

# RAINBOW NEWS

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## About The Rainbow Project

The Rainbow Project is a health organisation that works to improve the physical, mental & emotional health of gay, bisexual and non-heterosexual men in Northern Ireland.

We are the largest gay organisation in Northern Ireland and have two centres: one in Belfast city centre and the other in Foyle, L'Derry.

### Belfast Centre

The Rainbow Project  
Belfast LGBT Centre  
1st Floor  
9-13 Waring Street  
Belfast  
BT1 2DX

t: (028) 9031 9030  
f: (028) 9031 9031

### Foyle Centre

The Rainbow Project  
12a Queen Street  
L'Derry  
BT48 7EG

t: (028) 7128 3030  
f: (028) 7128 3060

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## Laramie Project Performances July 2011



During Pride this year the Rainbow Project was privileged to be involved in a production of the Laramie Project - a play based on the true events of Matthew Shepherd's death in Laramie, Wyoming in 1988 - the play was put on by the Dundonald Association of Music and Drama and was funded by the Policing Board to be performed in the Lyric Theatre over two evenings. - Both performances were sold out!

Following the performance each night the audience participated in a panel discussion with representatives from the Policing Board, community representatives and the PSNI on the issue of homophobia and how it is tackled and dealt with in Northern Ireland. Facilitating discussion on the first night, William Crawley posed questions on prejudices held by society with debate focusing on the need for early years interventions through schools and education to help tackle hate in our community. Harriet Long from the Rainbow Project led discussions on the second night and was joined on stage by Chair of the Board's Community Engagement Committee Gerry Kelly MLA, Kamala Lakhdir US Consul, Neil Jarman Institute of Conflict Research and C/Insp. Gabriel Moran.

The cultural similarities between Laramie and Northern Ireland and the role of passive homophobia in creating an environment where violent attacks can occur, was highlighted in both discussions. Personal experiences of hate crime and the willingness of victims to come forward and report incidents to the PSNI were discussed in some detail and the particular vulnerability of people who have been the victim of homophobic hate crime. It was agreed that ongoing work by the Rainbow Project in partnership with the PSNI in the Belfast area had gone some way to build confidence in the reporting of crime by the LGB&T community but there remained a lack of consistency in approach across NI.



There was also the need to 'signpost' support services so that people knew where to go to if help was needed. A straw poll of the audience also revealed that many people were not aware that hate law to tackle racism, sectarianism, or hostility based on sexual orientation or disability was introduced in Northern Ireland in 2004 and more work was needed to raise community awareness. We were very privileged to have the Chief Constable Matthew Baggott attend the second performance, along with the US Consul General Kamala Lakhdir and Gerry Kelly from the Northern Ireland Policing Board. Overall the events were a roaring success - many people commenting how nice it was to have something different in a new venue during Pride week. Thanks to those who helped to make it all happen.



## Women's Advocacy Service

Harriet Long our LGB&T Advocacy Officer is very excited to be working closely with LASI (Lesbian Advocacy Services Initiative) to improve information and access to the advocacy service for lesbian and bisexual women. From mid-September Harriet will be basing herself in the LASI offices one morning a week and to launch this new partnership hosted an information evening in the LASI community space on Wednesday 31st August 2011. The LGB&T advocacy service exists to support you if you are experiencing difficulties in terms of discrimination or violence. Many lesbian and bisexual women live with difficulties and stress in the workplace, housing and accommodation issues, relationship abuse, homophobia and exclusion with very few places to turn to for support

and information.

The LGB&T advocacy worker Harriet Long will be based up in the LASI offices every Tuesday morning available to any lesbian or bisexual woman needing advice and/or practical support. She can:

- Support you in your disclosure and reporting of incidents
- Advise you of your choice and control over what happens next
- Accompany you in a supportive role should you wish to take things further with PSNI, NIHE etc
- Provide information about support and services available to you and your family
- Speak on your behalf to agencies and service providers
- Raise awareness of issues you have faced/are facing to improve services in the future
- Treat all matters with sensitivity and respect for your privacy

If you want to contact Harriet to find out more or make an appointment you can leave a message at the LASI offices (90 249452) or email [harriet@rainbow-project.org](mailto:harriet@rainbow-project.org). Alternatively you can drop in one Tuesday morning from the 13th September, any time after 10am.

## Family Ties Project



The Family Ties Project held a showing of 'The Kids are all right' movie and follow-up discussion as part of the Belfast Pride Festival. Family Ties is a group for parents, by parents, providing advice, befriending and social and peer support for parents with LGB&T children and young people. The film was shown at the cube theatre in Crescent Arts Centre, and was used as a talking point about parenting as an LGB person and parenting LGB children and young people.

The film tells the story of a female same-sex couple and their children, and the subsequent upheaval when their two children introduce their sperm donor father back into family life. Representatives from LASI, The Rainbow Project and two parents from the Family Ties project fielded questions from the audience and shared some of their own personal stories. Many of those present also shared their own stories regarding parenting issues. For more information on the Family Ties Project please visit our

website ([www.familytiesproject.org.uk](http://www.familytiesproject.org.uk)) or contact Mal at The Rainbow Project.

**'The Other Side of The Rainbow' LGB&T Mental Health and Wellbeing** – A DVD resource aimed at promoting awareness of the increased risk of mental ill health and suicide amongst the LGB&T community and explaining the reasons why we experience this inequality.

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy\\_JW\\_Qz79s](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Hy_JW_Qz79s)

## The Rainbow Project pilots new series of short term Support Group Workshops.

The Rainbow Project is piloting a series of short term support group workshops for gay and bisexual men and men who are unsure of their sexual orientation. Initially three workshop themes have been established to provide men from particularly conflicting backgrounds a safe therapeutic space to share their individual life stories and seek possible ways forward towards greater self-acceptance and wellbeing.



- **Coming out to homophobic families and communities .**  
(August 2011...sorry no places available)
- **Reconciling faith and spirituality with same sex attraction.**  
(September 2011.places still available!!)
- **Managing multiple minority identities.**  
(October 2011...places still available!!)

The workshops take place over 2x3hour sessions during the course of a month in Belfast. The first session is to invite people to share their stories while the second session focuses on possible ways forward for every individual present. The groups are kept small (4-8 people) so that everyone is given time to speak. All workshops are completely confidential and facilitated by a qualified counsellor. A pre meeting is required with the counsellor to secure your place on any of the above support group workshops.

The first support group workshop on coming out to homophobic communities and families is to be completed next week and is for men who have or are currently finding it hard to come out for fear of rejection and homophobic recriminations

in their family or community. The group may be repeated later in the year and relocated to the Western Health and Social Services Board area depending on demand.

The second workshop on faith and same sex attraction is aimed at men who have found that their religion or faith has been or still is at conflict with their feelings of same sex attraction and seek greater reconciliation between these two important aspects of their identity. It will be jointly facilitated by Pádraig Ó Tuama of The Irish Peace Centres and the first session begins on Wednesday 14<sup>th</sup> September 2011.

The third workshop on multiple minority identities is held in conjunction with the Gay Ethnic Group and is aimed at those who have or still at times feel a heavier weight of discrimination and oppression by being part of LGBT community AS WELL as another minority identity whether that be ethnic, gender or physical ability, health status etc. The first session will take place in October 2011 date to be confirmed.

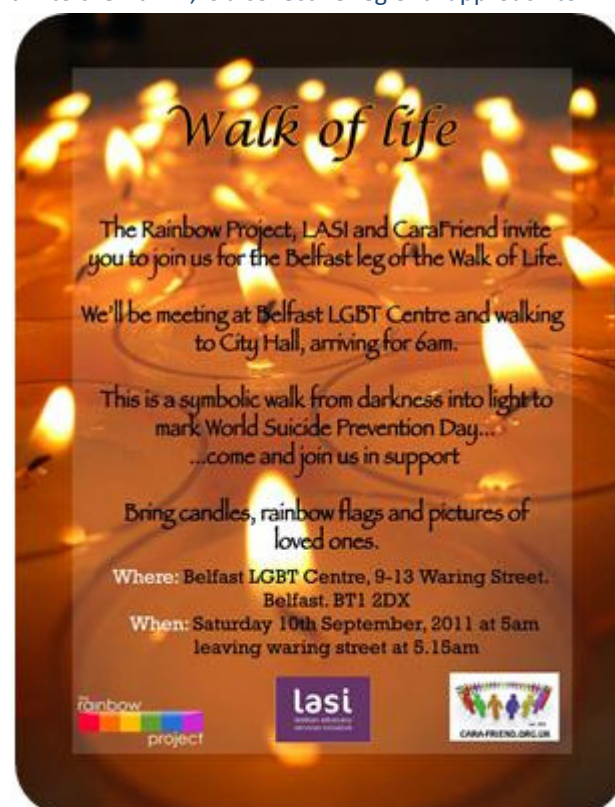
For more information on any of these workshops please contact **Dean Lee, Counsellor, The Rainbow Project on 028 9031 9030** or email [dean@rainbow-project.org](mailto:dean@rainbow-project.org)

## Walk Of Life

The annual 'Walk of Life' event, walking 'Out of the Darkness and into the Dawn', is a collective regional approach to mark World Suicide Prevention Day on Saturday 10th of September 2011. Representatives from Suicide Prevention and Support groups will make their way to converge on Belfast City Hall for 6am.

World Suicide Prevention Day is held on September 10th each year as an initiative of the International Association for Suicide Prevention (IASP), and is co-sponsored by the World Health Organization (WHO). The theme for this year's event is Preventing Suicide in Multicultural Societies. The Lord Mayor Cllr Niall O'Donnaghaile will be the keynote speaker. Other groups from across the province will be in attendance to mark the day as one of hope and reflection.

As Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people are more likely to experience thoughts of suicide and to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers, we would encourage you to join with us by meeting at Belfast LGBT Centre at 5:15am on Saturday 10th of September. Over the last two years, members of the LGB&T communities and their respective organisations have joined in this event. This year, Malachai O'Hara, Mental Health Officer at The Rainbow Project will speak at the event to highlight the increased risk of suicide amongst this community and to remember those lost through suicide.



## Book Your Free HIV testing Today



The Rainbow Project has launched a free HIV and Syphilis testing service. Tests are by appointment only and are available in Belfast, Newry and L'Derry.

### Belfast Appointments

**Monday** 10.00am - 1.00pm  
**Tuesday** 4.00pm - 8.00pm  
**Wednesday** 10.00am - 1.00pm  
**Sunday** 2.00pm - 6.00pm

### L'Derry Appointments

**Tuesday** 10.00am - 7.00pm

**Newry Appointments** are available on Monday 26<sup>th</sup> September from 12.00 - 7.00pm in the Newry Rainbow Community, 82A Hill Street, Newry.

Call us on 028 9031 9030 or email [harry@rainbow-project.org](mailto:harry@rainbow-project.org) to book your appointment.

## Sexual health Testing Clinics

### Pipeworks Sauna

Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> October 2011  
Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> December 2011

### Outside Sauna

Tuesday 22 November 2011

All information is strictly confidential and will not be shared with your G.P. Free admission to the sauna after testing. For further information contact Harry on 028 9031 9130 or email [harry@rainbow-project.org](mailto:harry@rainbow-project.org)

## Health and Social Care LGB&T Staff Forum

Following consultation with lesbian, gay, bi and trans staff across Health & Social Care, it has been agreed to establish a staff forum which is being co-ordinated by the Public Health Agency.

The first meetings take place in UNISON, Belfast at 6pm on Thursday 15<sup>th</sup> September and UNISON, Derry at 6pm on Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> October. Any LGBT member of staff is welcome to attend. This initiative is supported by regional health organisations, Health & Social Care Trusts and the trade unions.

It would be helpful for catering purposes to let us know if you are attending. You can also join the email list to receive information. All contact will be confidential.

Please email [Leanne.Mulholland@hscni.net](mailto:Leanne.Mulholland@hscni.net) or ring Leanne at 028 90321313 ext 2481.

## Youth Groups @ The Rainbow Project



Youth Groups are a Rainbow Project initiative run under our Young Persons Empowering programme, currently funded by the Big Lottery.

The youth groups are targeted at young people aged 14-25 who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender or who are exploring their sexual orientation.

The LADZ Group (Wednesday evenings 4.00 p. m. – 6.00 p.m.) and iD Girls (Tuesday evenings 6.00 p.m. – 8.00 p.m.) meet regularly in a well-managed safe environment at our Foyle Centre, as well as organising and participating in other projects both locally and regionally, including residential events with other youth groups from across Northern Ireland and further afield.

Past projects have included film making, LGBT history, resource design, website design, creative writing, practical photography, mask making, digital photography, pottery crafts, mural painting and storytelling. The Youth Groups have also run multiple events with guest speakers on issues that affect young men such as self-harm, suicide prevention, testicular cancer, HIV and safer sex, depression and promoting good mental health.

Access is also available to one to one support from experienced staff, advocacy, parental and family support, professional counselling with a qualified youth counsellor, literature and reading resources, TV and DVD nights, games as well as information on many issues. For further information contact Natalie in the Foyle Centre, 12a Queen Street, L'Derry telephone (028) 71283030 Email [natalie@rainbow-project.org](mailto:natalie@rainbow-project.org)

## Therapy Groups at The Rainbow Project

Therapy groups consists of a group of 9 individuals and one qualified therapist and supports clients with issues such as low self-esteem, depression, inability to get on with the partner or find a partner and past traumas to name a few. The process is that everyone gets to be heard and everyone gets to be a therapist whilst boundaries are held in the safe hands of a qualified therapist.

Like counselling, everyone in the group has to sign up to a confidentiality agreement and like counselling there will be a small donation (from £3.00 per session depending on disposable income) to cover room expenses and my time as therapist/group facilitator. Group therapy can be a powerful vehicle for change, different to but just as therapeutic as one to one counselling.

Recent research in the UK has shown that a mixture of 1 to 1 and group therapy is a powerful tool for change for gay and bisexual men. If this is the right time for you to make changes to your life and to explore your community more deeply then contact Martin by email at [martin@rainbow-project.org](mailto:martin@rainbow-project.org) or telephone 028 9031 9030.

## **Couples Counselling at The Rainbow Project**

Couple Counselling can help you and your significant other to understand each others hopes and needs using the skills of a qualified therapist. Common Issues are jealousy, controlling behaviours, inability to communicate needs, infidelity, inappropriate behaviour, arguing...etc

For further information contact with [martin@rainbow-project.org](mailto:martin@rainbow-project.org) or contact the office directly on 02890319030.

## **Personal Development at The Rainbow Project**

The first of this year's personal development programmes will be drawing to a close at the end of June. The programme takes up to 15 men from any age above 18 and addresses issues that are important to gay and bisexual men. These range from sex and relationships to intimacy, assertiveness, mental health, coming out, communication, addictive behaviours and much, much more.

The content is decided by the group participants, and is delivered in an informal and relaxed manner. This is a great opportunity to meet new people and explore the issues that are important to you. The programme lasts for twelve weeks and the next one will be running in September. Places are already starting to fill up.

So, if you know anyone that may benefit then get them to make contact with [malachai@rainbow-project.org](mailto:malachai@rainbow-project.org) or contact the office directly.