



**d-Talk** would like to wish all our readers **a very Merry Christmas!**

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what's d-story with

**CHRISTMAS DRINKING**  
SPENDING TIME WITH OUR KIDS and  
**PAUL McGRATH**

also **HOW MUCH DO YOUNG PEOPLE IN  
BALLYFERMOT REALLY KNOW ABOUT  
DRUGS...**

and **MUCH, MUCH MORE!**

# what's d-STORY?



d-NEWS

## A CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

from the Ballyfermot Local Drugs Task Force

As Chairperson of the Ballyfermot Local Drugs Task Force I would like to wish everyone a very Happy Christmas.

Christmas can be a great time. A time for celebrating the good things with our families and friends, a time for remembering the year gone by, and fostering hopes for the year to come.

For many people and families in Ballyfermot, drug use has changed that picture from one of comfort and hope to a life to be endured. Drug use and addiction can damage lives, ruin potential, shatter people's hopes and ideals. Alongside the drug user, families and friends and those close to them can be badly affected.

But that is only part of the story. The other part is about new beginnings and hope. It's about the many people living in our community who have overcome addiction and re-learned to live being drug free. It's about the people who are stabilised and are looking forward to the future. It's about families who have learned to come to terms with all the parts of their home and are optimistic about good things to come.

People can and do survive drug use and addiction. Others don't and their absence leaves a huge gap for their families who will miss them this Christmas.

The message from the Ballyfermot Local Drugs Task Force to everyone this Christmas is that there is help and support out there for people and families affected by drug use and its consequences. There are many services working on the ground that can help people make real improvements to their lives and to support them through difficult times. Addiction can be a very heavy burden and it is not one that people need carry alone. At the back of this newsletter is a list of the services available in your area. If you need them please make the call.

Have a very Happy and Safe Christmas.

David Connolly  
Chairperson of BLDTF

## PURITY OF HEROIN

**Drug users and service providers are being warned that a dramatic increase in the purity of heroin could lead to the likelihood of overdoses.** Heroin comes from the plant opium which is mostly grown in Afghanistan. The UN has reported that there has been a huge 50% increase in the amount of opium being produced in Afghanistan over the last year. An increase in opium normally results in stronger and purer heroin on the streets. Stronger heroin means that drug users need to take smaller amounts to get the same high. Otherwise they are putting themselves at serious risk of overdose. Warning that the increase represented a very severe health threat, Antonia Maria Costa, the head of the UN Office of Drugs and Crime said: "I therefore strongly encourage you, the local health authorities and the community drug treatment centres in your country to take every possible measure in the period ahead".

## NOMINATION OF COMMUNITY REPS

### Ballyfermot Local Drugs Task Force

The nomination of Community Representatives on to the Ballyfermot Local Drugs Task Force will take place on:

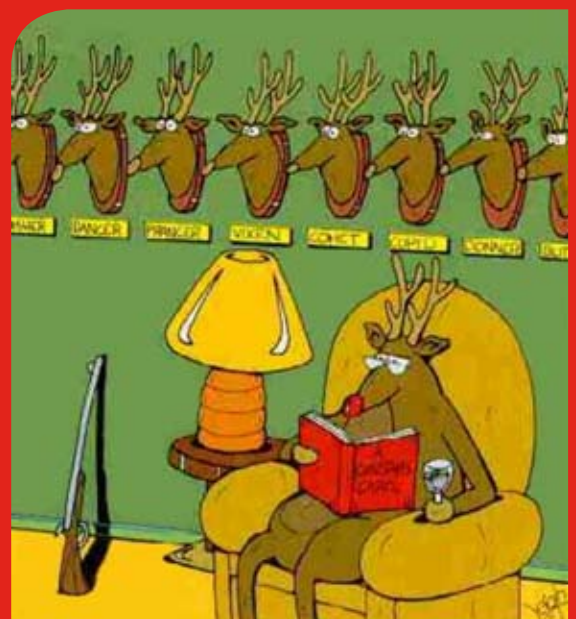
**Monday the 29th of January 2007  
At the Ballyfermot Community & Civic Centre  
From 7.30-9pm**

There are now spaces for additional Community Representatives on the Ballyfermot Local Drugs Task Force.

Anybody wishing to be nominated as a Community Representative should have an interest in the drugs issue, live in the area and be prepared to represent their area on the Task Force. Support, training and skills development will be provided to all Community Representatives on an ongoing basis.

All persons seeking consideration for nomination must formally register their name with the Community Support Worker in Ballyfermot Advance by Friday 19th January. This can be done in writing or by email and must contain your name, address and contact number.

For further information please contact the Community Support Worker in Ballyfermot Advance on 6238001 or at [community@ballyfermotadvance.ie](mailto:community@ballyfermotadvance.ie)



All of the other reindeer used to  
laugh and call him names



# what's the story with **ALCOHOL?**

**Units:** Women                      Men  
2-3 units a day                      3-4 units a day

**Examples:**

- A bottle of wine (12%) has 9 units
- A pint of beer has 2 units.
- A single whiskey has 1 unit.
- A bottle of alcopops has 1.5 units

**Going on a major bender once a week while still coming in under the recommended allowance doesn't work and can be dangerous. Remember the science. Alcohol depresses your brain and slows down some of its major functions.**



- **'Making good judgements and keeping yourself safe reduce significantly when you drink large amounts of alcohol in one go.'**
- **'NEVER mix alcohol and other drugs. Your brain and body are sensitive pieces of equipment and they cannot survive some of the effects of mixing alcohol and other drugs. Most overdoses are caused by mixing alcohol with another drug.'**



**Alcohol is a part of daily life for many people. Christmas especially is a time when people often increase the amount that they drink. Yet many of us actually know very little about alcohol and how it works.**

The Central Nervous System is made up of the brain and the spinal cord. Movement, speech, vision and other bodily functions are all controlled by the central nervous system. Drinking alcohol has the effect of slowing it down. So for example when somebody slurs their speech after a few pints that's because the part of their brain that controls speech is working at a much slower speed. The same goes for somebody who gets unsteady on their feet after a lot of drink. This time the coordination part of the brain has slowed down and movement is effected.

- The strongest effects of alcohol lessen after a few hours. But the central nervous system can stay agitated or irritated for a lot longer. This is basically what we call a 'hangover'. Some people try to ease the hangover by starting to drink again, but really they are only making themselves more miserable in the long run, because once the nervous system has been agitated by alcohol it needs time to recover.
- People often feel more confident and sociable when they are drinking. They may feel more relaxed and think that the alcohol has given them this sense of wellbeing. In fact, alcohol doesn't actually 'give' anything. What it does do is slow everything down so that those parts of the brain that send out feelings of nervousness and anxiety take a break for a while and the person feels better over all.
- For somebody who is already depressed the opposite can happen. Alcohol can have the effect of making them feel even worse. That's because alcohol itself is a depressant. A person's mood at the time of drinking will determine how they react to the alcohol.
- Women's bodies can tolerate less alcohol than men. This is because on average women's bodies tend to be smaller than men's and they contain less muscle and blood, both of which dilute alcohol in the body.

- People can become physically and psychologically addicted to alcohol. Some people drink very large amounts of alcohol and seem to function normally until their bodies, especially their liver, can't take it anymore. Other people feel they need small amounts of alcohol to get them through the day. Levels of addiction depends on the person, their body and their state of mind.



## alcohol and families at **CHRISTMAS**

**Bernie McGrane is a sessional Addiction Counsellor working with the Ballyfermot Advance Project. Here she talks about some of the difficulties facing families around Christmas where alcohol has become a problem.**

As Christmas draws near many people will be preparing to celebrate the festive season, decorating their homes, and buying gifts to exchange with their friends and loved ones. However, for others the story is very different. Many men, women and children out there live in dread of the Christmas celebrations. The financial pressure created at Christmas can cause much worry; family commitments are another source of pressure; and above all, excessive use of alcohol makes Christmas one of the most vulnerable times of the year for families.

During this season of "peace and goodwill" many women find themselves waiting in dread for their spouse to come home. Waiting in anticipation of what will happen can cause physical symptoms, such as pounding of the heart, sweating of the palms. People living like this can be consumed by an intense fear. They say it's often the anticipation of abuse they find extremely difficult, - waiting for something to happen is both physically and mentally draining. This type of emotional abuse can cause people to live in terror; and in turn can lead to severe depression and, in extreme circumstances, to suicide.

A person recently said to me as she recalled her childhood "I hate Christmas; I remember opening the door to my friends, I only opened so there was a small crack, just enough for me to talk out to them. I wouldn't dare open the door further, in case they'd want to come in. I never knew what way he (her father) would come home. All hell could break loose. You never knew who was going to get it'. This person gives an insight into the feelings of a child, who experiences excessive use of alcohol at home, feelings of fear, shame, loneliness and isolation. In addition there may be the extra burden of

the social stigma often attached to having alcoholic parents, and again this affects self esteem all through life.

In the course of my work I come across a significant increase in the number of women excessively abusing alcohol. This is a very worrying trend as this can lead to all sorts of difficulties for the family and affect every aspect of their lives for many years thereafter. The increase in drinking is not confined to Christmas alone. However, around Christmas it becomes more frequent. Life is extremely difficult for the children and young adults living in this situation. It is further exaggerated if the father is not living with the family or if the father himself is abusing alcohol.

Christmas has long been regarded as the children's festival; therefore it is painful to think of the many children or young adults in our communities who will spend Christmas for the most part on their own, or in the company of carers who are effectively not available to them because of the excessive use of alcohol.

I know that I have described the darker side of Christmas but for some people reading this article this will seem all too familiar. The message which needs to be put across this Christmas is that festive celebrations are for the family. Children rely on their parents to provide a safe environment in the home. The responsible use of alcohol could go some way to creating this environment for our children this Christmas.

My thanks to the person who allowed me to use their experience to illustrate my point in writing this article.

This year make it a happier Christmas.

*Bernie McGrane*



There are a lot of people out there who will find it difficult to stay off drink and drugs this Christmas when all around them everyone else seems to be letting go. If you want to meet up with people in a similar position for a cup of coffee and some Christmas pudding you can give some of the following numbers a call and they will give you times for your local group. There are also numbers for family members affected by drink problems in the home.

### **Alcoholics Anonymous**

1890 412 412

### **Narcotics Anonymous**

6728000

### **AI-Anon**

8732699

Fellowship for people close to the problem drinker

### **Alateen**

8732699

Fellowship for children of problem drinkers



# helping you answer your family QUESTIONS



## missing **Someone Close**

**My kids find Christmas very sad because they miss their Dad who died around this time. Is there anything I can do?**

Christmas time is often a sad and lonely time, particularly for people who are suffering grief and loss.

- It is good to talk to children about their feelings of loss and to remind them that while Christmas is a happy time it is normal to miss loved ones.
- Visit the grave of the loved one near Christmas and place a special flower or plant in memory of that person.
- Talk about the lost loved one and remember fun times.
- Be patient and remember that a child's way of grieving might be quite different from yours. Children often like to be open and frank about their feelings – this is very healthy and should be nurtured.
- For children who are less able to put words on how they are feeling give them time and space. They might not want to talk openly but sometimes it helps just to hear that they are not alone in how they are feeling. It might help to say something like, "I think a lot about Daddy at Christmas - I miss him". Simply saying this without expecting a response could give a child a real sense of relief.

## spending **Time Together**

**I don't have enough money to buy my children all the things that I think they should have. Toys are so expensive but I don't want my child to be disappointed on Christmas morning. Help please!**

• These days a lot of importance is given to how much things cost – the things that are thought to be the most valuable are the things that cost the most money. This is not always true.

• There is no doubt that children like to receive presents that they have asked for but don't forget that there are things that you can do for your child that they will value much more and which will cost you nothing.

• Don't forget how great it is for a child to simply be with their parent. Playing with your child for a good half hour or more is extremely valuable and often underestimated.

• Children also love to hear stories about how things were when their parents and grandparents were children. Tell them about what you used to eat and do at Christmas time when you were a child. You will be amazed at how much your child will value and remember this experience. It will last into their future much more powerfully than owning the most expensive and popular toy.

• Sometimes the sense of disappointment that we think our children feel if they don't get the most expensive toy is really a feeling that comes from ourselves. Our own feelings of anxiety and worry about being a good parent gets confused with what we think our children are feeling.

• For many different reasons parents sometimes don't spend a lot of time playing and talking with their children. Be mindful of this at Christmas time and organise to spend extra time doing special things with your children. You might be surprised at how much happier it makes them and you.



## *Familiscope*

Familiscope is an organisation supported by the Ballyfermot Local Drugs Task Force and others that works with families, individuals and communities to prevent children and young people developing behavioural, communication and relationship difficulties. It also works to support people who live and work with children and young people who are already experiencing such challenges. The staff team includes a music therapist, family therapist, art therapist, speech and language therapist, youth liaison officer and a community based child welfare worker working with families living with addiction.

## national **HELPLINES**

Below you will find some useful contacts that are available over the Christmas period and throughout the year.

**Childline** **1800 666 666**

For children and young people who are experiencing any type of difficulty and need to talk to somebody confidentially.

**Samaritans** **1850 60 90 90**  
or Text Us: 087-2609090

For anybody who is feeling depressed, lonely or suicidal and needs a listening ear. No problem is too big or small.

**Women's Aid** **1800 341 900**

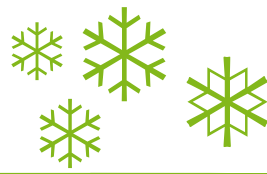
For women and children who are experiencing violence in the home and need practical help and advice.

**Homeless Services** **1800 724 724**

For advice, information and access to emergency accommodation.

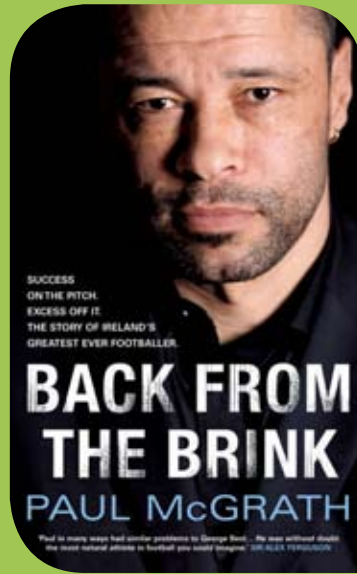
If you're going to read one book this Christmas make it...

# 'BACK FROM THE BRINK' BY PAUL McGRATH



d-REVIEW

'Back from the Brink' is a deeply honest and warm account of Paul McGrath's life. From his secret birth in England and his journey through different foster care and children's homes in Dublin, until he hit the heights of club and International football. And back again. It paints a picture of a man struggling with his demons and his ongoing battle with drink and prescription drugs even when he was at the pinnacle of his football career. The honesty of the book is compounded by the number of people who contributed their accounts to it. His birth mother Betty tells how she brought him to a children's home under the pretence of visiting a friend and left him behind heartbroken. Mick McCarthy describes having to make the decision to drop Paul from the Irish squad for the 1997 Ireland v Macedonia match because he was too drunk to leave the hotel.



His old friends recount the energy and drive that the young Paul McGrath had to succeed at football against all the odds. Ultimately the book carries a message of hope and an enduring spirit:

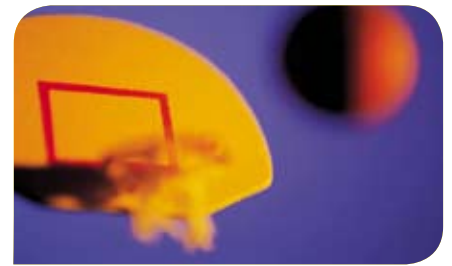
'Yet, for all the lost days and broken promises, my life is incredibly rich too. I have three children I genuinely adore and three others that I pray- in time- will know me as a decent human. I have a mother I love, I have some extraordinary friends. Maybe I need to remind myself of that more often. To remember to count my blessings. To get up in the morning and think about what it is I can do as distinct from what it is I can't. The past is unchangeable. It's time to stop looking behind'.

**Ballyfermot Advance has three copies of 'Back from the Brink' to give away. The first three correct answers drawn to the following question win a book. Entries with your answer, name and address to Ballyfermot Advance, Le Fanu House, 3b Le Fanu Rd, Ballyfermot.**

**Q What was the first English Football Club Paul McGrath played for?**



By Andrew McDonnell from the Matt Talbot Community Trust



## sport 4 FUN

The Base Youth Health Programme were delighted to be awarded funding from the Community Grants Scheme, managed by Ballyfermot Advance Project. The funding has been put to good use.

In association with Caritas College School Completion Programme, the funding is being used to provide Basketball coaching to a group of teenage girls in Caritas College. The coaching is part of an ongoing programme facilitated through the homework club by the Caritas College School Completion Programme.

The initiative provides a group of up to 25 teenage girls with the opportunity to access the group once a week for the entire school calendar year.

Every Monday directly after school the group can avail of, a healthy snack, supervised homework time with teaching assistance followed by expert Basketball coaching from a professional coach.

Monday was chosen as the day by the School Completion Programme as school attendance can traditionally be poor on that day. Having the group on Monday encourages better attendance on that day and has a beneficial effect on the rest of the week

The underlying message is always one of keeping your body and mind healthy with nutritious snacks such as Fruit and Water, the importance of education as well as participating in a sport such as Basketball.

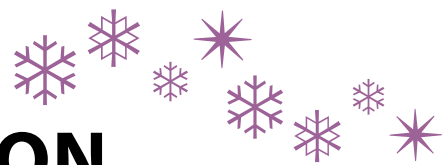
The group has plans to enter a team into the Community Games competition in 2007 and hope to expand the Sport 4 Fun programme into 2007 – 2008 school year.

### A thought for Christmas..

For a long time it seemed to me that real life was about to begin, but there was always some obstacle in the way. Something had to be got through first, some unfinished business; time still to be served, a debt to be paid. Then life would begin. At last it dawned on me that these obstacles were my life.

Bette Howland





LEFT TO RIGHT: Tracy Doran, Blaitnaid Dunne, Rachel Grendon & Aisling Kelleher

**d-Talk spoke to Tracy (18) and Rachel (20), Peer Educators with the Ballyfermot Youth Services about teaching drug awareness in the local schools and what young people in Ballyfermot think about drugs.....**

**A Tell me about the Peer Education Programme. You go around to the Schools in Ballyfermot...the secondary or primary?**

T Yeah, both. From sixth class in primary and then up to fourteen or fifteen year olds in Secondary. It's a six week programme.

R Within the programme itself we have ice breakers and games. It's enjoyable... its not all work and I think that's what they like about it as well because they know that it's not going in and getting pens and paper like and writing loads down.

T It's not like we go in and tell them 'Take this down!'

R We play 'What's in the Bag?' We do a scenario where you're coming home and you find a bag and the bag has drugs in it. But we don't say if they are legal or illegal. We try to see what the group thinks and we try to broaden their knowledge. We let them help each other instead of us giving them things.

T Like we draw a body and ask them questions like how different drugs would affect someone and then we'd draw the effects on the body.

**A What level of knowledge or understanding would the younger age group in sixth class in primary school have of drugs?**

R A good bit of it, like they'd be able to tell you: gear, heroin, coke, hash, grass, they've lots of names for hash. We ask the girls in the group 'Does any of you know what this drug is?' and try and get them to feed back to the group instead of us telling them. We want to get them to understand it at their level and not at our level.

T We're not telling them what drugs are illegal...they're telling us what they think and

sharing it amongst each other.

**A Is the information they have about drugs normally accurate?**

R Normally they're quite on the button. When I was that age, like we weren't oblivious we knew things, but it was nothing to what they know. They could tell you an awful lot like about what you do with coke and all and you're sitting there thinking 'I didn't know that at that age, how do they know it?' But you hear more about it now on the news and you hear more about people using different drugs, especially coke, nowadays and using things in different ways.

**A And is that where you think that they are getting the information?**

R Yeah...and I think it's that the younger generation is using more drugs as well and that's where they're getting the information from too. And just from listening to kids on the back of the bus, just from talking generally.

**A Is there a negative perception of people who use drugs?**

R Yeah. 'Junkies'. You try and explain to them that the addiction they have is a disease and it's just something that a person has to deal with themselves at their own pace and in their own time. If they're saying 'junkie' you have to stop them and say 'Girls, its not junkie. It's a drug addict'. I know that at that age I would have said 'junkie' just from hearing people saying it like 'Alco' instead of alcoholic and you pick up things so easily. When you hear people using a phrase you use it yourself, especially when you're younger because you think you're cool.

**A Why do people think people get involved in drugs in the first place?**

R From my own experience an awful lot of young people I know are using coke as a slimming aid...which its not...they think that it's going to help them stop eating. They're drinking and they're doing it to give them energy. But I don't think that a lot of

people know that when you take coke it speeds you up and when you take drink it slows you down. I know a person who was taking coke and drinking vodka and she died over it, because of her heart, because the vodka slows you down and the coke speeds you up. From things we've done in the schools they think it's because people are sad, they're unhappy or down. Or they think people do it because they just want to do it. There all different opinions.

**A What benefit do you think it is for you to be doing the courses in the schools instead of the kids teachers?**

R We're meeting them at their level. What they are trying to do with Peer Education and Drug Awareness is to bring people in around the age of the young people in the schools. Like I know when I was that age if someone came in who was 28 or 29 and was talking I would have been looking at them saying 'How would you know? You don't know what goes on in my own world because you're ten years older than me'. With me and Tracy, they know that we're around their age and that we'd know what's going on, they'd say like 'They're our age, they live in the Ballyfermot area, they know where we're coming from, they probably have brothers and sisters, they know what goes on in the area and they probably know what drugs are being used...and they've probably been in situations where things have happened'.

**A So it makes it more real..**

R Yeah it makes it more real and it's easier to build up relationships with them because you're on a one to one level with them. If they have any problems they know they can come and talk to you. What I feel is that it's only for six weeks and I'd love for it to be for a lot longer. I'd love it to be even for First Years. One class every week for the year.

peer **EDUCATION**

The Ballyfermot Youth Services will launch 'Can U HAC it' a new Drugs Awareness Pack for young people on the 17th January. Further information from Janice McGarry at Ballyfermot Youth Services on 6231431

# d-SERVICES

## TREATMENT: Drugs Services

The services listed below work with people who are using all types of drugs and who want help and support:

**Aisling Clinic**, Cherry Orchard Hospital, Ballyfermot Road  
ph: 6206010

**Fortune House**, Cherry Orchard Hospital ph: 6206030

**Drugs/HIV Helpline** ph: 1800 459 459

**Ballyfermot Advance Project & Ballyfermot Community Drug Team**, Le Fanu House, 3b Le Fanu Road, Ballyfermot  
ph: 6238001

**Ballyfermot STAR**, 7 Drumfinn Park, Ballyfermot ph: 6238002

**HSE Outreach Team**, Bridge House, Cherry Orchard Hospital  
ph: 620 6400

**Fusion-CPL**, Cherry Orchard Health Centre, Cherry Orchard Grove  
ph: 6231499

**Young Persons Programme**, Fortune House, Cherry Orchard Hospital  
ph: 6206400

**HSE Alcohol Services** ph: 4516589

**Cheshire Community Service**, Drug-related Disability Support, Ballyfermot Civic & Community Centre, Ballyfermot Rd ph: 620 7187

## REHABILITATION: Education, Training & Supported Employment Services

The services listed below offer education, training and supported employment opportunities for people at different stages of recovery:

**Ballyfermot STAR-Realt Nua**, 36b&c Lavery Avenue, Parkwest Industrial Estate, Cherry Orchard ph: 612 0950

**Fusion-CPL**, Cherry Orchard Health Centre, Cherry Orchard Grove  
ph: 623 1499

**HSE Integration Team**, Cherry Orchard Hospital ph: 6206400

**Matt Talbot Community Trust**, Rear Assumption Church, Kylemore Rd, Ballyfermot ph: 626 4899

**Ballyfermot LES Jobsplan**, 4 Drumfinn Park, Ballyfermot  
ph: 623 5612

**Ballyfermot Theatre Workshop**, Ballyfermot Community and Civic centre ph: 643 4722

**Ballyfermot Advance**, Support for Residential Initiative  
ph: 623 8001

## FAMILY SUPPORT/PREVENTION & EDUCATION: Family and Children's Services

The services listed below offer support and advice to families affected by addiction:

**Ballyfermot STAR- Realt na Clann**, 11 Drumfinn Park, Ballyfermot  
ph: 623 5644

**BSII**, Orchard Community Centre, Orchard Grove, Cherry Orchard  
ph: 626 7041

**Familiscope**, 201c Decies Road, Ballyfermot ph: 620 6842

**Cherry Orchard Family Centre**, Cherry Orchard Avenue  
ph: 6231313

**Ballyfermot Advance-Support for Childcare Initiative**, Le Fanu House, 3b Le Fanu Road, Ballyfermot ph: 623 8001

**Family Support Service**, Social Work Department, Bridge House, Cherry Orchard Hospital ph: 6206387

## YOUNG PEOPLE'S SERVICES

The services listed below work with young people at risk or already involved in drug use by providing direct services or diversionary activities:

**Candle**, Lynch's Lane, Ballyfermot ph: 6269111

**HSE Young Persons Programme/Project**, Fortune House, Cherry Orchard Hospital ph: 6206400

**Ballyfermot Youth Services- Peer Education**, 41 Decies Rd, Ballyfermot ph: 623 1431

**Cherry Orchard Integrated Youth Services**, Equine Centre, Cherry Orchard Green ph: 620 9160

**Ballyfermot Youthreach**, 49 Rossmore Avenue, Ballyfermot  
ph: 623 1055

**The Base**, Ballyfermot Community and Civic Centre, Ballyfermot Rd  
ph: 620 7195

**Familiscope**, 201c Decies Road, Ballyfermot ph: 620 6842

## OTHER SERVICES

### NA Meetings:

**Ballyfermot Resource Centre:** Tues & Thurs 8.30pm, Sat 7pm

### AA Meetings:

**Ballyfermot Library:** Mon, Wed, Fri 12.30pm

### Needle Exchange:

Aisling Clinic Mon 2.15-4.30pm  
Ballyfermot Health Centre Tues 2.15-4.30pm  
Merchants Quay Mon-Fri 2-4.30pm

### HIV/Hepatitis/STD Testing:

Aisling Clinic 6206010  
St James HIV/STD Clinic 416 2315  
Merchants Quay Project 6790044  
Women's Health Clinic 1800 201 187 or 6699515  
Gay Men's Health Project 6602189 or 6699553

