



A Community of Hospitality, Hope and Justice

Annual Review 2008



Merchants Quay Ireland

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Merchants Quay Ireland

Vision, Values, Mission

Merchants Quay Ireland is a national voluntary agency providing services for homeless people and for drug users. We provide creative and innovative responses to the issues of drug use and homelessness in Ireland.

Vision

We look forward to a society where nobody is without a place to call home and where drug related harm is minimized and the range and quality of drugs services is maximized.

Values

- Providing quality services for drug users and homeless people
- Offering access for the most marginalized
- Promoting positive change
- Working at the cutting edge
- Involving our Service Users
- Valuing our staff
- Managing finances prudently
- Promoting partnership

Mission

Merchants Quay Ireland is a community of hospitality, hope and justice. We seek to:

- Work for justice and opportunity for those who are excluded in partnership with those who share our aims
- Create a place of safety, compassion and welcome for all who enter our doors and offer high quality services to meet their needs
- Remain committed to supporting all who work in Merchants Quay to enable us to achieve our full potential in our various roles
- Believe in and cherish the value of every human being in keeping with our commitment to social justice coming from our origins in the Franciscan Tradition.

Looking Back

The year in review



2008 was a busy and challenging year for all at Merchants Quay Ireland. Early in the year we saw the commencement of the much delayed building extension programme at our drug-free residential treatment centre, St. Francis Farm. This is a major boost and, when completed, will allow us to provide single room accommodation for up to 28 persons at St. Francis Farm.

In 2008 the Franciscans began the redevelopment of the Friary at Merchants Quay. In order to facilitate the Franciscans building work we moved our Head Office from Merchants Quay to Newmarket, our “Into Education and Employment” programmes to a centre in Chapelizod and our Training and Research Unit to the Sophia Housing premises on Cork Street. In due course we plan to move our Open Access Services to the Riverbank Centre on Merchants Quay which is being made available to us by the Franciscans. The building needs substantial renovations and this will involve a concerted public appeal campaign.

All of our services were working flat out in 2008. During the year 4,657 individuals accessed our needle exchange facility - this is more than one third of all heroin users in Dublin and represents a slight increase on 2007. Nearly 1,000 were new attendees which highlights the fact that substantial numbers of new people continue to be drawn into problem drug use.

We began to see the first effects of the economic crisis with more people than ever seeking help at our drop in centre for homeless people. Overall the number of interventions with homeless people showed a 12% increase on 2007. We provided more than 48,000 meals for homeless people, 4% more than in 2007. We expect even sharper increases in demand in 2009.

During 2008 we saw the continuation of a number of worrying trends. Injecting drug use is increasingly widespread across the country. In High Park, our Dublin based residential treatment centre, for example, 40% of those accessing treatment in 2008 were from outside the Dublin area. We are now working with injecting drug users from almost every county in Ireland including the most rural. Access to appropriate treatment and support is totally inadequate in many parts of the country.

To address some of the gaps we began working with the Midlands Regional Drug Task Force to establish a Community Harm Reduction and Family Support Service headquartered in Athlone covering the four midland counties of Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath.

In addition, through our collaboration with the Irish Prison Service, we now have Addiction Counsellors based in all Prisons providing increased access to drug treatment services for prisoners nationwide.

We believe that it is vital that the full range of drug services, including needle exchange, are developed at local level across the country. Not only do these programmes assist in preventing the spread of HIV and Hep C infection and other health risks but they also act as an invaluable first point of contact with active drug users and offer pathways towards treatment and rehabilitation

Looking ahead, like everyone else, we are worried about the future. It seems inevitable that the numbers of persons becoming homeless or becoming dependent on drugs will increase substantially. It is *holy writ* that the prudent response of Government in this crisis is to cut social spending. Equally, our very generous donors from the business sector and from the community are finding that they have less money than before and this makes fundraising more difficult.

In these tough times, more than ever, investing in homeless and drugs services makes economic sense. All of the evidence shows that the overall economic costs associated with these problems for example, in terms of healthcare and the criminal justice system, are much greater when such problems are left unaddressed.

In the recession of the 1980's, in order to save money, nothing was done to address the growing drugs problem and investment in social and public housing was substantially cut back. The people we work with are still paying the costs associated with those decisions. As a society we cannot afford to make the same mistakes again.

Tony Geoghegan, Chief Executive

Welcome Message

from the Chairman of the Board



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2009 is a year of anniversaries. 40 years since the 'Tea Rooms' opened and 20 years since the establishment of Merchants' Quay Project. However, the very real challenges of today - with a significantly increased need for our services allied to the prospect of decreased funding - mean that we cannot rest on our laurels. On the contrary, MQI means to confront these issues squarely and energetically so that we can be true to our vision of a society where nobody is without a place to call home and where the incidence of drug related harm is greatly reduced and the range and quality of drugs services are maximised.

In recent years the MQI Board has worked with MQI Executive in strengthening the structure of the organisation and in developing a range of internal control systems, all of which are bearing fruit and will position us well to deal with prospective cuts in funding and the generally changed socio-economic environment. The Executive now has increased strengths in the areas of Financial Control, Human Resources and Fundraising, while the Board of Directors has been delighted to welcome Mick Price as a member. Mick brings a financial background as well as experience in the area of the provision of addiction services. The Board will continue to seek a variety of other expertise as well as ensuring that those we work with are involved in the shaping of our planning and strategies.

In celebrating the anniversaries of our services, the founding inspiration comes to mind. The Franciscans who began this work decades ago heard the words of Jesus of Nazareth "*When I was hungry you gave me food, when I was naked you clothed me, when I was in prison you visited me... Whatever you do to the least of my brothers and sisters, you do it to me.*" MQI continues to believe in and cherish the value of every human being in keeping with our commitment to social justice for all. These values are at the heart of what we do and we extend a welcome to all those who share that vision to come and be a part of our organisation's future.

Caoimhin O' Laoide, Chairman

'Reeling in the years'



Clockwise from Top-left. Minister John O'Connell Officially opening Merchants Quay Project Drug Services (1992).
Bro Sebastian welcomes HRH Prince Charles on his visit to Merchants Quay (2002).
Beaumont House, the original farm house at what is now St. Francis Farm.
First group of Volunteers for Merchants Quay Project with founding director, Sean Cassin OFM, back row, far right (1989).
President Mary McAleese opens Fáiltiú Resource Center (2000).

Merchants Quay Ireland

A Brief History

- 1969** Bro. Sebastian and Bro. Salvador begin serving afternoon tea for homeless men and others in need from the parlor in the Franciscan Friary.
- 1970** They move afternoon tea to the Old Oratory. The number of men coming to the “Tea Room” continues to grow.
- 1977** The Tea Room begins serving breakfast to fill a gap in services while the Capuchin Food Centre is under refurbishment. Numbers for breakfast remain high after Capuchin’s reopen so the Tea Room continues serving breakfast.
- 1979** The Tea Room moves to a temporary building on the Friary grounds. As a result of generous donations of fish and chicken from local business men, the Tea Room begins serving a cooked meal on Sunday for 120-130 men.
- 1984** The Tea Room moves to a permanent base. A garage at the back of the Friary is converted and given a separate entrance from Cook St. This becomes St Francis’ Food Centre.
- 1989** Under the direction of Fr Sean Cassin, a new project is established to respond to the growing drug problem in Dublin offering information, counselling and referral to appropriate services. The demand for these services grows and the Merchants Quay Project begins to take shape.
- 1990** An Advisory Team is formed of professionals with experience in drugs and HIV services to define the direction of the project. The project takes on its first volunteers to meet the increased needs of clients.
- 1991** The Merchants Quay Project is registered as a limited company and granted charitable status. The objective of the project is to prevent the spread of HIV through drug use and related behavior and to provide non-judgemental care and treatment to drug users with HIV and their families. As part of this, MQI opened the first NGO needle exchange service in the country.
- 1991** House in Swords opens, providing residential respite care programme and detox support.
- 1992** House in Monaghan opens, providing family breaks and a respite care programme.
- 1994** Day Programme begins, providing skills training and structured support programmes.
- 1995** High Park opens (replacing Swords house) providing a fully structured 16 week residential detox to drug free programme.
- 1996** The Fáilteú Resource Centre is set up to cater to the daytime needs of homeless people. These services include counselling, settlement, information and advice, crisis intervention, personal development programme, low-threshold drop-in service and two meals per day.
- 1997** MQI links with U.C.D. and develops a formal accredited professional training programme in Drugs Counselling & Intervention Skills.
- 1997** Research department is established.
- 1998** St Francis Farm is given to Merchants Quay by the Franciscan Friars to be used as a therapeutic educational community. Settlement Service begins working with homeless people in Dublin.
- 2000** President McAleese formally opens the refurbished Failtiu Center.
- 2001** Homeless Service is expanded to 7 days a week, 10 hours a day.
- 2002** MQI hosts an International Conference on Homelessness and Drugs. Prince Charles visits Merchants Quay.
- 2007** Partnership with Irish Prison Service to provide addiction counselling services in all prisons.
- 2008** Midland Community Harm Reduction & Family Support Services established covering the four counties of Laois, Offaly, Longford and Westmeath.
- 2008** Head Office, Training and Day Programmes move to new premises leaving core services at Merchants Quay.

Addressing Crisis

Open Access Services

➤ Open Access Homeless Services

The Drop-in Centre for People who are Homeless (Fáiltiú)

The aim of the Drop-in Service is to provide a “one stop shop” offering a range of interlinked services meeting the key daytime needs of homeless persons with the twin purpose of minimising harm associated with life on the streets and offering clear pathways towards settlement and reintegration. Our Cook Street Centre is open seven days a week from 7.15a.m. to 4.30p.m. with shorter hours at weekends.

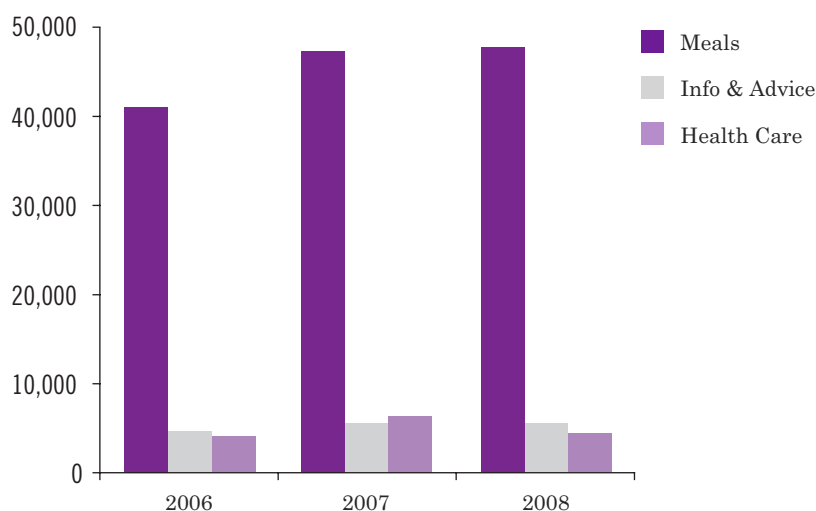


Figure 1. Homeless Services between 2006 and 2008.

The services we provide for homeless people from this centre are as follows:

- **Information, Advice and Crisis Support Service:** The drop-in service includes assessment of service users’ needs, advice and information on health, social welfare, emergency accommodation, long-term housing and other issues. In 2008 we recorded 5,875 supportive interventions with service users of our homeless service. This was an increase of 12% since 2007. Interventions include key working sessions, referrals to emergency accommodation, social work services, medical services and social welfare services, help in contacting friends or family, access to drug treatment and support in a variety of other matters.
- **Meals Service:** Homeless persons are offered two meals a day (breakfast and lunch). A total of 48,471 meals were provided in 2008, an increase of 4% on the same period in 2007.

➤ Primary Health Care Services

MQI is working in partnership with the HSE in providing a primary health care service for homeless people. The service has General Practitioners, a dentist, nurses, a counsellor and a chiropodist. All told there were 4,469 health care interventions during the year. This represents a decrease relative to 2007, resulting from a decision to limit the number of attendees to ensure adequate time was given to those presenting.

- **Nursing:** In 2008 there were a total of 2,841 nursing interventions, or 236 per month. The drop-in nurse led clinic provides a full range of primary health care services such as wound care management, blood testing, sexual health, medication management and women's and men's health issues. Mental health presentations range from acutely suicidal clients to those who need to be referred back to services they have lost contact with. Referrals to tertiary services such as A&E and other hospital services and advocacy are a large part of the nursing role.

The citywide Primary Care Safety Net Service, of which MQI medical unit is part, is still developing and will provide for consistency and continuity of care between those homeless services involved.

- **Counselling:** Homelessness is often associated with severe stresses and difficulties in life, and it is not surprising that many people find it hard to cope. The Counselling Service for homeless people works at two levels – firstly providing a brief crisis counselling service targeted at service users in distress and secondly offering medium to long-term counselling relating to issues such as relationships and bereavement as well as issues of drugs and homelessness. In addition we provide group support for homeless service users attending our day programmes. We provided 382 counselling sessions in 2008.
- **Dental Service:** In 2008 there were 285 dental interventions, averaging 24 each month. This represents a significant decline relative to 2007, resulting from staffing shortages for part of the year.
- **G.P Service:** Our two GP's dealt with in the region of 949 consultations or 79 per month with a variety of acute and chronic illnesses.
- **Acupuncture:** We offer auricular acupuncture to address a variety of issues including stress and drug/alcohol stabilisation. In 2008 up to 6 persons availed of this service each week.

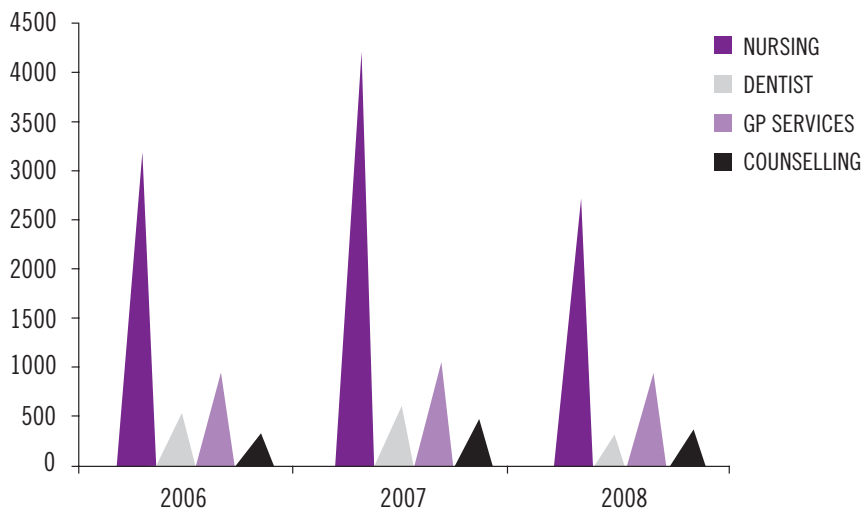


Figure 2. Primary Health Care Services 2006- 2008.

➤ Open Access Drugs Services

These services can be accessed by drug users simply by walking in from the street. For this reason we are often the first place to which drug users turn for help. Services include:

Needle Exchange – Health Promotion Unit

Here we provide drug users with information about the risks associated with drug use and the means to minimise such risks. We also offer drug users a pathway into treatment and the possibility of living life without drugs.

In our needle exchange and health promotion service our main focus is on HIV and hepatitis prevention, promoting safer injecting techniques and safer sex and on providing information on overdose and other risks. We also offer early referral to drug treatment services.

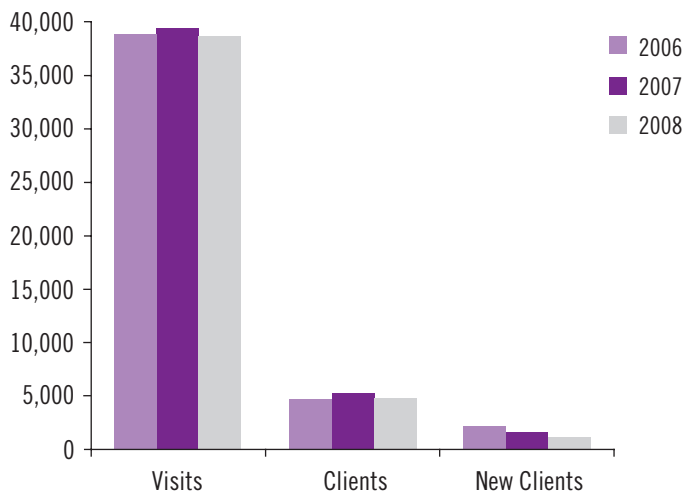


Figure 3. Attendance at HPU between 2006 and 2008.

As can be seen from the above chart the number of visits to the needle exchange stayed steady at just under 40,000. The number of service users was equally steady at 4,657. Almost 1,000 new injectors presented in 2008. In addition a total of 904 safer injecting workshops were undertaken with injecting drug users. The figures here serve as a reminder that heroin use remains at very high levels and that significant numbers of new people are beginning to use heroin every year.

The vast majority of those using the HPU service (84%) were male. Just under 1 in 7 were female. The age profile of heroin users appear to be getting older with 85% of the total being over 25 and almost half being over 30 (46%).

Crisis Contact Service

Many of the drug users who come to us are in crisis. Some have become homeless, others have financial problems or are in trouble with the law. Relationship or family breakdown is an issue for many people. We offer drug users practical help in getting through such difficulties – by providing counselling, advice and information, through referral to other relevant services or by providing support to people facing court action and working with people in prison.

Outreach Service

This service aims to make contact with drug users not engaged with services and to make referrals to Merchants Quay Ireland services as well as to other external agencies. In 2008 the outreach team contacted vulnerable drug users on the street, collected used needles and syringes and also liaised with local community groups, the Gardai, Dublin City Council and other drugs and homeless service providers.

Family Support Group

The Family Support Group meets regularly providing a forum where parents, and other close relatives and friends of drug users are offered support and advice on a range of issues. The participants provide support for each other and the group is continually open to new members joining. The Family Support Group is linked to the Citywide Family Support Network which offers an opportunity to raise issues at a national level.

Work with Clients in Custody

Merchants Quay Ireland endeavours to continue working with service users within the prison system. We offer support, advice and counselling with a particular focus on accessing appropriate post-release options. This process entails a close working arrangement with the Probation and Welfare Service and with members of the legal profession.

Promoting Positive Change

Progression Pathways Programmes

THESE SERVICES OFFER THE FIRST STEPS AWAY FROM CRISIS DRUG USE AND TOWARDS STABILITY. THEY ARE AIMED AT PEOPLE WHO ARE CURRENTLY USING STREET DRUGS, OR THOSE RECENTLY ENGAGED IN TREATMENT AND SEEKING MORE STABILITY AND STRUCTURE IN THEIR LIVES.

➤ Services include:

Stabilization Services

- ***Methadone Prescribing Treatment and Support:***
Methadone substitution therapy helps people to break their links with illegal and high-risk drug use. There were 20 service users on this programme in 2008.
- ***Into Education and Employment*** offering therapeutic groups, life skills training, personal development work and pre-employment training to help drug users reintegrate into society. Links with the City of Dublin VEC allow us to include a strong educational component for this programme, which is of considerable importance in addressing the educational disadvantage experienced by so many of our service users. There were 12 participants on this year long programme in 2008.

Settlement Service

The Settlement Service is delivered to those seeking to move away from being homeless and we actively seek to include those who have a history of drug and alcohol problems. We work with homeless people from a variety of settings - rough sleeping, hostels, B&B's, short-term arrangements with friends/families and transitional and supported accommodation. We have a dedicated settlement service targeted at those using our residential drug treatment services, where a high proportion of participants have effectively no home to return to on completing the programme.

We use assessment interviews, individual support plans, one-to-one key working sessions, group support, personal development and life skills training, advocacy and pre and post settlement support to assist our service users to find, access, and sustain long-term appropriate accommodation. We have a dedicated Settlement Worker for our Residential Drug Treatment Services who works to ensure that homeless persons becoming drug free in those services are able to secure appropriate long term housing.

During the settlement process the main issues being addressed with service users are accessing interim and long term accommodation, family relationships, money management, counselling, legal matters, and employment.

In 2008 the Settlement Team (including our High Park Settlement Worker) carried out 86 assessments, and provided support to 96 persons working with an average of 34 service users each month.

In addition, we also saw increased use of services such as money advice services and counselling, improved relationships with family members and friends and a return to employment, education or vocational training.

The Integration Programme

This innovative programme offers transitional accommodation to drug users who find themselves homeless after completing residential drug treatment. The programme aims at assisting the integration of former drug users into mainstream society by providing opportunities for those who had drug or alcohol problems to participate in group and one-to-one therapeutic sessions and activities.

These service users have transitional accommodation in a house in the Dublin suburbs or Athlone for a period of up to six months. Residents are offered one-to-one support, an aftercare group and a weekly community night with staff. Service users' settlement needs are addressed from the start of their stay. All service users are also offered one-to-one counselling and support during their stay.

There were nine individual clients residing in our house in Ballymount in 2008. Of these six moved on successfully to longer term accommodation. Two persons relapsed however both are still linking in with services. One remained in the house into 2009. Our drug free aftercare group worked with an average of 6-8 people each week. In Athlone there were 6 residents in the house in the course of the year, 5 of these moved onto independent accommodation, with three taking up further education and two taking up employment. One relapsed and has now reengaged in treatment.

Training and Work Programmes

- ***FAS – Community Employment Services:*** MQI works in partnership with FAS to provide hands on training for prospective drugs workers, clients and post-treatment service users. This is done through a number of Community Employment (CE) projects based in our services. CE projects provide participants with skills that enable them to access permanent employment. In many cases our CE projects have often provided service users with their first experience of paid employment.

In 2008 a total of 124 persons participated in CE programmes at Merchants Quay Ireland. A total of 53 completed their FAS placement at Merchants Quay in 2008 and of these 17 (28%) secured permanent employment and 2 (4%) moved into full time further education. In addition 20 (38%) completed a MQI residential or community based drugs intervention programme as part of their CE project.

➤ Midlands Family Support and Community Harm Reduction Service

In recent years heroin use has become a major issue in many towns and cities across Ireland that were previously untouched by this problem. In light of this, Merchants Quay Ireland, with support and funding from the Midlands Regional Drugs Task Force is now providing much needed services in the four Midlands counties of Laois, Longford, Offaly and Westmeath.

The MQI Family Support and Community Harm Reduction Team was established late in 2008 and provides dedicated outreach services for individuals actively using drugs and Family Support Services focussed on the needs of the families of active drug users.

The team, which consists of two Family Support Workers and two Outreach Workers, has two key functions:

1. Provision of Family Support Services

Family support is seen as increasingly important in the areas of drug treatment and prevention. This involves the provision of services and interventions that support families impacted by drug use. Such services include counselling, guidance and advice.

The Family Support Service assists families to:

- Deal with the trauma associated with discovering their loved one is involved in drug use.
- Work with vulnerable families in the area of drugs prevention.
- Act as a reliable source of information and advice on drug use and related issues.
- Deal with the reaction of neighbours and others to this fact.
- Overcome self blaming responses.
- Create positive coping strategies that will help parent and thus the drug user.
- Make positive decisions.
- Build their capacity to respond.
- Set rules of behaviour for those living in their house.
- Challenge views that they caused it, can control it, or can cure it.



We also provide one-to-one support by appointment for parents and other close relatives seeking advice and support. We work to proactively link people with other support or treatment services that may be relevant to their needs.

2. Provision of Community Harm Reduction Services

We are aware that most local people and organisations are very concerned about the level of public and community harm associated with drug use in their communities. They are also very worried about the risks that drug users may expose themselves to.

Aims

The aims of this service are as follows:

- To act as a resource for community groups in the target areas in their efforts to minimise the impact of problem drug use on their communities.
- To reduce the level of individual and community harm experienced in local communities as a result of drug use in the target areas.
- To reduce the associated level of public health risk experienced in the designated areas.
- To provide harm reduction and crisis support services to local drug users in places and at times where such services are unavailable.
- To ensure that problems associated with drug use are minimised.
- Promote a partnership model between Residents Associations, Estate Management Committees, Community Policing services and Midlands Outreach Service in tackling the drugs issue at local level.

By the end of the year our Family Support Service was providing services to 26 families across the four counties and our harm reduction service was working with 43 drug users between Athlone and Portlaoise. ■

➤ National Prison Based Addiction Counselling Service

Overview of Services

In 2007 Merchants Quay Ireland, in co-operation with the Irish Prison Service and its partners, began rolling out a new national counselling service for prisoners with drugs and alcohol problems. In 2008 we completed the roll out of the service to 13 Prisons in all parts of the country. The service offers structured assessments and evidence-based counselling interventions with clearly defined treatment plans and goals. This occurs within the context of care planning within multidisciplinary teams.

Counselling is available to prisoners who have a history of drug use including opiates, cocaine, ecstasy, amphetamines, LSD, anxiolitics, hypnotics, alcohol, cannabis and other illicit and licit drugs.

Aims and Objectives

- Assisting prisoners to achieving and maintaining abstinence from alcohol or other drugs of abuse.
- To reduce the amount and frequency of drug use via harm reduction strategies.
- Motivating prisoners to seek detoxification or inpatient treatment; supporting stabilisation/abstinence orientated models of working i.e. group-work, peer support & mentoring.
- Via the counselling relationship to seek to resolve or reduce problems and improve physical, emotional, social, family, interpersonal, occupational, academic, spiritual, financial, and legal functioning.
- To work towards positive lifestyle change.
- Assisting prisoners in relapse prevention, coping skills and problem solving empowerment.
- To refer prisoners where appropriate i.e. case management, medical, social, vocational, economic needs and to work within a multi disciplinary context, information sharing and shared care.
- To deliver case management, links to the community and positive pre release planning.



The services offered include:

- Brief interventions.
- Motivational Interviewing and Motivational Enhancement therapy.
- 12-step facilitation programme.
- Relapse Prevention.
- Cognitive-behavioural therapy which would also include problem solving approaches, development of alternative coping strategies, anxiety and stress management and anger management.
- Harm Reduction Approaches.

Outcomes

By the end of the year we had achieved our target of providing in excess of 1,000 counselling hours in the prisons each month working with a total of 440 prisoners. ■

'The faces of 2008'



Clockwise from Top-left. Deloitte's team of eager volunteers after a day redecorating MQI Chapelizod.

Computer skills training session on our Day Programme.

Vincent Browne, Minister John Curran and Joe Kealy (ESB) on the Drugs in the Workplace discussion panel.

Math Skills, one of our most popular classes on our Day Programme.

Tony Geoghegan and Minister for State, John Curran TD.

➤ Drug Free Treatment Services

Our Drug Free Treatment Services aim at providing easily accessible treatment for drug users who wish to become drug free. Service users can be self referred or may be referred from a wide variety of agencies across the country.

High Park Residential Programme

This is a 17 week fully residential programme designed to help participants to become and remain drug free. The programme is a low threshold programme that seeks to attract service users who might not otherwise engage in drug free treatment such as homeless drug users and female drug users. The emphasis is on assisting service users to gain insight into the issues which underpin their drug use and developing realistic measures to prevent relapse. The High Park programme offers individual care plans which, where necessary incorporate in-house detoxification in partnership with community GPs, individual counselling, group therapy, educational groups, work assignments and recreational activities.

In 2008 there were 59 admissions to the High Park programme an increase of 14% on 2007. Over two thirds (68%) were male and 32% were female (high by international standards). The proportion of homeless persons accessing the service was 9% higher than in 2007 at 47%. A total of 18 persons were admitted for detoxification in 2008 and 14 of these (78%) successfully completed the detoxification.

Our Residential Settlement Worker continues to offer settlement support to homeless residents of High Park and St. Francis Farm. This programme has been very successful.

One of the most striking trends to emerge was the surprisingly large number of service users coming from outside Dublin. Overall more than 40% of clients come from outside Dublin City and County. This reflects the spread of opiate use outside its traditional base in Dublin and a consequent demand for drug treatment in the regions. It is interesting to note that the average length of stay was much greater for clients coming from outside Dublin. Given the strong correlation between length of stay and therapeutic outcome this may indicate that services are best to extend their catchment areas well beyond local area boundaries.

St. Francis Farm

This is a therapeutic facility which offers a long-term programme of six months duration for people with a history of problematic drug use. We provide a safe drug free environment where service users can adjust to life without drugs and make positive choices about their future. We also afford service users the opportunity to explore the reasons for their drug use and to learn more effective coping mechanisms. We provide former drug users with access to training and education with support from FAS as a means to gaining employment and we enable service users to develop their individual, social and interpersonal skills.

The programme covers areas of relapse prevention, one to one counselling, group therapy, self esteem seminars, assertiveness training, anger management, farm training, literacy skills, and computer skills training (ECDL). Service users also receive training in Emergency First Aid and in life skills and budgeting. In addition service users are offered the opportunity to participate in Yoga classes and reflexology and fortnightly spirituality workshops.

What makes St. Francis Farm unique is the fact that our programme is situated in a working farm environment. Service users gain work experience in animal care, vegetable production, and in general farming. The food produced at the farm is used to supply the kitchens in our various centres, feeding up to three hundred people every day.

The St. Francis Farm programme had 29 participants in 2008, with just 4 women and 25 men. Average occupancy was 81%, during the course of the year. 38% of clients were from the South east. Fourteen residents moved on, with support from the staff team, after completing individual care plans of 3 to 6 months duration. A further 11 left after completing less than 3 months at the Farm. In 2008, nine residents remained with plans to complete programme.

2008 also saw the commencement of the much delayed building extension programme at St. Francis Farm. Capital funding for this project came through the Department of Environment Capital Assistance Programme. When completed the St. Francis Farm programme will be in a position to provide services for 28 clients at any one time, compared to just 10 currently. In the current environment our greatest challenge will be securing funding to meet the running costs of the expanded services and this will be a major focus of attention in 2009.

Aftercare Support

The Aftercare Support for clients is available from facilities in the Parish Centre in Carlow provided by St. Francis Farm Staff. In addition clients from Dublin are able to avail of our Dublin based aftercare services.

We also ran a fortnightly support group in the evening which was well attended over the course of the year and the team provided addiction support to residents in the hostel for homeless persons in Carlow.

'Work, Rest and Play'

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Clockwise from Top-left. Renovation on St. Francis Farm will increase our bed capacity and is due to finish in late 2009.

Physical Fitness Training in the gym at High Park Residential Rehabilitation.

The woodwork skills training workshop at St. Francis Farm.

All residents participate in farm work as part of the programme at St. Francis Farm.

Bord Gais brings Christmas cheer to our homeless center every year.

Towards a Fairer Society

Training, Research and Social Policy

Training

In 2008 a total of 815 persons participated in Merchants Quay Ireland's various training courses. The courses offered included the following;

- Project Worker Training Programme.
- Drugs Awareness Training Programme.
- Information and Communications Technology.
- Management Development Programme.
- Volunteering Induction Training.
- MQI/University College Dublin: Certificate in Drugs Counselling Theory and Intervention Skills.
- MQI/University College Dublin: Diploma in Drugs Counselling Theory and Intervention Skills.

Research

The MQI Research Team completed a number of projects in 2008 including:

■ ***Older People's Experience of Housing and Exclusion***

Merchants Quay Ireland was commissioned by the National Council on Aging and Older People to undertake a piece of research aimed at providing a demographic profile of older people experiencing all kinds of housing exclusion in Ireland. This study explored the experience, perceptions of housing circumstances and preferences of older people experiencing all forms of housing exclusion. The study identified implications for policy, service planning and delivery in terms of meeting the needs of this group and of prevention.

■ ***Migration and Homelessness***

Following on from our 2007 study *An Assessment of the Numbers and Profile of EU10 Nationals using Homeless Services in Dublin* MQI was commissioned by the Homeless Agency to undertake a study on the wider issue of migration and homelessness. The main objectives of this project were:

- (a) to examine the evidence on what the impact of the Habitual Residency Condition (HRC) will mean for service provision
- (b) to investigate future implications in terms of the development of services so that they are culturally and socially capable to meet the current and emerging needs
- (c) to explore the broader context of migrants' experiences, especially given the current economic climate

The study found that the HRC continues to act as a significant barrier to accessing social protection in Ireland including access to homeless accommodation services. In addition it was found that segregation between migrants and Irish nationals occurs both in the access routes to homeless accommodation services and within homeless accommodations services themselves. The report identified the particularly vulnerable situation of non Irish nationals who find themselves homeless and identifies a need for measures to address language and cultural barriers across the range of services available

Financial Report

Finance

2008 was a difficult year for Funding and in order to better position itself, MQI has scaled back or eliminated non direct client service costs. As a result MQI is now a leaner entity providing better value for money with a minimum of 88c in each Euro donated going to client services.

Income for 2008 was up €755k due mainly to the provision of Prison Counselling services and Family Support/Harm Reduction in conjunction with the Irish Prison Service and Midlands Regional Drug Task Force respectively.

In 2008 we began to feel the first effects of the current recession. While income and expenditure both increased compared to 2007 this was entirely related to the delivery of new services in the Prisons and in the Midlands region. Funding for existing services was frozen or reduced in a number of instances. However we were able to undertake a cost containment programme during the course of the year, with the much valued support and cooperation of staff in all areas and as a result ended the year with a very small surplus in the region of 1%.

It is critical that MQI build up sufficient unrestricted reserves in order to ensure sustainability (per SORP 2005). At Dec 2008 MQI has a negligible reserve balance, a major part of the finance strategy over the coming 3 years is to rectify this position.

2008 saw the implementation of the Finance and Audit sub committee in order to increase the visibility and accountability and to ensure that standards within MQI Finance are best in class.

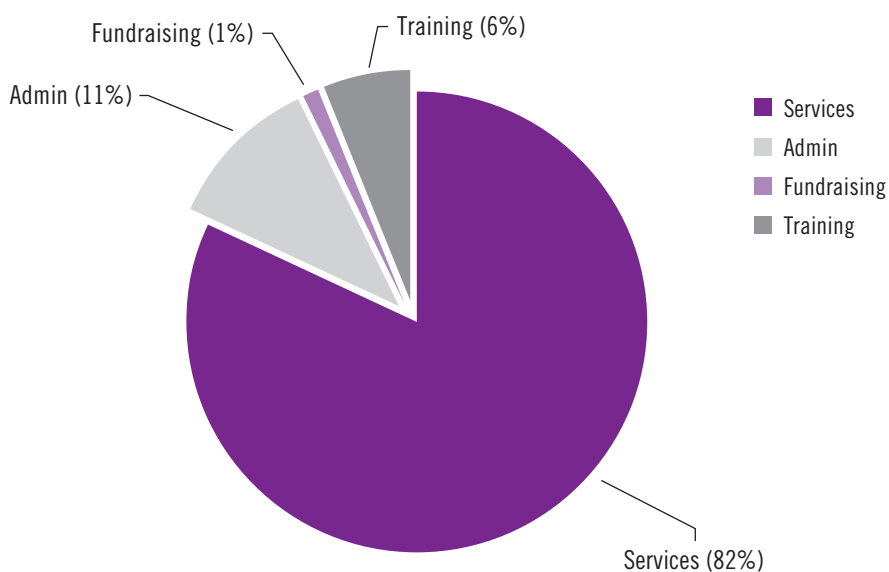


Figure 4. 2008 Where the money was spent

In order to streamline the audit process PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) were appointed as auditors for both MQI companies. PwC are a leader in the field of accounting and audit and signing up with PwC is indicative of MQI's goal to achieve highest standards in Finance.

Financial Information systems were put in place in 2008 to ensure that value for money is at the core of MQI's delivery of services. Increased use of technology to streamline financial operations were implemented to ensure that relevant, timely & accurate financial information is delivered to all stakeholders in MQI.

In 2008 MQI received €653k (9% of running costs) from fundraising. The support of those who donate to MQI is vital in delivering services to the poorest and most marginalised in our society.

The outlook for 2009 is for another difficult year with further cut backs in State funding projected. This will further necessitate optimising cost efficiencies and increasing donation revenues. MQI is committed to continuous improvement in how funds are spent and to maximizing the value for these funds.

Accounts

Income and Expenditure Account for MQI for the year ended Dec 31st 2008

| | Total 2007 | Total 2008 | Difference |
|--|-------------------|-------------------|-----------------|
| Income | 6,223,168 | 6,978,716 | 755,854 |
| Expenditure | <u>-6,373,076</u> | <u>-6,907,819</u> | <u>-534,743</u> |
| Surplus (Deficit) for the year before interest | -149,908 | 70,896 | 220,806 |
| Interest received | <u>0</u> | <u>8,230</u> | <u>8,230</u> |
| Surplus (Deficit) for the year | -149,908 | 79,128 | 229,036 |
| Accumulated surplus at 1 January 2008 | <u>124,501</u> | <u>-25,407</u> | <u>-149,908</u> |
| Accumulated surplus at 31 December 2008 | -25,407 | 53,721 | 79,128 |

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Merchants Quay Project Ltd. Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2008

| | € | 2008 € | 2007 € | € |
|--|----------|----------------|------------|------------------|
| Fixed Assets | | | | |
| Tangible Assets | | 135,104 | | 123,545 |
| Current Assets | | | | |
| Debtors | 564,258 | | 826,210 | |
| Cash at bank and in hand | 319,109 | | 1,525,078 | |
| | | <u>883,367</u> | | <u>2,351,288</u> |
| Creditors (amounts falling due within one year) | -799,848 | | -2,376,996 | |
| Net Current Assets | | <u>83,250</u> | | <u>-25,708</u> |
| Total assets less current liabilities | | 218,624 | | 97,837 |
| Creditors (amounts falling due after more than one year) | | -156,285 | | -101,121 |
| Net (liabilities)/assets | | <u>62,339</u> | | <u>-3,284</u> |
| Represented by: accumulated (deficit)/surplus | | <u>62,339</u> | | <u>-3,284</u> |
| | | <u>62,339</u> | | <u>-3,284</u> |

Franciscan Social Justice Initiative Ltd. Balance Sheet as at 31 December 2008

| | 2008 | 2007 |
|---|----------------------|-----------------------|
| | € | € |
| Fixed Assets | | |
| Tangible Assets | 150,074 | 208,603 |
| Current Assets | | |
| Debtors | 24,151 | |
| Cash at bank and in hand | 228,273 | 206,014 |
| | <u>252,424</u> | <u>206,014</u> |
| Creditors (amounts falling due within one year) | <u>-268,989</u> | <u>-245,992</u> |
| Net Current Assets | -16,565 | -39,978 |
| Total assets less current liabilities | <u>133,509</u> | <u>168,625</u> |
| Deferred Grants (Capital Grants) | -142,129 | -190,748 |
| Deferred Grants (Revenue Grants) | 1 | |
| Deficiency of Assets | <u><u>-8,619</u></u> | <u><u>-22,123</u></u> |
| Capital and reserves | | |
| Income and expenditure account | -8,619 | -22,123 |
| Total reserves | <u>-8,619</u> | <u>-22,123</u> |

Making a difference

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION PLEASE CONTACT

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