

Soilse Annual Review 2018



Soilse's Dave O'Brien and former service users after winning a 2018 AONTAS STAR Award

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Summary

2018 was probably the most challenging year in Soilse's history due to a severe staffing shortage which had a significant impact on programme delivery and output. The unexpected long-term illness of our Head of Service left Soilse to a large extent rudderless at a time when the Soilse programme was also undergoing fundamental changes. Staff rallied to keep the programme open and provide a service to people in the inner city. However, the toll on staff was high and this was compounded by another key staff departure later in the year.

On a positive note, however, the reorientation of the Soilse programme was largely – and successfully – implemented. We entered 2018 with an agreed, staff-supported plan for a major transformation of the Soilse programme from an addiction education and rehabilitation model to a recovery model.

Our rationale for changing the programme was based on service user feedback, our work in RECOVEU (a European Grudtvig programme in which we were a key partner), emerging literature on recovery, the performance indicators in the new National Drug Strategy (2017) and proposed Health Research Board research on outcome measurements. We also visited recovery projects abroad and their innovative and successful approaches helped inform our own thinking.

Proposed changes

The main proposed changes were in the Green Street programme and included:

- a two-month pre-entry phase incorporating relapse prevention, mindfulness, NA meetings, groupwork and urine screening;
- a four-month recovery programme exploring different aspects of living in recovery; thematic groups on topics such as sexual health, relationships, mental health, alcohol and gambling; and individual learning plans based on the identified needs of each service user;
- a dedicated dyslexia stream, resources permitting;
- a follow-on QQI Level 3 programme offered through CDETB; and
- a one-off return-to-learning group to cover the transition from the main programme.

It was felt the Henrietta Place programme was already achieving its goal of preparing service users for detoxification and initiating the recovery journey. The proposed changes there were to include more recovery activities including a weekly Opiate Replacement Therapy (ORT) meeting, a pop-up café for women, greater availability of the gym and a weekly social afternoon.

To view the details and rationale behind the original Transformation Plan, please visit www.soilse.ie to see a copy of the proposed Soilse Transformation Plan 2018.

Actual changes

The proposed changes were to start, on a rolling basis, in Spring 2018. Unfortunately, unexpected long-term sick leave by two staff members including Soilse's Head of Services, the departure of another key staff member during the year and pre-existing staff shortages, meant that the plan had to be scaled back.

The dedicated dyslexia stream and the QQI Level 3 education programme were dropped. However, the core changes – the recovery groups and thematic groups – were successfully implemented. The number of participants in each group was also increased, helping to increase programme throughput despite reduced staff numbers. So far, feedback from service users has been extremely positive with noticeable improvements in attendance and completions.

The changes and our other activities are outlined in greater detail in the following pages.

Our 2018 performance targets

Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to review our work against procedures • Do joint training re interagency issues (protocols, seamless progression, etc) • Introduce recovery indicators to our work
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement new recovery element in the programme in both facilities • Explore a dyslexia stream
Service Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to advocate on service user needs (housing, dyslexia, and so on)
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement Healthy Ireland Plan • Replace staff who have left • Training – list
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to upgrade ICT • Carry out electrics upgrade in Henrietta Place

Our 2018 achievements

Governance

- **Continue to review our work against procedures**
This is an ongoing target. In 2018, as in previous years, we continued to review our work against the Standards in Primary Care quality assurance framework.
- **Do joint training re interagency issues (protocols, seamless progression, etc)**
We continued to work with other agencies to the benefit of our service users.
- **Introduce recovery indicators to our work**
Due to staff shortages in Soilse in 2018, we were unable to progress our discussions with the Health Research Board around the development of recovery indicators. We hope to re-start the consultations in 2019.

Programme

- **Implement new recovery element in the programme in both facilities**
This was one of the main planks of our 2018 Soilse Transformation Plan. Most of the changes are in the Green Street programme and included:
 - an 8 weeks pre-entry phase incorporating relapse prevention, art, drama, NA meetings, group and urine screening;
 - an 18-week programme structured around recovery and thematic group sessions. Sessions were scheduled in the mornings with afternoons free for one-to-ones, care planning, active citizenship, gym and free time to enable participants to build their recovery assets independently;

- curtailment of the QQI-accredited education element of the programme although we continue to work with CDETB with regard to literacy assessments and, where indicated, dyslexia screenings;
 - increased group sizes to 15, a 25% increase over previous group sizes;
 - in Henrietta Place, a weekly Opiate Replacement Therapy meeting and pop-up café for women;
 - a one-off return-to-learning group to ease the transition from the addiction education and rehabilitation model to the addiction recovery model. This took place in April/May in Green Street.
- **Explore a dyslexia stream**
Based on our experience over the years, we believe that dyslexia is a major hidden problem among addiction service users. We had hoped to establish a dedicated dyslexia stream within Soilse Green Street and prepared a business case to this end. Unfortunately, we were unable to proceed with this. However, we continue to screen for dyslexia with the support of the CDETB, advocate for dyslexia assessments for those whose screening indicates a high probability of dyslexia, and refer service users with an identified need to the Career Paths dyslexia programme.

Service users

- **Continue to advocate on service user needs (housing, dyslexia, and so on)**
The recovery model adopted by Soilse is rooted in the concept of recovery capital outlined by Cloud and Granfield (2008). This describes the resources a person needs to initiate and sustain recovery from substance misuse which include housing and education. Clearly, homelessness and dyslexia are barriers to successful recovery from addiction, hence the importance Soilse places on advocating on these issues. In 2018, we continued this work, strengthening our relationships with housing providers, in particular with Dublin Simon, and dyslexia services.

Staff

- **Implement Healthy Ireland Plan**
Staff were extremely stretched in 2018 trying to implement the Transformation Plan while at the same time coping with long-term staff sick leave and the loss of a key staff member. Although staff were keen to introduce healthy activities which would help to reduce job stress, there was no time within the working day to incorporate these as service user timetables run through lunchtimes.
- **Replace staff who have left**
Aside from our ongoing staff shortages which have been highlighted in previous annual reports, Soilse was hit in 2018 with the sudden and unexpected long-term sick leave of its manager and Grade III admin support, and the departure of a key staff member in the latter part of the year. All had a critical effect on the programme in what was already a year of great change. Other staff rallied around and kept the programme going but the additional workload and stress are not sustainable in the long-term. Soilse is still awaiting a promised replacement for the staff member who left.
- **Training**
 - The only mandatory training that took place was fire training and An Introduction to Children First (online) programme.
 - Relevant staff undertook Part 1 HACCP training in preparation for the opening of the kitchen in Henrietta Place. (Part 2 to follow in 2019).
 - Two health and safety representatives were elected in 2018 and they underwent health and safety training for newly-appointed health and safety representatives.

Facilities

- **Continue to upgrade ICT**
Due to other pressures, we took no action on this target in 2018.
- **Electrics upgrade in HP**
We upgraded the heating system in Henrietta Place.

Other activities and achievements in 2018

- **Ministerial visit.** On 10 December 2018, Catherine Byrne TD, Minister of State at the Department of Health with responsibility for the National Drug Strategy visited both Soilse buildings. Participants in the Henrietta Place programme put on a short drama for her which was followed by a question-and-answer session between the minister and participants in Green Street. The visit went well and we were delighted to welcome the minister to Soilse.
- **Anger management course.** This course was open to participants with an identified need in Soilse Green Street. We will continue to offer this as the need arises. Feedback from participants was positive.
- **Women's group.** Following the success of the weekly women's pop-up café which ran from January to March 2018 in Henrietta Place, a women's group was formed. This is a peer-led social recovery group which meets weekly in Henrietta Place.
- **Soilse bus.** Soilse got a minibus in 2018 which was used for regular outings for participants. Having available transport meant that Soilse was able to organise 'outward bound-type' activities, introducing participants to new skills and experiences and contributing to the building of participants' recovery capital. Activities organised included day and night hikes in the Wicklow Mountains, and sea and lake swimming.
- **Christmas day fundraiser.** A highlight of the year was a Christmas morning fundraising swim in the Forty Foot swimming area in Sandycove. Some 43 current and former participants and their families took part. It was followed by the annual Christmas Day NA meeting in Soilse Henrietta Place which attracted 67 recovering drug users.
- **Star Award.** Soilse won the 2018 STAR Award in the Large Organisation Category for its Adult Learning Initiatives that Promote Wellbeing. The STAR Awards are presented annually by AONTAS, the National Adult Learning Organisation, to outstanding, learner-centred adult education initiatives that demonstrate high levels of collaboration amongst participant groups. Soilse has won a number of STAR awards over the years in recognition of its adult education approach to addiction rehabilitation.

Committees and meetings

Due to limited staff time and availability, Soilse could only maintain its involvement in the following committees and meetings:

- Recovery Academy of Ireland committee meetings
- Aontas Community Education Network
- Northwest Inner City Network (NWICN) Drug Working Group

- Gateway Women’s Project management committee

Activity levels and outcomes 2018

As explained in previous reports, it is difficult to provide accurate outcomes for participants as we are required to use a variety of separate electronic and paper-based data sets to measure progress. Adding to the difficulty is that groups may start in Soilse in one calendar year and finish in the following year. This means that the people who start in a given year are not necessarily the same as the people who leave the programme in that year.

As far as possible, the figures in Table 1 indicate the people who either started or finished in Soilse in 2018.

Green Street programme

Some 152 referrals were made to the Green Street programme in 2018 and 100 of these had an assessment. Those who were not assessed either were not suitable for the programme and referred elsewhere, did not attend for their assessment, or did not take up a place for personal or family reasons.

Of those who were assessed, 97 started in the pre-entry programme. Subsequently, 73 started the full-time programme. Of the 73 who started the full-time programme in 2018:

- 43 (61%) completed the programme (25 in 2018 and a further 21 in 2019);
 - Of these, 36 (80%) continued to attend Soilse for aftercare (drop-in visits to keyworkers, career guidance, educational support, gym, etc);
- 24 (33%) did not complete the programme. Of these:
 - 9 were discharged for continuing drug use or relapse;
 - 5 were discharged for behaviour problems or failure to attend;
 - 10 left for other reasons or unknown reasons.

However, these numbers do not give the full picture as some groups roll over from one year to the next. While the above data covers those who started in 2018, a further 27 people started in 2017 and rolled over into 2018. This means that staff actually worked with 100 people on the full-time programme in 2018.

Table 1: Outcomes – Green Street - 2018

	Green Street	% Change from 2017
Referrals	152	+11%
Assessments	100	+12%
Started pre-entry programme	97	n/a
Started full-time programme	73 ¹	+37%
Finished programme	43 ²	+19%

¹Includes 31 who started in 2018 and rolled over into 2019

²Includes 16 who started in 2017 and rolled over into 2018

Henrietta Place programme

Please note that the Henrietta Place programme was reduced to 1 full-time group for 7 months of the year following the transfer of one key worker to Green Street due to staff shortages. This had a significant effect on outcomes.

- Staff worked with 41 participants on the full-time programme in 2018. These included 12 people who started in 2017 and 15 who began in 2018 and rolled over to 2019.
- Of the 29 new people who started in 2018, 15 rolled over to 2019.
- 17 participants (41%) were women.
- 20 participants completed the Henrietta Place programme in 2018.
- 14 participants successfully completed a detox in 2018.
- 10 went on to residential treatment and 80% of these successfully completed treatment.
- 11 transferred to the Green Street programme.
- 3 completed the Henrietta Place programme and progressed to employment.
- 2 completed the Henrietta Place programme and transferred to another day programme.

Table 2: Outcomes – Henrietta Place - 2018

	Henrietta Place	% Change from 2017
Referrals	152	-14%
Assessments	62	-10%
Started pre-entry programme	62	+3%
Started full-time programme	29 ¹	-36%
Finished programme	20 ²	-35%
In-patient stabilisation referrals	1	-50%
Detox referrals	14	-33%
Residential treatment referrals	10	+40%

¹Includes 15 who started in 2018 and rolled over into 2019

²Includes 12 who started in 2017 and rolled over into 2018

Drug screens

Soilse conducts twice-weekly drug screens with all participants. Applicants must provide drug screens before they are accepted onto the Soilse programme. In 2018, Soilse conducted a total of 1,566 drug screens on 88 service users in Henrietta Place and 2,597 screens on 111 people in Green Street.

Table 3 shows that the vast majority in our drug-free programme in Green Street tested negative for drug use while on the Soilse programme. Only 1% tested positive for opiates. As would be expected, there was a higher number of positive screens in our drug stabilisation programme in Henrietta Place as service users prepared for detox.

Table 3: Urine screens - 2018

Green Street			Henrietta Place		
Drug	% Positive	% Negative	Drug	% Positive	% Negative
Opiates	1	99	Opiates	8	92
Benzodiazepines	0	100	Benzodiazepines	39*	61
Methadone	0	100	Methadone	85*	15
Cannabis	0	100	Cannabis	15	85
Alcohol	0	100	Alcohol	0	100
Amphetamines	0	100	Amphetamines	0	100
Cocaine	0	100	Cocaine	5	95
Total samples	1,566		Total samples	2,597	
Total clients	88		Total clients	111	

*This may include prescribed medication

QQI

Changes to the Soilse programme in 2018 led to the cessation of the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI) element of the programme midway through the year. In the first part of the year, however, when BTEI was still operational 16 participants from Soilse’s Drug-Free Programme (Green Street) received a total of 54 QQI awards at level 3. Of these, 2 participants achieved a Major Level 3 General Learning Award.

Table 4: QQI awards for Soilse Green Street Participants in 2018

Participants	Awards	Major Awards*
16	54	2

* Equivalent to Junior Cert

For those in Henrietta Place, Soilse offers a non-accredited programme comprising outings, social activities, one-to-one support, group work, art, mindfulness, yoga, exercise and nutrition. The aim is to give participants the confidence, knowledge and skills to undertake detox and treatment.

Literacy and dyslexia

Some 40 participants in Green Street had an individual literacy assessment in 2018 to see if they needed additional literacy or numeracy support. The assessments indicated that 17 may have literacy difficulties. Dyslexia screenings were conducted with 12 participants. Of these, 10 showed probable dyslexia.

Table 5: Literacy and dyslexia assessments 2018

	Green Street
Literacy assessments	40
Literacy levels 1 – 2 (poor literacy skills)	17
Literacy level 3	23
Dyslexia screenings	12
High likelihood of dyslexia	10

Table 6: Educational attainment of Soilse Green Street participants

	Green Street
No formal 2 nd level qualifications	16
Partial Junior Cert / Inter Cert	2
Full Junior Cert	10
Partial Leaving Cert	2
Full Leaving Cert	6
Some 3 rd level	4
Completed a 3 rd level course	0

Educational support

The education support service provides ongoing, practical academic support to current and former participants who have secured, or hope to secure, a place on a college or university course. This entails working with students on a one-to-one basis and also providing online support to those who cannot – due to college time constraints – attend Soilse in person.

Career guidance

Soilse provides ongoing guidance for current participants plus a drop-in service for former participants who are contemplating or applying for third-level and further education. Depending on participants' needs, this may include advice together with assistance with college and grant applications. In 2018, Soilse provided 239 career guidance appointments to 98 clients, 40 of whom were former participants.

Eligible participants who are primarily interested in further training or employment are linked in with the Guidance Service of the Eastland and Docklands (ICRG), which works in conjunction with Soilse's career guidance counsellor. Following an initial information meeting with Soilse groups, career guidance at ICRG is by one to one appointment. ICRG also helps with CV development, job searching strategies, interview preparation and funding for college courses and work-related licences, tickets and other expenses related to work and training.

Table 7 shows the progression of 68 participants who either completed or left the Soilse Green Street programme in 2018, including those who started in 2017 and finished in 2018. Those participants who began the programme in late 2018 and will finish in 2019 will be accounted for in the 2019 annual report.

The figures show a positive outcome in educational and occupational terms for 60 per cent (60%) of participants. Those who left the programme did so for a variety of reasons including lack of childcare, poor behaviour, ongoing drug use and unwillingness to participate fully in the programme.

Please note that these figures cannot be compared directly with the Soilse outcomes on pages 7-8.

Table 7: Progression for 2018 Green Street Graduates

Third Level	1
Fás Training/Apprenticeship Programme	1
Employment (full-time and part-time)	7
Further Education/Training/CE Scheme/Day Programme	28
Unknown/Relapsed/Deceased	8
Left the Programme	19
Returned to Soilse to repeat Programme	4
Total	68

Looking ahead to 2019

This will be a year of consolidation for Soilse as we continue to implement the programme changes introduced in 2018. Initial indications from service users are that the enhanced focus on recovery is meeting their needs and contributing to a more sustained re-integration into family, community and society.

In early 2019, we expect to welcome back two staff members, including Soilse's manager, who had been on long-term sick leave for most of 2018. Their return will help ease the staffing crisis which we experienced in 2018. However, as neither works directly with service users, the acute staffing shortage will remain. We will continue to advocate for extra staff in 2019.

Another challenge we will face in 2019 concerns the renewal of the lease of our Henrietta Place premises. These premises house our stabilisation and detox preparation programme which is an essential part of Soilse and which provides the first introduction for many service users to the concept of recovery. It is our hope and expectation that the HSE will renew the lease for a further 25 years.

Targets for 2019

Governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce recovery indicators to our work • Continue to quality assure our systems • Update our health and safety policies, procedures and systems
Programme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Embed the principles of recovery in all aspects of the programme • Introduce more recovery activities such as health, nutrition and health-based outings, and expand access to the gym
Service Users	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Introduce a joint recovery housing initiative with Focus Ireland incorporating a 10-bed residential unit • Continue to advocate for service users in relation to housing, dyslexia and other issues
Staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Replace staff who have left • Organise training in first aid
Facilities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Renegotiate the lease on our Henrietta Place premises • Open our facilities for more recovery activities such as pop-up cafes

