an organisation, we continue to be concerned by the numbers presenting with an HIV positive diagnosis in Ireland and particularly in the West of Ireland, which was reflected in the number of new clients presenting for support this year. The most recent figures published by the Health Protection Surveillance Centre (HPSC) reveal almost 400 people were diagnosed in Ireland in 2009 and 168 in the first six months of 2010. Whilst there have been great advances made in medical treatments for HIV and thankfully people with HIV are living relatively normal lives, as a society we cannot afford to be complacent. HIV is a chronic condition, which requires lifetime medical treatment. The area of stigma and isolation remains a massive issue for those affected. There also continues to be dramatic

increases in other sexually transmitted infections and an increase in the misuse of drugs and alcohol across all sectors of society, but especially among young and vulnerable groups, which has accelerated the growth in HIV/STIs.

Our Goal at AIDS West must be to continue to bring awareness about the issues around Sexual Transmitted Infections into the public domain. Our many achievements at AIDS West during 20010, as outlined in the manager's summary, are a reflection of this goal and of the dedication and commitment of the organisation in the provision of the highest quality services to our clients.

We need the following:

- **Commitment of our funders, in recognising the value of the work we do and continuing to support us to realise our goals**
- **Commitment of our staff and voluntary supporters, fundraisers, outreach workers and donors, to provide the ongoing provision of services at the centre**
- **Commitment of our Board of Management to provide leadership and direction for the organisation**
- **Commitment of our partner organisations, both statutory and voluntary, to enable us to work innovatively in partnership by pooling resources**

On behalf of the Board I would like to thank you all for your support in the past year.

Keith Finnegan
Chairman

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

2010 was an extremely busy year for such a small group (5 full-time and 1 part-time employee) we achieved and indeed exceeded the goals we set ourselves.

A Summary

- **We continued to provide excellent professional care and support services. We had 126 HIV + clients , who we support , there we 13 new clients in this year.**
- **We ran a number of seminars/workshops for our service users, which focus on their self development**
- **We provided alternative treatment sessions to service users in our newly converted treatment room in Ozanam House , including reiki, acupuncture and massage therapy**
- **In schools alone we presented over 84 sexual health educational programmes throughout the region, visiting 40 schools. Over 2000 young people availed of these programmes**
- **We presented in excess of 40 sexual health educational programmes with professional, marginalised and youth groups in Galway, Clifden, Castlebar, Sligo, Ballyhaunis and Athlone, with over 400 in attendance**
- **We ran 9 Parenting workshops / seminars from Carna to Roscommon, delivered to over 280 parents entitled “ I am a Parent...Get me out of here”. It's aim is to help parents to communicate more effectively with their own teenagers, who daily face a society laden with sexual situations , drugs and alcohol.**
- **We had over 350 callers to the office for condoms and we distributed over 6000 condoms to at-risk groups, asylum seekers, the gay community etc. through our outreach programmes.**
- **We received an average of 3 helpline telephone calls per week and an equal number of calls/visits in regard to information on sexual health**
- **We had over 13000 visits to our website in 2010**
- **We had representation at more than 40 community events in 2010. At many of these we had information stands with staff /volunteers in attendance to answer queries etc.**
- **We distributed over 700 copies of our newsletter, each quarter, to medical centres, doctor's surgeries, public places (libraries, etc), other support groups, services users and the general public**

KEY HIGHLIGHTS IN 2010

Launch – The History of AIDS West

We launched the History of AIDS West, a very important publication which chronicles not just the history of the organisation but also the development of HIV in Ireland and the social attitudes towards HIV. Maria Joyce gave of her time to research and author the book. Great support was given by Geraldine Mills in bringing the project to fruition. Our founder, Evelyn Stevens, provided us with great technical direction and encouragement. Medtronic Ireland provided the financial backing to design and print the publication. The book will be both a memory and testimony to those many courageous people in our community.



Pictured at the launch of the History of AIDS West, John Kilmartin (Medtronic) with the Organisation's founders Evelyn Stevens / Angela Savage and Mia Joyce the author



Nick Fenlon, Evelyn Stevens, Orla Irwin, John Flannery of AIDS West Managers over the years.

Special Event – Irish AIDS Day Concert

We held a major awareness concert to mark Irish AIDS Day, 15th June which featured the Black Magic Big Band and special guest, the wonderful Julie Feeney. We had over 250 attending the concert on the night. The event got widespread publicity for AIDS West, and the work we do, it also helped to raise funds for our many projects. The venue was Monroe's and the proprietor, Garry Monroe said it was one of the best gigs the venue had in 2010 and has invited us back in 2011. A huge thanks to the Black Magicians and Julie who gave their time freely to our cause. It was a huge scoop having the amazing Julie perform. A big thanks to Orla Forde for background help with that .



The Black Magic Big band in action on the night in Monroe's



Julie Feeney makes her entrance

Annual World AIDS Day Memorial Service

We held a most successful World AIDS Day Candlelit Memorial Concert on December 1st at St Nicholas' Collegiate Church, Galway. Despite the arctic conditions with snow and frost, a huge crowd turned out to participate in a moving and memorable night to mark the 10th anniversary of the event. The Cois Cladaigh Choir, under the direction of maestro Brendan O' Connor were once again inspiring and we were also blessed with the beautiful voices of Sandra Schalks and Delia Boyce. The Mayor of Galway Councillor Michael Crowe spoke about the importance of the work of AIDS West. It was very heartening to see so many of the local councillors also there supporting the event. Evelyn Stevens, our founder and Paula Clarke, coaching consultant, were the guest speakers. Huge thanks to Patrick Towers (Board Member) for being master of ceremonies on the night.



St Nicolas' Collegiate Church in its glory on World AIDS Day, December 2010

Parenting Workshops I'm A Parent...Get Me Out Of Here

The aim of the workshop is to provide information and support to the parents of teenagers on sexual health, drugs, legal highs, alcohol and effective communication. The workshop creates a supportive environment where parents can learn factual information about drugs, alcohol and sexual health. They also provide parents with an opportunity to consider issues affecting teenagers while presenting advice on how to enhance communication between parents and their children.

As part of our work with the Western Regional Drugs Task Force we also provide a very successful parenting course. The course deals with all aspects of drugs and alcohol misuse and includes contributions from the Garda Siochana and RSE(Relationship, Sexuality ,Education) Co-ordinators. We also continue to provide youth worker leaders with drugs and alcohol education.



Pictures from the parenting workshop in Ballinasloe

THT Course Certificate in Understanding HIV & AIDS

This is a course we offer through The Terrence Higgins Trust (THT) & City and Guilds London. We ran the course for the first time in 2010 and it was an outstanding success. Over 20 individuals, from many differing backgrounds, who for various reasons, wished to achieve a qualification in understanding HIV, participated. The program is focused on three main areas, Transmission and Prevention of HIV, Stigma and Discrimination in HIV/ AIDS and Management of HIV/ AIDS. It involves a considerable degree of research, with submission of assignments. It was a great honour to work on the programme and we plan to run the course again in 2011.



**Both lecturers and attendees get into the swing of things at the THT course
“Understanding HIV”**

Education and Awareness

Our major drive this year has been on expanding our educational efforts. While our focus has been on secondary schools we have also targeted 3rd level institutions. We have held numerous workshops and attended many student fairs in NUI Galway, GMIT, Sligo IT and Athlone IT. We are constantly availing of opportunities to create awareness through local radio and the print media etc. We also have involvement with events such as a fun quiz night at the Stage Door with the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay ,Bi Sexual ,Trans-sexual) group



AIDS West stands at various events



Fun Quiz night at Stage door

Looking to the Future

As we look ahead to 2011, the challenges for communities in Ireland with regard to sexually transmitted infections are sadly as significant as in the past, if not worse. While the most recent national figures for HIV are slightly less than the previous year, which is good news, it must always be remembered that these are only the reported numbers and that HIV is not a reportable infection at present. Alarming Chlamydia numbers are up 20% on previous years.

There is less money available to fund Education, Prevention and Treatment programmes in schools. The downturn in the economy has not helped and adds greatly to our challenges. As always, we face these challenges with hope and confidence that we can continue to give an excellent service to our existing and future clients.

Our key goals remain the same:

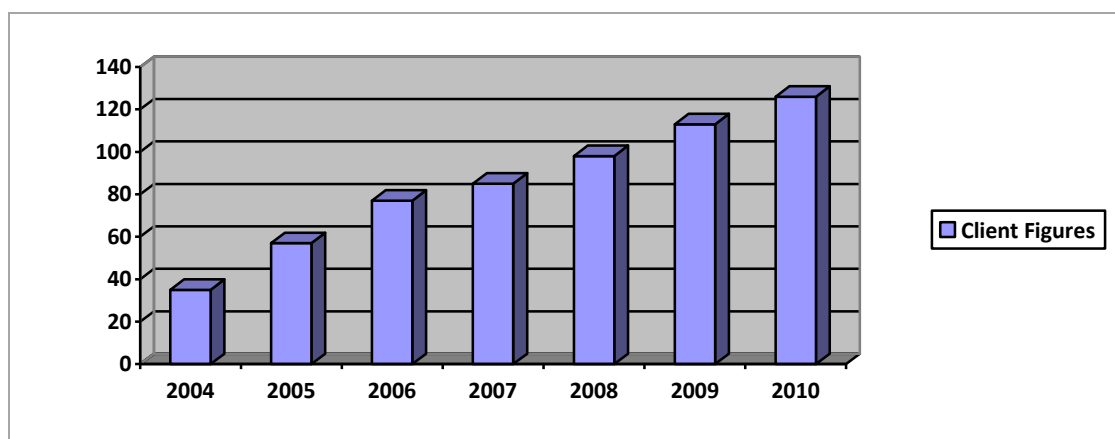
- To give hope to our clients and their families
- To be there for all those who need our support or who are worried about STIs or HIV
- To continue to advocate against the stigma that surrounds HIV/STI's
- To support those who feel isolated.
- To continue to get the message out concerning the growing prevalence of HIV/STIs within our society
- To focus on educating people on the importance of their sexual health young and old who could be at risk, we need to constantly emphasize the prevention of HIV/STIs infection
- Awareness, Awareness, Awareness about sexual health whenever and wherever we can.
- To provide outreach programmes to at risk communities

I know this is an onerous task but I look forward to the challenges ahead. We at AIDS WEST, our staff, board, and volunteers, know that with the support of sponsors, donors and the public at large, that we will continue to make a difference.

John Flannery
General Manager

SUPPORT SERVICES

Summary of Increasing Client Figures 2003 – 2011



We now have 126 clients, and in keeping with the trend of the past few years, those using our services continued to increase consistently year on year. We had 13 new clients in the past twelve months. The problems facing clients can vary but confidentiality and stigma remain consistent issues.

Summary of Clients by Region – 2010

Total	Galway 77	Mayo 22	Roscommon 12	Other 15
Percentage	62%	17%	9%	12%

The majority of our clients (62%) come from the Galway region in fact, 7 of the 13 new clients this year were Galway based. A number of new clients came from outside the West of Ireland, these would form part of the other category.

One client who contacted us is now living overseas but was originally from Ireland and just needed to have some support, being isolated from family and friends. As there are no services in the Northwest and Midlands, we work with a number of clients from these areas who would have been referred to us from UCHG. Interestingly 3 of the new clients had in fact being diagnosed some years back but are now only coming to us for support for the first time.

Mayo and Roscommon, make up over 25 % of the total and constitute a significant % of our cohort of clients.

Summary of Clients by Gender Base – 2010

	MSM	Heterosexual	Non Disclosed	Total
Male	30	35	8	73
Female		53		53
Total	30	88	8	126

A majority of our clients are heterosexual. This would include non nationals, asylum seekers etc. Nearly 50% of our clients are female. As mentioned previously clients still present with a vast number of varying issues including welfare problems, relationship difficulties, financial issues (economic downturn has not helped), acute life crises , family difficulties etc. but as already highlighted isolation/stigma remain the major issues, despite a greater openness in our society.

We continue to help and provide support to those who request it.



Gerry Coy (counsellor) , John Flannery and Lorriane O Connell at World Aids Day launch , December 2010

2010 FOCUS

In the pursuit of continuing the new initiatives of the past few years, our focus in the past twelve months has been on the following

- **In January we set up a room in the building for alternative treatments and installed all the requirements for a very user-friendly therapy room. We got assistance from Karen Egan, a therapist with a busy practice in Galway. Karen also agreed to provide a range of therapies fortnightly, including massage, reiki and acupuncture. In mid-February we began our sessions and many of our clients have benefited from these services**
- **Over the last twelve months we have set up external counselling for seven clients. We have financially supported any clients who were unable to pay and this has proved very successful, especially for those who live a long distance from Galway**
- **Buddying (linking new clients with older more experienced clients) has continued to be a major success and ten clients are now involved in the process.**
- **We held a very successful development seminar in June that was attended by 16-20 clients. We had lectures from two practice nurse managers from the Sexual Health Clinic at University College Hospital in Galway, a solicitor and a self-development professional, Paula Clarke. Following on from our work in previous years on this area of self development we are now working with Paula on a number of programmes and seminars for clients which we are planning to run in 2011.**



Friends of AIDS West at launch of the "History"

EDUCATION, PREVENTION & TRAINING PROGRAMMES

Our education service provides tailor-made sexual health education and prevention programmes to youth groups, schools, parents and many marginalised groups. This year we had Siobhan O Higgins who holds a PHD in Sexual Health, formally join our team on a part-time basis. The group has re-developed both schools and parenting programmes focusing on relevant knowledge, encouraging positive attitudes towards sexual health and empowering individuals with specific life skills to cope with all aspects of sexual health. This has greatly enhanced the quality and professionalism of the work we do and have been very well received.



Parenting nights at St Colmans, Claremorris



Siobhan and Lorriane in Gairmscoil Fheichin Naofa

SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION PROGRAMMES & SEMINARS DELIVERED IN 2010

	No. of Programmes		No. of Attendees
Schools	2009	42	955
	2010	84	2077
Other	2009	21	250
	2010	30	522
Parent Seminars	2009	1	45
	2010	9	296

- The scope and depth of our school based sexual health programme expanded throughout the year. The programme supports and complements the Social, Personal and Health Education Curriculum (SPHE) and particular, the Relationship, Sexuality and Education (RSE) module, which is already implemented in a number of schools. Our programme is conducted over a three-week period and consists of three sessions with each group.
- Outside of schools, marginalised groups are always a key focus for our educational programmes. We targeted and delivered our programme to such groups as asylum seekers, immigrant communities, the gay and lesbian communities, prison detention services and adult education groups.

Programmes (other) delivered this year include

Women's Sexual Health Course with Mayo Inter Cultural Agency

Sexual Health Workshops NUIG/GMIT /AIT, SIT

Workshop with Shout LGBT group

Staff Training with Galway Rape Crisis Centre

Staff Training with Dochas On Oige

Western Care Castlebar for adults with learning difficulties

Support to GAF youth café attendees (information sessions for minors)

**Workshops with Great Western/Lisbrook asylum hostels on Sexual Health,
Drugs & Alcohol**

Parenting workshop for African Parent groups

Workshop on Sexual Health for women, Lisbrook

Staff Training at Citizens Information and at Osterley Lodge for Cope

Development workshops at National Learning Centre.



Tracey Ferguson (P.R.O. AIDS West) & Lorraine O'Connell (SH Educator, AIDS West) enjoy our World AIDS Day Concert 2010

EDUCATION WORK WITH WESTERN REGIONAL DRUGS TASK FORCE

- We continued to work in conjunction with the Western Region Drugs Task Force (WRDTF) to deliver holistic drug and alcohol education/prevention programmes to young people, parents, professionals, organisations, ethnic minorities, at risk groups and communities where a need has been identified. The programmes focus on the links between abuse of drugs, alcohol and sexual health.
- We continued the rolling out of “Putting the Pieces Together” programme both within the western region and further afield. This will continue in 2011 and we will be evaluating its effectiveness.
- We actively participate in a number of the WRDTF committees, such as drug prevention, the voluntary sector and finance committees.
- Our work with WRDTF is focused on enhancing the capacity of professionals in the area of drugs and alcohol education, e.g. youth workers, teachers, social workers, community development projects (CDPs), family resource centres (FRCs), occupational health teams, etc.



Neil Wilson (centre) Drug and Alcohol Education coordinator at Parenting Course

PUBLIC AWARENESS

Our key efforts to raise public awareness regarding the need for informed sexual health and prevention of Sexually Transmitted infections focused on:

- Creating awareness via Press Releases, Advertising and Newspaper Articles
- Using every opportunity to talk on local and community radio programmes
- Publishing/Distributing our quarterly newsletters “Happiness is Vital”
- Organising and publicising major events i.e seminars, World AIDS Day Concert and fundraisers
- Utilising social networking ie: Facebook & Twitter
- Updating our own website regularly with interesting articles/information
- Presenting our DVD at public events, such as the parenting evening, Network meetings (Castlebar /Ballina), Lions club etc.
- Continuing our outreach programmes, delivering free condoms and information to gay bars/nightclubs weekly and into a number of asylum hostels
- Providing free information and condoms to numerous visitors to our offices each week

We are very grateful to our volunteers, without whom these programmes could not be run so successfully.



Cindy Dring prepares the Condom Tree at NUIG



Orla Forde / Julie Feeney at IAD

THE FUTURE

As we look to the future, we are very aware of the financial constraints that we all face and we have to be realistic about the services we can provide given those constraints. Our resolve is steadfast and our focus remains on continuing to provide these services, despite the obstacles.

Support Services

Our expectations are that demand for our services and support will continue to grow, be it for short term support, counseling sessions, advice and family issues. Our

Client base is now at 126 and we expect to add new clients in 2011. We have recognised an increase in the number of female and heterosexual clients from the immigrant community, which poses significant cultural challenges and additional demands on a small group like AIDS West. However in 2011, we will:

- **Continue with services in supporting existing and new client needs**
- **Develop both buddying systems and the personal development programs with clients**
- **Develop programmes to stamp out stigma**

Education

The demand for our school educational preventive programmes exceeds our ability to supply but we believe that preventative education programmes are a key element in the curtailment of the transmission of sexually transmitted infections, and we make the best efforts to meet this demand in 2011,

we will :

- **Continue with all existing educational programmes**
- **Focus on the Galway region, but support existing school programmes in Mayo and Roscommon**
- **Continue to run parenting seminars in schools and hold a major one in Galway city while expanding parenting seminars to national schools**

Awareness

Our outreach programmes have expanded and we have increased our voluntary help base in order to provide a better service. These services are primarily Galway based but our plan is to expand to other areas in Mayo and Roscommon,

We will

- **Continue with the publication of our Newsletter**
- **Have a greater focus on PR in all media**
- **Run a series of events including our World AIDS Day Concert, a major fundraiser, parenting seminars and Irish AIDS Day seminar.**

OTHER KEY FACTORS TO FUTURE SUCCESS

- **Having a strong and focused Board of Management to provide strategic direction whilst ensuring the best of governance**
- **Continue to maintain strong allegiances with other HIV support groups such as Dublin AIDS Alliance and Open Heart , as well as groups in Limerick, Cork and Donegal**
- **Developing our relationship with Terence Higgins Trust in the UK**
- **Continue our close working relationship with the STI Clinics.**
- **Maintain a positive working relationship with HSE /WRDTF**
- **Grow and develop our volunteer base.**

WORLD AIDS DAY CONCERT 2010



Board members with Mayor of Galway (top), Volunteers lighting the candles (bottom)

EMPLOYEE DETAILS

<u>Role</u>	<u>Name of Employee</u>	<u>Qualifications</u>
General Manager	John Flannery	B. Comm., F.C.A.
Support Service Co-ordinator	Gerry Coy	B.A. in Psychology & Health Studies Diploma in Psychology of Counselling, Diploma in Marketing
Education Co-ordinators Sexual Health	Lorraine O Connell Siobhan o Higgins	B.A. in Child Psychology and Social Studies ,NUI Galway Diploma in Health Promotion NUI Galway PhD in Sexual Health
Education Co-ordinator Drugs & Alcohol	Neil Wilson	B.A. in Theology, Durham University. P.G.C.E. , Cambridge University
Office Co – ordinator	Josephine Mohan	Secretarial Qualification in administration and finance
Public Relations Officer (Part-time)	Tracey Ferguson	B.A. in English/Greek/Roman Civilizations, Diploma in Applied Science, Certificate in Basic Counselling
Office Assistant	Kieran Browne	Job Initiative Scheme ,FAS

BOARD MEMBERS

<u>Name</u>	<u>Workplace</u>	<u>Occupation</u>
Keith Finnegan	GM at Galway Bay FM	CEO / Broadcaster
Pauline Staunton	GMIT, Galway	Counsellor
Evelyn Stevens	Retired	Co founder of AIDS West
Nuala Ward	LGBT representative	Chairperson Amach
Patrick Towers	Retired	Rector St Nicholas' Church
Kate Mulkerrins	Dept of Public Prosecutions, Dublin	Barrister
Dr Claire Connolly	Dept of Health Promotion, NUIG, Galway	Senior Lecturer in Health Promotion
Joe Barrett	Barrett HR and Coaching Services	Consultant
Suzanne McKane	Galway Refugee Support Service	Community Development Worker

Acknowledgements

We at AIDS WEST would like to express our sincere thanks to all those who have worked with us and supported us during 2010

- **To our principal funder, The Health Service Executive and also to the Western Regional Drug Task Force.**
- **To our many sponsors and donors, without whose kindness and generosity many of the programmes we undertook just could not have happened.**
- **To those who organised fundraisers for us throughout the year, special thanks to the Black Magic Big Band**
- **We would particularly like to thank the staff at the Infectious Disease Clinic at UCHG with whom we share a special working relationship. We appreciate the moral support and shared advice we get from the other HIV organisations in Dublin, Cork, Limerick and Donegal.**
- **We would like to acknowledge our appreciation to the staff and management at Terrence Higgins Trust who have been helpful and supportive to us.**
- **We are very grateful to our volunteers, without whom these programmes could not be run so successfully.**





To the following sponsors:

