

## Mental Health Services at The Rainbow Project

The Rainbow Project works to improve the health and well-being of gay, bisexual and non-heterosexual men in Northern Ireland. We have a centre in Belfast and one in L'Derry where we provide a range of services that include;

- Information and Support
- Education and Training
- Health Promotion
- Advocacy
- Research
- Sexual Health Services
- Mental Health Services

## Training for Professionals

The Rainbow Project provides Sexual Orientation Awareness Training for health professionals in the Community, Voluntary and Statutory sectors. The broad issues covered in training will include, attitudes, language and their impact, homophobia, heterosexism and other key barriers for LGB people, health inequalities and outcomes, legislative and historical context, from policy to practice and a question and answer session. These sessions can be tailored appropriately to suit your organisation. For further information please contact The Rainbow Project directly.

## Training For Counsellors

In addition to the training for health professionals, The Rainbow Project have developed a 2 day training model for counsellors and counselling managers. This programme is one full day of sexual orientation awareness training and then a second day which is an introduction to gay affirmative therapy. For further information, please contact The Rainbow Project directly.

**Sexual orientation is not just about sex in the physical sense; it is about self-esteem, relationships, love, affection, trust, respect and belonging to a community.**



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# MENTAL HEALTH & WELL-BEING SERVICES



## What Mental Health Services does The Rainbow Project provide?

At The Rainbow Project, we provide a variety of services for gay and bisexual men and those men unsure of their sexual orientation. Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people are more likely to experience poorer mental health than their heterosexual counterparts. This is due to homophobia, heterosexism\*, discrimination, prejudice and isolation, rather than the misconception of mental illness being intrinsic to Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual or Transgender people. The mental health services provided by The Rainbow Project are for men, but we can provide information on the relevant services for women and people who are transgender. These are the services that we provide;

- Counselling
- Personal Development Programmes
- Personal Development Residential Programmes
- Listening Ear
- Gay/Bi Dads' support group
- HIV Support Group
- Family Ties
- Training
- Counsellor Specific Training

\*Heterosexism can be defined as the belief that heterosexuality is naturally superior to homosexuality or bisexuality, which reinforces the invisibility and lack of understanding of non-heterosexual people

## What does the Counselling Service provide?

The Rainbow Project provides the only co-cultural service in Northern Ireland for gay and bisexual men. That is counselling delivered by gay and bi men to gay/bi men. The counsellors are BACP/IACP accredited or working towards, and receive external, independent supervision, as well as regular on-going training.

*(For further information on our counselling services please see our 'Counselling Services for Gay and Bisexual Men' leaflet or visit our counselling website [www.rainbow-project.org/counselling](http://www.rainbow-project.org/counselling))*

## Personal Development Programmes and Residential at The Rainbow Project.

The Rainbow Project provides 2 Personal Development Programmes in each of our Foyle and Belfast offices each year. The Programmes in our Foyle Centre run for 8 weeks, and for 12 weeks in our Belfast Centre. These programmes are aimed at gay and bisexual men at risk of/or experiencing mental health issues. The programmes are incentivised with a celebratory event when completed and a team building event mid-way through. The programme specifically aims to address common issues faced by men, which may include, but are not limited to, sex, relationships and intimacy, assertiveness, coming out, knowing your rights, body image, community identity and looking after your mental health.

These programmes are free of charge, have a maximum number of 15 attendees per programme and the expectation is for attendance at all sessions, which are run on a weekly basis for 2 to 3 hours per session. The sessions are delivered through a variety of mediums, from individual work, to small and large group work, role-plays, facilitated discussion, quizzes and multi-media to name a few. These are also self-referral programmes. For further information, please contact The Rainbow Project directly.

## Personal Development Residential

The Rainbow Project provides 2 weekend residential per year. These are a follow-up support for men who have already been through the 8 or 12 week personal development programme.

## Listening Ear

The Rainbow Project staff team are trained to provide listening ear services for clients that drop-in or telephone either our Belfast or Foyle offices. This service is empathetic, confidential and non-judgemental and is often the first step for clients in accessing our various services. Where appropriate, we signpost clients onto services, whether in-house or to partner agencies.

## Peer and Social Support Groups

The Rainbow Project provides a variety of support groups for gay and bisexual men. These are social and peer support groups for men experiencing similar issues. Currently, The Rainbow Project has a support group for men living with HIV and men who are parents. Each of these groups meets once per month and is facilitated by a member of The Rainbow Project staff team. This is a safe space for men to discuss these issues in a confidential manner, get support from other men in a similar experience and build social networks to reduce the risks associated with isolation. The Rainbow Project are also helping to establish a group for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender people from ethnic minority groups. This group will meet on a quarterly basis. For further information on any of the peer and support groups please contact The Rainbow project directly.

## Family Ties

In partnership with Cara-Friend, The Rainbow Project facilitates the Family Ties group. This is a peer and social support group for parents and guardians who have Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and/or Transgender children. This group meets once a month and is facilitated by staff and volunteers from The Rainbow Project and Cara-Friend. The group has a befriending mechanism where new parents are matched up with long-standing group members who have received basic telephone helpline and sexual orientation awareness training, and provide telephone support.

In addition, Family Ties have produced a pamphlet for parents/guardians in 2008, which addresses many of the main concerns that parents/guardians first have when they discover their child is gay, lesbian, bisexual and/or transgender. For further information on the Family Ties project, please visit our website or contact The Rainbow Project directly. [www.familytiesproject.org.uk](http://www.familytiesproject.org.uk)