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# Foreword

## Dear Colleagues,

I am very pleased to present Merchants Quay Ireland's new Strategic Plan for the period 2004 to 2006.

The overall theme of the plan is one of consolidation and building for the future. As an organisation we have grown hugely in the last ten years and it is now appropriate for us to review and consolidate our position. We also plan to move forward to address emerging and unaddressed needs of homeless people and drug users. In this regard one of our key strategic aims is to work in collaboration with other agencies, both statutory and voluntary, to enhance the range of services for drug users and homeless people. We will become involved in the direct management of supported accommodation aimed at meeting the needs of homeless drug users. We will look towards meeting the needs of homeless people and drug users in cities outside of Dublin and the development of new innovative harm reduction services for homeless people and drug users.

As well as developing new services we will also work hard to enhance and improve our existing operations. The plan identifies a range of goals aimed at strengthening our existing services including improved access for women to our High Park residential programme, expanding the scope of the primary health care project in our Open Access service and further developing mechanisms for ensuring that service users have a voice in the operation and development of all of our services.

At management level there is a clear commitment to the development of new governance structures that will establish us as an independent organisation and carry us confidently and securely into the future. We have identified quality management as a clear priority over the next three years. We are going to ensure that we are meeting the standards outlined in Putting People First and Quality in Alcohol and Drugs Services (QuADS) over the course of the next three years. These standards apply not just to direct client services but also in areas such as finance, communications, human resources and administration.

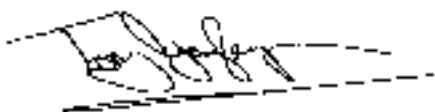
The development of the new plan has entailed a long process of consultation and hard work. I would particularly like to thank the members of the strategic planning group, Aisling Crawford, Basil Cronin, Richard Cunningham, Dermot Kavanagh, Gabriel Kinahan, Joe McGran, Ray McGrath, Eobhán O'Brien, Ambrose O'Byrne and Mary O'Shea. This group have shown great commitment in developing the plan and in ensuring that the process has been full and inclusive.

I would also like to thank the staff in our various services and departments who themselves made an important contribution to developing the operational plans for each service and department.

I believe that everybody in Merchants Quay can have a sense of ownership of this plan, and that all are committed to making it a living document that actively shapes their work.

Of course like all plans the real proof of its success will be in the implementation. The challenge for us as an organisation is to deliver on the plan. To support this process we have set quarterly milestone review dates that will bring the strategic planning group back together to continually monitor progress. At the same time each team across the organisation will build a schedule of reviews into their meetings structure to follow up on their area specific aspects of the plan. Achieving the goals and targets set in the plan will be a challenge but also an incentive and a focus for our work. The plan provides an important framework for that focus.

My greatest hope is that this plan will help us to continue to make a significant contribution to improving the opportunities and options for homeless people and for drug users in Ireland.



**Tony Geoghegan**  
**Director**

# Introduction

Merchants Quay Ireland is a national voluntary agency providing services for homeless people and for drug users. Our two companies (Merchants Quay Project and Franciscan Social Justice Initiatives) are registered charities and companies limited by guarantee

Merchants Quay Ireland is to the fore in providing creative and innovative responses to homelessness and problem drug use in Ireland. As a voluntary organisation we strive to be alive and sensitive to the needs of our service users and to have the flexibility to respond appropriately. In turn we have a role in influencing and shaping the direction of drug and homeless service provision and policy in the country.

Our original clients were those who were excluded from and had difficulty fitting into the existing services of the day. These clients provided the impetus for establishing our services and their needs have been instrumental in shaping our programmes. The provision of client centred services to this marginalised group provided our *raison d'être* and it is vital that in the development of our new strategic plan we remain true to this core value.

The new plan has two strands. One focuses on issues which are pertinent to all sections of the organisation while the second focuses on operational plans developed within each service department.

## Vision

We look forward to 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.

## Mission

Our mission is twofold:

- To provide services aimed at reducing harm related to drug use and homelessness and at providing pathways towards rehabilitation and settlement.
- To work for positive social change to combat poverty and social exclusion which lie at the root of problem drug use and homelessness.

## Mission Statement

Merchants Quay Ireland is a community of hospitality, hope and justice. Our mission is to:

- Work for justice and opportunity for homeless people and drug users 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
- Support all who work with 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.

# 1. Guiding Principles Bedded in Reality

For our new strategic plan to be successful it must be bedded in the realities of today while adhering to our core founding values. Looking to the future we must ensure that the following principles are central in our planning:

- 1.1 Quality Services for drug users and homeless people
- 1.2 Emphasis on low threshold services for the most marginalised
- 1.3 Progression pathways in our services for clients
- 1.4 Cutting edge
- 1.5 Client involvement
- 1.6 Valuing our staff
- 1.7 Prudent financial management
- 1.8 Partnership

## 1.1 Quality services for drug users and homeless people

People experiencing homelessness or problem drug use have a right to the same quality services as any other citizen. Drug users and homeless people should be treated with dignity and respect through the provision of the highest quality standards across all our services.

## 1.2 Emphasis on low threshold services for the most marginalised

Our original clients were unable to access or comply with the regimes of the mainstream services of the day. This problem provided the impetus for the establishment of our services. All our services have a low threshold to access as it is our aim to minimise the barriers that people experience in accessing services, treatment or accommodation appropriate to their needs.

## 1.3 Progression pathways in our services for clients

Merchants Quay Ireland is probably most strongly identified with harm reduction programmes such as our health promotion unit and our food service. We also provide other services such as vocational training programmes, residential drug free programmes, aftercare services and settlement and integration services. The needs of drug users and homeless people occur across a continuum and we assist people to make progress towards a better life

## 1.4 Cutting edge

We strive to meet clients where they are, with particular concern for those that are most marginalised and excluded from mainstream services. Effective work with those at the margins requires us to be also at the cutting edge of innovative practice. What is now accepted as best practice was often considered radical just five years ago. We are continually exploring new interventions and approaches so that we can more effectively address the needs of our service users.

## 1.5 Client involvement

We provide client centred services shaped by the needs of our service users. To this end we acknowledge and engage the experience of service users in the review and development of our programmes. We have also initiated client forums which meet regularly to look at client needs and give feedback on our services.

## 1.6 Valuing our staff

Merchants Quay Ireland began as a totally volunteer organisation. This ensured that an ethos of concern and appreciation for our workers permeated the organisation. Today Merchants Quay Ireland remains committed to

valuing its staff (including trainees and volunteers) as the core and central resource of the agency. We offer a supportive workplace that facilitates the professional development of all involved in delivery of our services.

## **1.7 Prudent financial management**

Merchants Quay Ireland is committed to the prudent management of its financial affairs. We have a responsibility to our service users and to our staff to operate in line with best financial practice to ensure the continuing provision of vital social services.

## **1.8 Partnership**

We consistently work in partnership with other bodies and agencies to promote the interests of those who rely on our services.

# **2. Analysis of Current Situation**

It is important to learn from the strengths and weaknesses of our last strategic plan. At that time we were in a climate of strong economic growth and development and the thrust of the plan was expansionist. This was in line with increasing demand for our services at that time. The plan promoted a broad based justice agenda that included the services at Adam and Eve's Church.

At that time we sought to enhance existing services and to develop new ones that would further reduce harm related to drug use and homelessness. Much was achieved particularly with regard to the integration and expansion of our open access services for homeless persons and for drug users and the development of our settlement and integration services.

However the plan was less successful on an intra- organisational level. Despite the achievement of many of the goals of the plan, ownership of it was not felt by all staff and this was its greatest weakness. The plan was viewed as a management paper. For the organisation to move forward there should be a shared sense of ownership in the planning process and in the plan itself. Management provides top down leadership but it is also essential that there should be bottom up participation and ownership across the whole organisation.

Times have changed since the last plan was published. We have suffered some cutbacks in statutory funding in real terms and we have had to reduce staff numbers in some areas. Nonetheless there has been increased demand and uptake of our services over the three years of that plan. While official figures indicate that the overall number of heroin users in Dublin dropped from 13,461 in 1996 to 12,456 in 2001 this was not reflected in the uptake of our services. For example, the number of visits to our needle exchange service rose from 15,512 in 2000 to 26,181 in 2003. The number of individual visitors grew from 2,715 in 2000 to 3,331 in 2003.

The Department of the Environment estimated that 5,581 individuals were homeless in Ireland during one week in March 2002. This compares to 5,234 homeless during the same period in 1999. 4,060 of those homeless in 2002 were in Dublin, where 723 had been homeless for more than three years. 312 of those surveyed in Dublin said they were sleeping rough with the remainder staying in emergency or insecure accommodation.

The apparent levelling off in the numbers of homeless has not been reflected in uptake of our services for homeless people. Our Failtiu resource centre for homeless persons had 44,000 visits in 2001 compared to almost 58,000 visits in 2003. Part of this increase reflects the extended opening hours for this service since 2002.

Our open access services are operating at capacity and we need to increase our ability to cope to ensure that the services are not overwhelmed.

## 3. Priorities

We must now adopt a more focused approach. We have to strengthen our core programmes and ensure that the range of client need is met with best quality services. We will extend our involvement in the direct management of supported accommodation for homeless drug users. We will address the needs of homeless people and drug users in cities outside Dublin and we will develop innovative harm reduction services in Dublin. We will also expand our drug free treatment services, particularly at St. Francis Farm in Co. Carlow.

This plan will focus on drugs and homelessness. Adam and Eve's Church will not come under its remit. MQI will be set out on an independent footing with its own governing structure.

## 4. Factors & Assumptions Influencing Current Strategic Plan

There are a number of assumptions and constraints that must be acknowledged if the plan is to be realistic. They can be summarised as follows:

- drug problems will continue although pattern and type may change
- homelessness is changing with less demand for emergency services
- demand for our services will not decrease
- no increase in core funding in real terms
- continued support from the statutory sector
- service agreements will be honoured by both sides.

## 5. Cross Organisational Issues

This section deals with crosscutting issues that impact across the entire organisation:

- Franciscan Relationship/Governing
- Communications & Information Systems
- Finance
- Human Resources Development
- Quality Standards & Effectiveness
- Future Directions.

### 5.1 Franciscan Relations

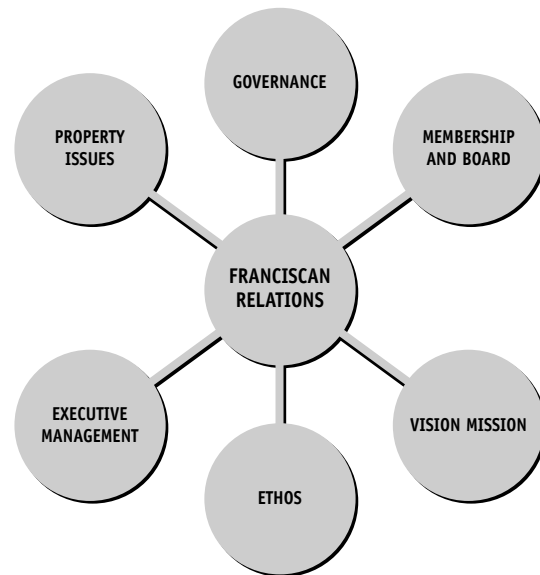
The Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless and Drugs Services were founded by the Franciscan Order as part of their tradition of reaching out to the most excluded and marginalised in society. Since then the services have grown and expanded exponentially. The Franciscans are no longer closely involved in all aspects of the services and they are now almost completely managed and staffed by lay professionals. The lines of authority between the Order and the Services have been largely informal. However, as the organisation has grown and become more professional, it should now have a more independent status with clearly defined lines of

authority and Governance. In this regard the Franciscan Order is also reviewing their role and priorities.

Now is the time to clearly define the relationship between the Franciscan Order and Merchants Quay Ireland. There are a range of issues that will have to be agreed and clarified. Some are practical relating to property, governing and management structures, while others are concerned with issues such as ethos, vision and mission.

**Overall Objective:**

Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless and Drugs Services will become an independent organisation while retaining strong connections with its Franciscan roots.



**Membership & Board**

The current members or shareholders of organisation are the Franciscan fraternity living in Merchants Quay. We hope to create a more inclusive model of ownership/shareholding in which responsibility for the organisation will no longer lie solely with the Franciscan fraternity.

**Objective:**

To create a wider shareholder/ownership structure for the organisation.

**Governance**

At present the Franciscan Order appoints the Governing Body and retains a majority on this Board. The overall aim over the life of this Strategic Plan is to develop an independent Governance structure.

**Objective:**

To develop an independent Governance structure while retaining some Franciscan involvement.

**Property**

Most of the premises in which Merchants Quay Ireland’s services are located are owned by the Franciscan Order. Merchants Quay Ireland rents the premises from the Franciscans but the agreements in this regard have been based on trust and goodwill with no formal legal agreements in place.

We will now move to a more formal and clearly defined position which will respect the needs of all concerned.

**Objective:**

To clearly define the arrangements regarding the use of Franciscan properties by Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless and Drugs Services.

**Executive Management**

The existing executive management structure developed in response to needs as they arose. Now as a large voluntary organisation it is appropriate that we now review our executive management structure to ensure that it meets current day realities.

**Objective:**

To have an executive management structure with clearly delineated areas of responsibility and reporting.

**Vision and Mission**

We need to ensure that our Vision and Mission are congruent with our work on the ground with one constantly renewing and informing the other.

**Objective:**

To continually renew our vision and mission to reflect the reality of the work of our Homeless and Drugs Services.

## Ethos

Merchants Quay Ireland was founded in the spirit of the Franciscan tradition of reaching out to the most marginalised and excluded in society. This spirit has continually informed the development of our services which remain open and accessible to those most in need. In the development of our services we wish to ensure our operations are consistent with our founding ethos.

### Objective:

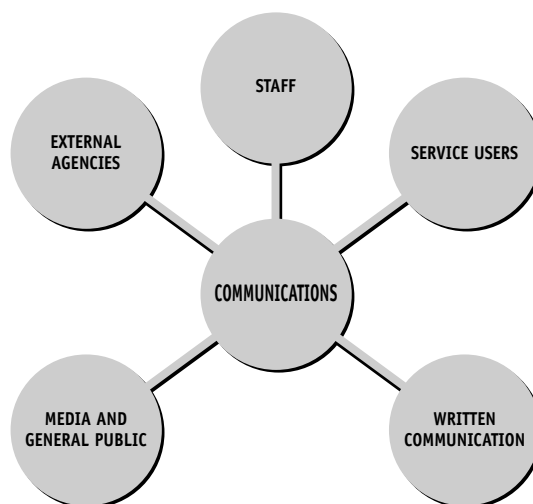
To ensure we remain true to our founding ethos.

## 5.2 Communications

Merchants Quay Ireland has grown quite large very rapidly. As the organisation has grown we have established increasingly formal communication structures but much communication remains informal. Over the next three years we need to develop more formal and effective communications systems so that our staff, our service users and indeed the wider public are kept informed of all developments at Merchants Quay Ireland and have an opportunity to express their views on any matters of interest to them.

### Overall Objective:

To ensure effective communication within Merchants Quay Ireland and with the wider community.



## Staff

Merchants Quay Ireland has thirteen different departments. The effective running of the organisation depends on these departments communicating with one another in an effective and efficient manner. Our communications include meetings, memos and occasional presentations covering the work of particular departments given to the wider staff body. Nonetheless from time to time people working in one department may not know, for example, the admissions policy of another department. We will improve communications between departments at Merchants Quay.

### Objectives:

To ensure excellent communications between departments and to promote joint working where appropriate and to ensure that all staff are kept informed of developments at Merchants Quay Ireland and have an opportunity to express their views on such matters.

## Service Users

Our service users need to be aware of all of the services that we have available for them and it is important that they have a voice that is heard at all levels within Merchants Quay Ireland. To date service users could make their views known informally, for example by approaching individual staff members or, where relevant, through group meetings held from time to time in different services. We have had Service Users Forums in various departments in the past but they are not organised on a regular ongoing basis. We are seeking to ensure that service users have the information they need and a have a way of ensuring their views are heard.

### Objective:

To ensure that our service users are aware of the full range of services offered by Merchants Quay Ireland and to establish a framework within which their views are heard at all levels;

## Written Communication

We produce a wide variety of documents including annual reports, research reports, evaluation reports, training materials, court reports and reports for our funders. We have endeavoured to ensure that any written material coming from Merchants Quay is of the highest standard but we have not, as yet, developed common templates for use across the organisation. We will ensure quality and consistency in all our written communications.



**Objective:**

All written communications emanating from Merchants Quay Ireland will be produced to the highest standard and will be consistent, clear and standardised where appropriate;

**Media and General Public**

Merchants Quay Ireland seeks to influence public attitudes towards a more positive view of homelessness and drug use. We highlight social justice issues and engage with the general public around the more human face of problem drug use and homelessness. We also rely on public support for our fund-raising in order to continue our services. We propose to increase our fundraising efforts with the general public while promoting more positive approaches to the issues of homelessness and drug use. The media is important because it is our primary communication channel with the general public. Through the democratic process it can influence government policy on the issues of homelessness and drug use. We have sought to ensure that our dealings with the media reflect positively on those with whom we work and positively address the problems of homelessness and drug use.

**Objective:**

To influence the general public towards a more positive attitude on issues of homelessness and drug use and to promote positive coverage of Merchants Quay Ireland, its work and the persons who use our services in the media and a positive policy agenda on the issues of homelessness and problem drug use.

**External Agencies**

We often depend on external agencies to ensure that our service users' needs are met. Indeed they may depend on us so that they can meet the needs of people availing of their services. External agencies, be they voluntary organisations, health boards, the Homeless Agency or whatever, need to be aware of the services we provide and any changes in those services, for example, times of opening or changes in admission criteria. Equally we need to be aware of the admissions policy of, for example, homeless hostels or residential alcohol services that may be of benefit to our service users. We have good links with a wide variety of external agencies through the Voluntary Homeless Services Network, through the Voluntary Drug Treatment Network, through our involvement with the Homeless Agency and through our links with the health boards and the National, Regional and Local Drugs Strategy Teams or Task Forces. There is nonetheless room for improvement and we will ensure better communication with these agencies over the next three year period.

**Objective:**

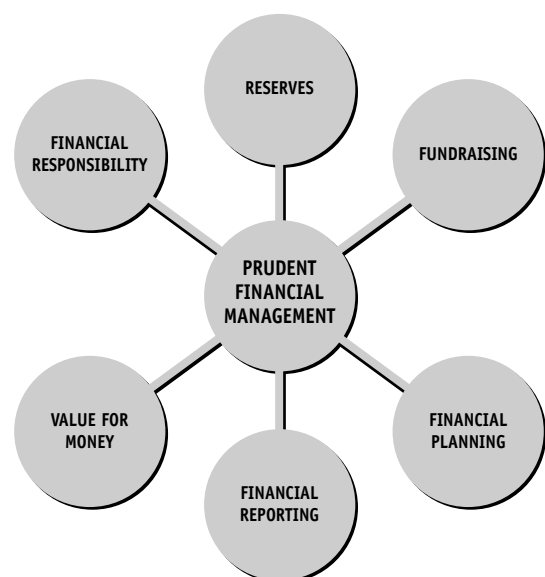
To develop positive links with external agencies, ensure that we are aware of external developments and that they are aware of developments at Merchants Quay Ireland.

**5.3 Prudent Financial Management**

Historically the organisation has been service-led and the support infrastructure has only been developed in more recent times. The MQI Finance Department was established in 1999. This department manages the financial affairs of Merchants Quay Project Limited, the Franciscan Social Justice Initiative Limited and Our Lady of the Immaculate Conception (Adam and Eve's) Church. The organisation has experienced significant financial growth over the past four years with turnover increasing from €2.8 million in 1999 to €4.9 million in 2003. Funding by various statutory agencies now represents 80% of all income. This compares to 50% in 1999. The MQI Finance Department ensures secure financial management across the organisation.

**Overall Objective:**

Merchants Quay Ireland will maintain prudent financial management across the organisation. The organisation will continue to be fully accountable for all funds allocated to it.



## **Reserves**

Merchants Quay Ireland needs to develop its cash reserves. The Strategic Plan for Finance aims to protect the organisation in the current restrictive financial climate and to work to ensure sufficient cash reserves are always in place to secure the organisation in the future.

### **Objective:**

To continually build our cash reserves such that we will be able to meet any financial challenges that may arise.

## **Fundraising**

Over the years our statutory income has increased significantly. We are anxious to increase our voluntary income so as to fund initiatives not covered by statutory income.

### **Objective:**

Merchants Quay Ireland to increase our fundraising capacity over the life of the Strategic Plan. We will examine the establishment of a separate Trust for monies raised by the Fundraising Department.

## **Financial Planning**

As the organisation has grown financial planning has become increasingly important. It is proposed to further integrate financial planning into our operational management structures.

### **Objective:**

To further integrate financial planning into the operational management of the organisation and to encourage and achieve greater involvement of staff at every level.

## **Financial Reporting**

When we were a small voluntary organisation the main financial reporting took place in our annual report and statutory accounts. Now, with the growth of the organisation, reporting needs are more complex and demanding. The Finance Department will develop a system of comprehensive and timely reporting across the organisation and externally.

### **Objective:**

To further develop our financial and management reporting systems to meet both internal and external information requirements on a timely basis.

## **Value for Money**

MQI recognises that our cost basis must be monitored to ensure that maximum value for money is achieved. We will continue to develop our systems for monitoring costs.

### **Objective:**

Merchants Quay Ireland will further develop a system of monitoring our current cost base to ensure maximum value for money at all levels.

## **Financial Responsibility**

Without prudent financial management we cannot deliver vital client services. We are now further integrating financial management into direct services to create a greater understanding and ownership by staff of these processes.

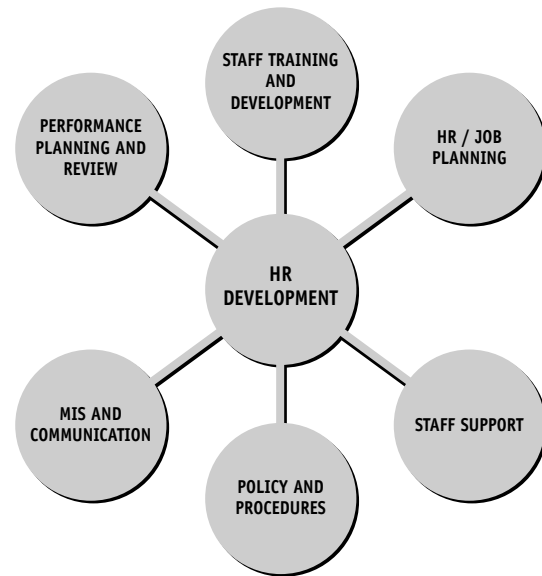
### **Objective:**

To create a culture of integration and ownership between financial management and client services across MQI.

## **5.4 Human Resources Development**

Merchants Quay Ireland originated as a totally volunteer-based organisation. However over the years we have become increasingly dependent on professional staff and in tandem with the growth of the organisation, our staff numbers have expanded significantly. Since the employment of our first full-time staff member in 1991 we now currently have more than seventy full-time staff members and in the region of more than a hundred

part-time staff, including Community Employment staff and volunteers. This growth in staff numbers has however not been matched by a corresponding growth in Human Resource management infrastructure. Merchants Quay Ireland recognises staff as one of our key resources and we are seeking to build a workplace that is supportive of staff and are committed to their professional development. In order to deliver a quality and professional service to clients it is essential that we have a quality and professional Human Resource function. We are now seeking to achieve best practice in Human Resource management and, in doing so, to foster a positive working environment for all at Merchants Quay Ireland.



**Overall Objective:**

Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless and Drugs Services to achieve best practice in Human Resource management.

**Staff Support**

Merchants Quay Ireland Homeless and Drugs Services grew and expanded hugely to meet the needs of service users on the ground. The infrastructure necessary to support this expansion did not always keep pace with this growth. In the area of staff support we are keen to have the appropriate infrastructure in place. Merchants Quay Ireland is committed to giving a high level of support to staff to assist them in dealing with the many complex and involved issues with which they work.

**Objective:**

To develop an integrated staff support system for all workers at Merchants Quay Ireland involving regular supervision, employee assistance programmes and staff support structures.

**Job Planning and Recruitment**

Currently Merchants Quay Ireland is working towards improving our system of recruitment of staff and for human resource planning across the organisation. In the past job-planning and recruitment was relatively informal and the record keeping process and documentation was sometimes less than desirable. We are now seeking to achieve a position whereby all those involved in recruitment and selection will receive training in interview skills and other relevant training and will have all up-to-date documentation in terms of contracts, job descriptions and other relevant documentation.

**Objective:**

For Merchants Quay Ireland to achieve best practice in human resource planning and in recruitment and selection.

**Management Information Systems and Communication**

Historically the information systems in Merchants Quay Ireland operated on an often informal and relatively rudimentary level. The Management of Merchants Quay Ireland needs up-to-date information on human resource issues. This information goes beyond just staff numbers and their location, it covers such areas as training and additional skills they may have. This is best achieved using a computerised information system. To this end Merchants Quay Ireland is seeking to implement a VIP human resource information system across the organisation.

**Objective:**

To ensure the effective management of Human Resources at Merchants Quay Ireland through the effective gathering of HR Management information.

**Staff Training and Development**

Merchants Quay Ireland has always put a strong emphasis on staff training and over the years has developed a Training Department that delivers accredited professionally orientated training as well as organizing core

training for all staff at Merchants Quay Ireland. Over the coming years we hope to consolidate this process whereby we arrive at a situation where the core competencies for all staff positions are clearly identified and training is put in place so that people are able to deliver these core competencies.

**Objective:**

To further develop structures and systems to ensure that the professional development needs of our staff and the operational needs of the organisation are effectively addressed through training.

**Policies and Procedures**

As Merchants Quay Ireland has developed the range of policies and procedures, which were applicable to the range of work we do, have increased substantially. Much work has been done at local departmental level in terms of developing procedural guidelines and the staff handbook has been produced, outlining the main human resource and other policies operating in Merchants Quay Ireland. We are now seeking to build on this solid foundation and update all of our policies and procedures across the entire organisation.

**Overall Objective:**

To have a comprehensive policy framework guiding the work done at Merchants Quay Ireland allied to clear procedures supporting these policies.

**Performance Planning and Review**

In the past feedback to staff on their work happened as part of online supervision or in training assessment and informal mentoring sessions. This practice often varied from department to department and was dependent on the given resources and priorities of the time. However, as Merchants Quay Ireland continues to grow and expand, it is essential that we develop mechanisms that ensure staff get helpful feedback about their work performance and are supported to develop their skills to their fullest potential. We are now seeking to develop a Performance Planning and Review System as an aid to Human Resource Management which will maximise workers' ability to develop in their role and ensure best quality services for our clients.

**Objective:**

To agree and implement a Performance Planning and Review system that ensures best practice in this area for Merchants Quay Ireland.

**5.5 Quality Standards and Effectiveness**

In 1992 we commissioned, and subsequently published a full evaluation of our services by Dr Kieran McKeown, a well-known Dublin researcher. Since that time we have established a full-time Research Office within Merchants Quay Ireland. Our research team has conducted evaluations of all of our internal programmes and is currently working to improve our monitoring systems. In the areas of finance, administration and support services we will develop our operations in line with best practice.



Over the life of this Strategic Plan we will improve our evaluation and monitoring systems to develop the highest quality standards across all of our services.

**Overall Objective:**

To achieve best practice and high quality standards for all Merchants Quay Ireland's services.

**Quality Systems**

We have always been committed to high quality services and the dignity of all. Consequently, all our services and administrative departments operate to the highest standards. Homeless people and drug users are marginalised in society and it is vital that the services available to them do not perpetuate that exclusion.

Services should be evidence-based and conform to approved professional standards – particularly the service standards outlined in “Putting People First” and “Quality in Alcohol and Drugs Services”.

**Objective:**

To introduce appropriate quality management systems across all of our client services and administrative departments, drawing on existing Quality Systems including Putting People First and Quality in Drugs and Alcohol Services

**Client Consultation**

Our overriding objective is to improve the situation of the people who rely on us for support. It is vital that we consult those benefiting from our services if we are to be confident that we are meeting their needs.

Merchants Quay Ireland has utilised informal and formal methods of consulting service users over the years – ranging from the establishment of client forums in different services to undertaking focus groups on particular issues and offering less formal opportunities to clients to have a say.

As part of this plan we will ensure that there are forums for service users in all of our services and will put in place mechanisms for consulting clients on particular issues on an ongoing basis.

**Objective:**

To ensure that the views of people who use our services are regularly sought and considered in order to continually improve our services.

**Risk Management**

As a professional organisation we are aware of the potential risks to both our staff and service users and manage them accordingly. We have over the years developed good practices in this regard and have fire regulations and health and safety policies and procedures in place. We will build on these foundations and work towards best practice in the area of risk management.

**Objective:**

To develop best practice in risk management across Merchants Quay Ireland.

**Physical Environment:**

Merchants Quay Ireland operates in five different service locations. In addition to our busy crisis centres in the inner city we also have our settlement and reintegration service and three separate residential centres. We are responsible for the maintenance and upkeep of these premises. We are expanding our residential accommodation at St. Francis Farm and are also upgrading and refurbishing our High Park residential facility. We propose to put in place a full buildings audit with refurbishment schedules.

**Objective:**

To establish new full buildings audit that includes refurbishment schedules for all the premises occupied by Merchants Quay Ireland.

**Monitoring and Evaluation**

We will continue a rolling programme of internal evaluation of our services as set out in the Research Strategy. We will co-operate with external evaluations of our services. We will continue to identify performance indicators in each of our services or departments and to monitor how our performance is measuring up to our aspirations towards best practice.

**Objective:**

To continue the regular evaluation of our services and to ensure that systems are in place to monitor performance against targets.

**5.6 Future Directions**

Merchants Quay Ireland has always been open to change and adapts to meet client needs. This commitment and flexibility ensures we remain at the cutting edge of service delivery and innovation. This has been borne out by the development of services such as our residential detox and drug-free programmes which evolved as a direct response to the needs of our service users. We are committed to extending the range of options available

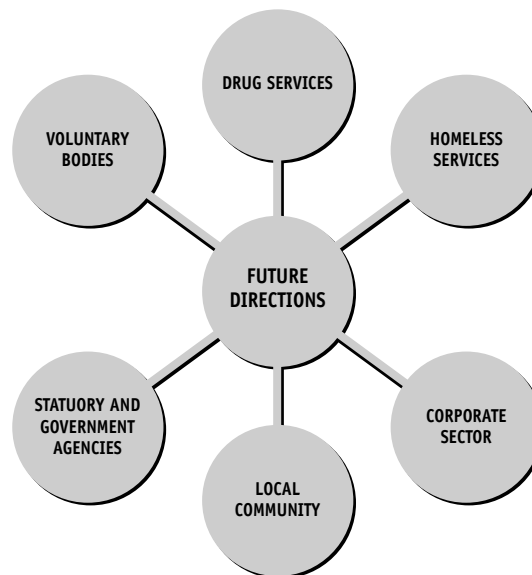
to drug-users and homeless people in partnership with other agencies and as part of our own service development.

**Overall Objective:**

To enhance and extend the range of services and options available to drug users and homeless people.

**Homeless Services**

Our homeless services originated with the “Tea Rooms” established in 1969 by Brother Sebastian to offer tea and light meals to homeless men who used to sit in the Church for warmth and respite from the elements. Building on this foundation we developed the service to provide a range of homeless advice, referral and advocacy options as well as vocational training and resettlement programmes. With the growing problem of drug use and homelessness it is increasingly difficult to find accommodation for homeless drug users. We are working in partnership with Dublin Simon to develop a hostel that will cater for their needs.



We will establish a Housing Association and develop long term accommodation and tenancy support programmes for homeless drug users in Dublin and elsewhere. The Stabilisation Day Services and the Settlement and Integration Service will be brought together with a single manager in 2004.

**Objective:**

To establish a housing association as part of the range of Merchants Quay Ireland services and to offer long term accommodation and focused tenancy support for drug users at risk of homelessness.

**Drug Services**

Merchants Quay Ireland’s drug services have expanded significantly over the past ten years. In particular our crisis services have expanded from an average of 45 clients per day in 1992 to an average of 300 per day in 2004. This increase is partly due to the lack of similar services at local level across the city. We will work in collaboration with other agencies to develop crisis and harm reduction services, particularly needle exchange services at local level in Dublin and elsewhere. We will also expand the number of drug free treatment places we offer through a major development of St. Francis Farm in Co. Carlow. In addition, the Stabilisation Day Services and the Settlement and Integration Service will be brought together with a single manager in 2004.

**Objective:**

To develop and improve the range of harm reduction and drug free treatment services in Dublin and elsewhere in Ireland.

**Voluntary Bodies**

In our early years we conducted joint volunteer training with “Cairde”, the AIDS support organisation, and were cofounders of the Voluntary Drug Treatment Network and the Voluntary Homeless Services Network. Many of our former volunteers have gone on to develop careers in other drugs and homeless agencies. We will continue to work with other voluntary bodies to foster the development of quality services for drug users and homeless people.

Merchants Quay Ireland has reached capacity at our city centre premises in terms of the numbers accessing our health promotion and crisis services. We wish to ensure that such services are more widely available across the city and across the country and we are keen to work with other voluntary bodies and agencies to develop harm reduction services at other locations in Dublin and other cities.

**Objective:**

To work with other voluntary bodies and agencies to encourage the establishment of more harm reduction and crisis oriented services for homeless people and drug users across the country.

## **Statutory & Government Agencies**

Merchants Quay Ireland has close links with, and receives substantial funding from, a number of statutory bodies. In return we assist the State in fulfilling its statutory responsibilities to care for homeless people and drug users. The receipt of statutory funding enables us to do this.

In collaboration with the statutory sector we play an active role in influencing policy and practice on the issues of drugs and homelessness. There is a need for more needle exchange and other harm reduction services as well as a need for tenancy support services aimed at homeless drug users. We will use our relationships with statutory providers to promote the development of such services.

The statutory bodies are increasingly concerned that there should be a high level of accountability for expenditure of taxpayers' money. Consequently they have put in place an increasingly burdensome range of reporting requirements that we must comply with. Developing appropriate systems to enable us to keep pace with these reporting requirements represents an important challenge for us in the coming years.

### **Objective:**

To promote the development of harm reduction and tenancy support services for homeless drug users within the statutory sector and to ensure that MQI can meet the accounting and activity reporting requirements of the various state agencies with which we work

## **Corporate Sector**

Homelessness and problem drug use are social issues. Private companies and multinational corporations are increasingly aware of their responsibility for addressing social problems in the areas in which they operate and we are keen to work in partnership with them.

Currently, MQI conducts two annual appeals aimed at private companies to raise funds for our services. We are keen to build positive relations with the corporate sector both to increase our income, and to explore ways in which we can jointly address the problems of homelessness and drug use. We hope to develop this area and seek increased funding, sponsorship and other support from the corporate sector.

### **Objective:**

To enlist the support of the corporate sector, in the form of donations, sponsorship arrangements and joint initiatives for our efforts to address homelessness and problem drug use.

## **Local Communities**

Communities often find it difficult to accept the presence on their doorstep of services for marginalised persons. This is particularly difficult where there is a high concentration of homeless people and drug users and hence a high take-up of services for these groups. Communities are concerned about issues such as anti-social behaviour and the risk of discarded injecting equipment.

We will improve our relations with the local communities in which we operate - so that we may understand any difficulties or concerns they may have. We would also like them to appreciate the difficulties faced by homeless people and drug users and to seek their co-operation in integrating these people back into local society.

We currently meet with local community representatives on an occasional basis as issues and concerns arise. Our aim is to improve on this by developing more proactive and regular ways of engaging with these communities.

### **Objective:**

To develop mechanisms for engaging with the communities in which we operate in a regular and pro-active manner.

# 6. Operational Planning

Each department or service was asked to draw up its own operational plan.

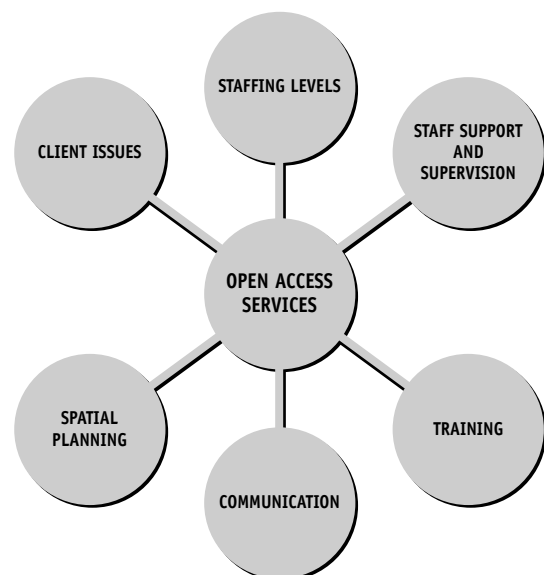
There will be quarterly reviews of the Strategic Plan and of each operational plan both at local team level and at senior management level.

In developing its plan each department:

- outlined the current services
- detailed how they operate
- clarified objectives and goals
- identified how we are meeting these goals
- put forward suggestions for improvements
- identified new services that would add value to the mission and operating principles.
- identified activities that may have lost their relevance and could be replaced by other more highly valued services

## 6.1 Open Access Services

MQI operates a range of Open Access services to meet the needs of homeless people and drug users. As the name implies these services are accessed simply by those who walk in off the streets. The open access drugs service and primary health care service for homeless persons are based in Winetavern Street, and our drop-in service for homeless persons is located on Cook Street. There is a significant overlap between these services in that a majority of homeless persons coming to us use drugs and a high proportion of persons availing of our drugs service are homeless. We seek to work with all clients in a holistic and integrated fashion and have worked over the past few years to ensure interoperability of staff between the drugs and homeless services. These services are often the first point of contact for homeless people and drug users in crisis.



The key aim of the Open Access Services is to reduce harm arising from drug use and homelessness and to link homeless people and active drug users with a range of services aimed at meeting their needs.

Taken together our Open Access Services provide the busiest low threshold programmes for homeless people and active drug users in the greater Dublin area. The services are focused on the most marginalised, such as those sleeping rough on the streets and those with drugs, alcohol and mental health problems. Many are not yet willing or able to become drug free or to participate in programmes which would move them in that direction or change their lifestyle. All are supported, however, in sustaining a better quality of life and receive help in minimising harm arising from their homelessness or drug use. Clients are helped to access new pathways towards treatment, housing, settlement, employment, education and training.

At our Drop in service targeted at homeless people we offer meals (breakfast and lunch), crisis support, information, advice and advocacy service, referral to accommodation and settlement services, referral to our and other drugs services and we offer a primary health service. At our Open Access Drugs Service on Winetavern Street we offer crisis support, information and advice on drugs issues, needle exchange and health promotion service, a family support service, referral to our own and others homeless services, referral to our own and other drug treatment services. We plan to develop our primary health care services for homeless people and to improve the accessibility and quality of all of our services.



**Overall Objective:**

The Open Access Services will consolidate and build on current services to ensure high quality, relevant and accessible services for active drug users and homeless people.

**Staffing levels**

While most of our staff are full time we also rely on part-time community employment trainees and volunteers. The increasing level of up-take and demand for our services has placed pressure on our staff in maintaining necessary service levels. We will review our services and staffing levels to ensure that the staff complement is sufficient to deliver a quality client service.

**Objective:**

To ensure that staff levels are sufficient to deliver a quality service for homeless people and drug users.

**Staff Support and Supervision**

In the Open Access Services staff members deal with a highly disadvantaged client group with a range of complex needs and issues. Staff have monthly one-to-one supervision to support them in their work and we are now developing in consultation with the HR department, a structure that will enhance the support available to staff.

**Objective:**

To enhance the supervision and support systems for all staff in the Open Access Services.

**Training**

We will work with the training and HR departments to ensure that relevant training is available to all staff in the Open Access Services on a regular basis and that a culture is fostered whereby training is seen as a necessary part of each staff member's development.

**Objective:**

To ensure training that is needs-based, on-going, targeted and meaningful is available to staff on a regular basis in Open Access Services.

**Communication**

The Open Access Services now have a combined staff (full -time workers, volunteers and CE trainees) of almost 50 persons. Within such a busy facility, and with staff working different shifts, it can be difficult to disseminate information so that everyone knows what is happening within their service. It can also be difficult to keep up to date with developments and events across the wider organisation. In line with the MQI Communication Strategy we will develop systems within the Open Access Services to ensure ready availability of all relevant information to all staff.

**Objective:**

To develop communication systems within the Open Access Services that ensures ready availability of all relevant information for staff members.

**Spatial Planning**

Up to now the open access drugs service and primary health care service for homeless persons have been based in Winetavern St, and our drop-in service for homeless persons has been located in Cook Street.

Additional space is being made available to us in Winetavern Street and we plan to accommodate all the open access services at this location. Allowing for greater co-ordination between services and some economies of scale, this development will present some difficulties and challenges. The overall space available will be smaller than that which we have at present and we need to ensure that service users have access to an outdoor smoking area. Notwithstanding these factors we have an opportunity to match our range of services to the best potential use of the available space. This review will take place keeping in mind how best to meet the needs of our service users.

**Objective:**

To review the space available to the Open Access Services to ensure its optimum use to best meet the needs of our service users.

## Client Issues

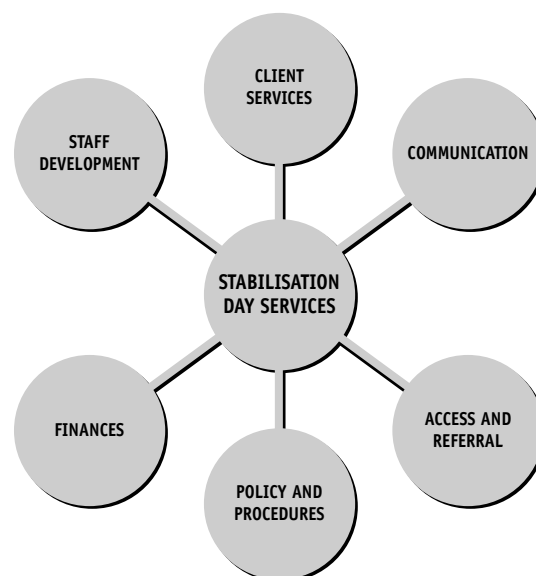
The Open Access Services endeavour to shape the services to respond to changing client needs. Consulting satisfactorily with clients in a busy drop-in setting poses its own challenges. The Open Access Services are, nonetheless, committed to real dialogue with service users regarding service developments. In line with the MQI Communication Strategy we are now putting in place a range of mechanisms for engaging with service users in meaningful consultation.

### Objective:

To develop mechanisms for consultation with service users that are meaningful and respects their rights.

## 6.2 Stabilisation Day Services

The stabilisation day services were formed in the early 1990s as a direct response to clients who requested more action-based activities and a structure separate from the drop in and needle exchange services. Initially the activities were informal such as drama and arts and crafts and were delivered in an ad-hoc manner. Over time these became more structured and a FAS Community Employment Project was established. This enabled us to develop a day activities programme and to pay clients to attend for twenty hours training per week. The FAS programme provides skill-based training for clients in groups. The programme assists them to bring stability into their lives. The aim is to bring about positive changes in relation to drug use and lifestyles, and to assist them towards drug free status if they so desire. We also offer a Methadone Prescribing and Support Service (for residents of Dublin 8 only) and individual support and counselling for clients, to support them in their efforts towards change and personal development. The Stabilisation Day Services and the Settlement and Integration Service will be brought together with a single manager in 2004.



We will enhance these services with a greater focus on bridging the gap between crisis and stability in order to provide greater support for those wishing to make that transition.

### Overall Objective:

To provide a range of effective and accessible services offering pathways from crisis towards stability for drug users and people out of home.

## Client Services

The main aim of our client services is to provide a bridging mechanism for our client group from chaotic drug using lifestyle to a more stable and manageable position. We need to formulate more clearly our aims & objectives. We also need to look at the concept of stabilisation and what this signifies for our client group.

### Objective:

To clarify our aims and objectives and to develop and sustain a range of high quality programmes that assists our clients in meeting their need in achieving more stability.

## Staff Development

The staff delivering the Stabilisation Day Services has by and large been constant over the last number of years as have the range of services we have been providing. While we have accessed general training modules offered by FAS over this time, we may not have focused adequately on our own personal training and development.

### Objective:

In conjunction with the training department, to have our individual and team training needs identified and to meet these needs.

## Finances

Funding for the Stabilisation Day Services comes through a variety of different sources. In line with the Finance Strategy we plan to take greater responsibility for financial decision making, budget setting and financial management.

### Objective:

To take greater responsibility for financial decision making, budget setting and financial management to enable us manage resources and more effectively plan and deliver Stabilisation Services.

## Policy and Procedures

We need to revisit our policies and procedures with support from the Human Resources Department in order to develop a more formal approach to organisational policy and towards the achievement of best practice in our services

### Objective:

To develop Policies and Procedures for the facility that will be clear while maximising flexibility in our service delivery.

## Communication

We are eager to enhance communications between our service and other facilities within MQI. In line with the MQI Communication Strategy we are seeking to improve our communications systems through both informal and formal means.

### Objective:

Establish good formal communications with other departments of MQI and with outside agencies.

## Access & Referrals

Access to our service is through referral from other services. We need to re-examine the ways in which we make initial contact with our client group and the pathways we offer to our client when they are ready to move on from our service.

### Objective:

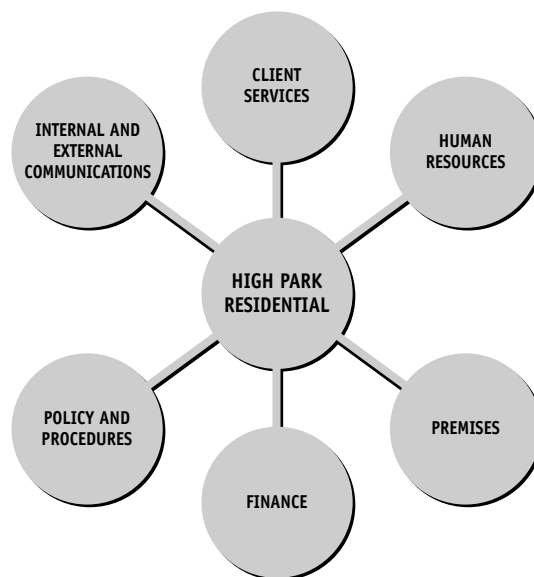
To comprehensively review our referrals and access systems to ensure that clients can access our programmes and that we in turn can refer clients on to other services as appropriate.

## 6.3 High Park Residential Programme

The High Park Residential Programme provides a low threshold, drug free treatment programme for people with histories of problematic substance use. In the Franciscan tradition, hope and justice are central to this work. Our ethos is also shaped by the Therapeutic Community Movement and the values of individual responsibility, honesty and personal development, which enable people to address the problems and challenges they encounter in trying to improve their lives.

The programme was established in 1995 and now offers a 17-week residential programme, which can accommodate up to 12 people at a time, 7 men and 5 women. The service is staffed 24 hours a day, 365 day per year by a team of full-time, part-time and volunteer workers.

The team provides an intensive and structured personal development programme which includes one-to-one counselling, group therapy, life skills training, drama workshops, gym sessions, basic skills education and community outings.



We accept people into our service who would not meet the admission criteria of many other drug-free residential projects. We achieve this principally by providing a 3-week residential detoxification programme working in partnership with GPs and community methadone prescribers.

**Overall Objective:**

To improve the quality and effectiveness of the services delivered to clients of the High Park Residential Programme.

**Client Services**

High Park provides residential treatment for an average of 70 men and women each year. The project aims to keep pace with the changing needs of our clients, in terms of patterns of drug use and the changing client profile in terms of gender, age and ethnicity. A revised client Interview Assessment form and an IT database will assist in the monitoring and management of our clients.

It is well-documented that women are underrepresented in drug treatment programmes. This is has also been our experience in High Park and we have decided to take steps to improve women's participation in the High Park programme.

**Objectives:**

To produce a revised Interview Assessment form, which will give a more comprehensive identification of service user needs.

To work with the ICT department to develop an IT Database enabling more effective monitoring, management and evaluation of services and the changing needs of our clients.

To ensure greater participation by women in the High Park Programme.

**Human Resources**

Staff turnover has been high during the past 3 years with only one of the 2001 staff team still working at the project. In the past year a full-time Settlement Worker and a number of part-time Community Employment staff have been incorporated into the High Park team. We will work with the HR Department to develop team effectiveness and strengthen the staff support systems in High Park with a view to increasing staff retention.

**Objective:**

To consolidate and strengthen the staff support systems in High Park.

**Premises**

High Park Residential has been operating out of High Park Convent in Drumcondra, since 1995. Respond! Housing Association purchased the convent and surrounding grounds in 1997 and has embarked on a large-scale refurbishment of the convent as well as a social housing development on the grounds. Merchants Quay Ireland leases part of the convent for the High Park Programme and this section of the building now needs to be upgraded. We have an excellent working relationship with Respond! and they are committed to refurbishing our section of the building as part of their second phase development. Unfortunately, their development plan is delayed and we are now exploring options for the immediate upgrading and modernisation of the facility.

**Objective:**

To refurbish the High Park premises to a modern professional standard.

**Finance**

High Park running costs are in the region of €500,000 per year. In order to achieve better efficiencies and value for money, High Park Residential will pilot a new system of delegated authority from Executive level to Service Managers in areas such as financial decision making, budget setting and financial management.

**Objective:**

To develop and pilot at High Park the delegation of more financial responsibility and authority from Executive level to Service Manager.

## Policy and Procedures

The range of policies and procedural guidelines at High Park and MQI have increased significantly in recent years. This has occurred as a result of new employment legislation as well as the organisation's aim for increased standards of professionalism. High Park will revise our project specific policies and, where necessary, update existing policies and produce new ones. These new policies will be incorporated into the Merchants Quay Ireland staff handbook following their approval by the Board of Management.

### Objective:

To work with the HR Department to develop comprehensive Policy and Procedures for staff at High Park.

## Internal and External Communications

Communication within the High Park Team and with Clients of our programme is central to our effectiveness. In addition we must communicate with all the Departments within MQI and with a range of external agencies including referral agencies, accommodation and support services, Social Welfare and Probation Services. In line with the MQI strategy on Communication, High Park will improve its communication systems by reviewing internal client Progress Notes, Incident Reports and shift handover procedures. We will develop a template which will be used to notify Referral agencies when a client they have referred to us has left High Park. We will also revise our "Client Guidelines Booklet" which provides information on the services we deliver to clients and explains their rights and responsibilities within our programme.

### Objectives

To review and develop High Park's internal communication systems.

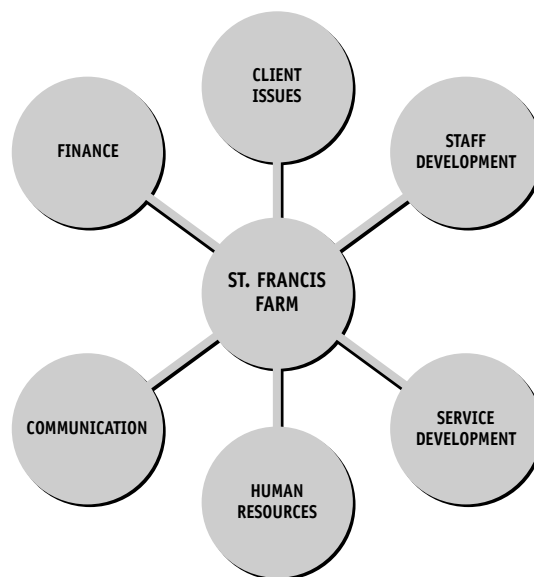
To develop policies in relation to client departures

To revise and update the High Park "Client Guidelines Booklet".

## 6.4 St. Francis Farm

St. Francis Farm is a therapeutic facility which offers a programme of six to twelve months duration to people seeking treatment for substance use problems.

The St. Francis Farm Programme involves a strong therapeutic input. We utilise a key worker system and provide one to one counselling and group therapy for all clients. We also offer educational opportunities including life skills training and budgeting, literacy tuition and computer training courses leading to ECDL certification. Participants in the programme also have the opportunity to gain work experience. St. Francis Farm is unique because it is situated on a working farm and this work is an integral element of the programme. Residents gain experience in farming (animal care, vegetable production etc) and are engaged in the general day to day running of the farm.



We are continually improving and adapting our programme to meet the needs of service users.

### Overall Objective:

To provide a professional service, for problematic drug and alcohol users seeking residential treatment.

### Client Issues

The length of time in treatment is positively associated with better outcomes. Many people accessing our High Park Residential Programme were seeking a longer term drug free programme. St. Francis Farm was established to cater for them. We insisted that clients must be drug free on entry. As we have expanded, this requirement has proved to be too restrictive for some service users, particularly those coming directly from active drug use. We are now looking at ways to increase the accessibility of the programme.

We currently operate a rolling review system with client participation. However we are planning to initiate a client council to provide feedback and input into the programme.

**Objective:**

To improve access for clients wishing to avail of our service.

To develop formal consultation structures for clients within the programme.

## **Service Development**

Our residential treatment programme incorporates therapy, education and training. At present there is no formal structured move-on phase for clients completing the programme. They are usually linked with the MQI Settlement & Integration Team or other structured re-entry programmes in Dublin and with the self help fellowships such as Narcotics Anonymous. We will develop a revised move-on and support structure for clients completing the programme based at St. Francis Farm.

**Objective:**

To review the current arrangements, to develop a structured aftercare and support mechanism at St. Francis Farm for clients completing the programme there.

## **Staff Training and Development**

The current staff at St. Francis Farm has a broad range of experience and professional qualifications. Clients present with a broad range of issues underpinning their addiction. It is essential that the skills base of the staff is kept up to date with current trends and issues.

**Objective:**

To work with the Training and HR Departments to review the training needs of the staff at St. Francis Farm, to enable them to provide up to date professional therapeutic service for our clients.

## **Human Resources**

St. Francis Farm has a multi skilled team working to deliver comprehensive and wide ranging services for our clients. We are now examining our staffing levels with a view to achieving best practice in human resource management and to continue to provide the best possible professional service.

**Objective:**

To work with the HR Department to review current staff structures and to work towards achieving best practice in Human Resource Management for the benefit of the staff and clients at St. Francis Farm.

## **Communication**

St. Francis Farm is located 55 miles away from the headquarters of MQI. This sometimes has meant that the Farm has been out of the loop in relation to events, news and information in general. In line with the MQI strategy on Communication, we will ensure effective communication between St. Francis Farm and the various departments of Merchants Quay Ireland.

**Objective:**

To improve communications with the wider organisation.

## **Finance**

We will work with the Executive Team and the Fundraising Department to ensure that St Francis Farm can build on its existing resources by attracting new funding from local sources and by capitalising on the income generating potential of the farm.

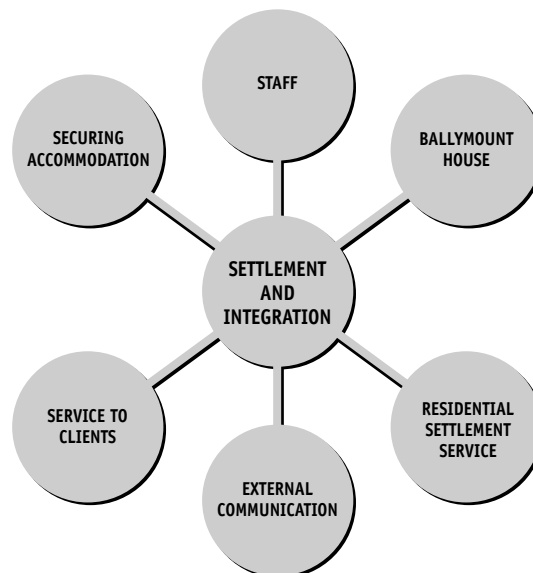
**Objective:**

To develop new local funding sources for St. Francis Farm and to look at new ways of generating income from the farm.

## 6.5 Settlement and Integration

The Merchants Quay Ireland Settlement Service commenced in 1998. The overall objective is to move homeless persons out of homelessness into sustainable housing, self sufficiency, and independent living appropriate to their ability and needs, with support as necessary. The Settlement and Integration Service will be brought together with the Stabilisation Day Services in 2004.

The target group is adult homeless persons, particularly those with drug and alcohol problems. We assist homeless people towards settlement through a range of interventions, including individual support, group support, and personal development and life skills training. A settlement service is also provided for those in High Park and Tullow. The Settlement service is also responsible for the running of Ballymount House. This is a small facility providing transitional accommodation for homeless clients who have completed residential drug treatment. This house offers a six month programme for up to three clients with one-to-one support, budgeting and independent living skills and a range of settlement supports. The service also supports clients referred from external agencies and from the catering training programme currently running in Merchants Quay Ireland.



### Overall Objective:

The Settlement Team will deliver a quality settlement and integration service for drug users and homeless people.

### Securing Accommodation

While there has been a marked improvement in hostel and temporary accommodation for homeless people in Dublin, more stable housing options are difficult to access. Merchants Quay Ireland will seek to obtain additional housing for clients moving from homelessness, in liaison with Dublin City Council. We will register as a housing agency to facilitate us in this work.

### Objective:

Provide appropriate housing and support for clients accessing the settlement service.

### Settlement Service to Residential Services

Many clients presenting for treatment at High Park and Tullow have settlement needs. Consequently, we have allocated a settlement team member to work full time with clients in both residential programmes. The staff member is based in High Park. This initiative will be reviewed in September 2004.

### Objective:

To address the settlement needs of clients in MQI residential drug treatment programmes.

### Service to Clients

Clients are referred to the Settlement service from MQI services or from outside agencies. The referral and assessment system is under review particularly for clients from our open access homeless services. Staff will commence a rota system in the open access homeless services twice weekly to facilitate easier access for clients to the settlement service. This and other aspects of the service will be reviewed in September '04. These include aftercare, art, and women's' groups. We will also look at additional day programmes to address alcohol issues.

### Objective:

To review the current client programmes including the referral system to ensure an enhanced settlement service.

## Staff Training

Ensuring that staff have the skills necessary to deal with the many issues presented by service users is essential to the success of this programme. An analysis of training needs will be undertaken in liaison with the Training and HR Departments.

### Objective

To provide all staff in the Settlement and Integration team with needs-based, on-going and specific training to deliver quality services.

## External Communications

The service is represented on the various networks and sub-committees which have been established through the Homeless Agency. It is also involved with a number of tenant and transitional housing associations. The structures and methods of communication with these bodies will be reviewed. Leaflets and information on the service will also be updated. It is important to ensure that the Links system is fully operational. This will be done in liaison with the Training, IT Department and Social Policy and Communications Department.

### Objective:

To maximise our external liaison functions to best benefit of our service users.

## 6.6 Training

The Training Department looks after the training needs of all workers, paid and voluntary, at MQI and offers high quality training to other agencies that work with drug users and homeless people. The Department works in partnership with a range of agencies in order to deliver high quality training for all our clients. The Training Team will enhance the training available both to MQI and organisations outside.

### Objective:

To provide high quality professional training on issues relating to homelessness and problem drug use.



### Drugs Awareness Training

Awareness training is provided for a variety of groups ranging from community groups to persons working in allied care professions such as FAS supervisors, trainee nurses and those working in health and educational services.

### Objectives:

To develop professional training for persons working in homeless services

To provide training for persons working with alcohol, cocaine and other drug types.

### Training for Clients

The Training Department delivers some training for clients including the methadone support programme delivered in partnership with Mountjoy Prison and the Education Equality Initiative. Currently most training for service users is organised at specific departmental level. We are seeking to draw on the collective experience to maximise resources and enhance the quality and range of options.

### Objective:

To establish a working group on client training led by the Training Department and including members of the Executive and Service Managers. This group will develop a co-ordinated approach to client training and to ensure that the needs of clients are addressed in a professional manner.

### Training for Staff

The Training Department organises the core training for our staff. This includes a wide range of areas ranging from 'Supervision Skills' through to 'Conflict Management' and 'Motivational Interviewing'. The training



department also organises the 'Management Development Programme' for Service Managers including financial management and human resource issues.

**Objectives:**

- To provide MQI staff with access to high quality in-service training
- To devolve responsibility for staff training to the Human Resources Department.
- To establish a working group to look at urgent issues.

**Training for Volunteers and Trainee Project Workers**

The Training Department is currently responsible for the initial training for volunteers and trainee project workers. We are now planning to review this process to maximise use of resources and to best benefit our volunteers and trainee project workers.

**Objectives:**

- To establish a Working Group on the Recruitment, Training and Retention of Volunteers and Trainee Project Workers with a view to making recommendations regarding their training, recruitment and retention.
- To devolve responsibility for the recruitment of volunteers and trainee project workers to the Human Resources Department.

**Partnerships**

The Training Department works in partnership with a range of different agencies. Our partners include University College Dublin, Probation and Welfare Service, FAS, Barnardos and the Homeless Agency.

**Objective:**

- To develop positive partnerships to assist us to comprehensively address the training needs of our clients.

**Professionally Orientated Training**

The Training Department is responsible for professional training courses which we have developed with University College Dublin i.e. the Certificate and Diploma courses in Drugs Counselling Theory and Intervention Skills. We are now developing a UCD/Merchants Quay Ireland Degree programme in Social Studies.

**Objectives:**

- To develop the UCD/Merchants Quay Ireland Degree in Social Studies
- To develop professional training for persons working in homeless services.
- To develop professional training for persons working with alcohol, cocaine and other drug types.

**6.7 Social Policy and Communications**

Merchants Quay Ireland has a long-standing commitment to change the social structures and policy issues within which homelessness and problem drug use occur. We are actively involved in campaigning on issues such as the provision of housing for people with drug problems and related anti-social behaviour, the extension of harm reduction services across Ireland and the development of targeted and effective services for homeless drug users. A Social Policy and Communications Officer promotes our social policy agenda and is responsible for a wide range of publications. The Officer also plays an important role in planning Merchants Quay Ireland events.

**Overall Objective:**

- To promote policy change through awareness raising, lobbying and positive partnership, to assist in the production of information materials, to organise events aimed at raising awareness of drug use and homelessness and to achieve a positive image of Merchants Quay Ireland, its services and its service users.



## **Publications**

The Information and Communications Officer is responsible for a wide range of publications for Merchants Quay Ireland, including the internal quarterly newsletter Quay Issues, service leaflets, style guides and the Merchants Quay Ireland website.

### **Objectives:**

To ensure that Merchants Quay Ireland produces a wide range of high quality publications that convey positive messages about Merchants Quay Ireland, its services and its service users.

To ensure also the production of high quality, clear and concise information materials focused on the work of Merchants Quay Ireland.

## **Campaigning**

We have over a long period taken a significant public role in advocating a wider variety of harm reduction oriented services for drug users. We have opposed the Housing Miscellaneous Provisions Act (1997), a measure aimed at making it easier to evict people with drug problems. More recently we have been involved in the Rent Supplement Coalition.

### **Objective:**

To promote positive policy change through awareness raising, lobbying and positive partnerships.

## **Communications**

It is important that our own staff and service users are aware of what we are doing and have an opportunity to support the public relations and campaigning work undertaken at Merchants Quay. Concerns have been raised from time to time that people do not know how the organisation is campaigning on behalf of our service users. Very often the first they hear about a particular policy may be when they read about it in the paper. In line with the MQI strategy on Communication we need, however, to improve awareness of our social policy and communications activity within the organisation.

### **Objective:**

To ensure that the Social Policy and Communications work of Merchants Quay Ireland is well co-ordinated with all other work undertaken at Merchants Quay Ireland

## **Events**

We organise high profile launches and events to promote our work and influence positive policy change. There was a major conference in Dublin Castle in 2002 on the issues of drugs and homelessness. We also launch research documents and reports and other publications from time to time. More recently we have had a number of fundraising events.

### **Objective:**

To organise and assist in the organisation of events to promote a positive image of Merchants Quay Ireland, its services and its service users.

## **Media & Public**

Independent research carried out in the late 1990s showed that Merchants Quay Ireland was a key source of information for journalists on the drugs issue. To date we have attracted significant media attention and promoted positive policy changes of benefit to our service users.

### **Objective:**

To raise awareness of drug issues, homelessness and the work of Merchants Quay Ireland amongst the general public.

## **Partnership**

To maximise our effectiveness in advocating positive policy change, we have always recognised the importance of working in partnership with others. Merchants Quay Ireland has been central in the establishment of the Voluntary Homeless Services Network and of the Voluntary Drug Treatment Network. We have actively participated in the Community Platform which represents voluntary and community groups at the level of the National Partnership. We have been represented on a wide variety of partnership bodies, including the National Advisory Committee on Drugs, the structures of the Homeless Agency and regional and local drug task forces.

**Objective:**

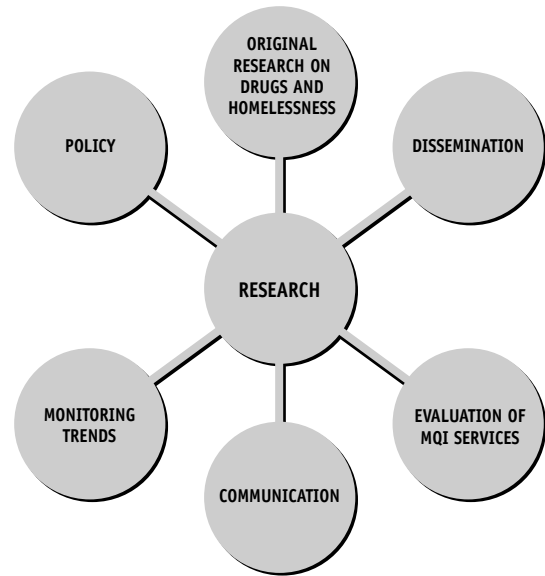
To work with external agencies, networks and partnerships to promote positive policy changes and mutually beneficial relationships.

## 6.8 Research

The Research Department of Merchants Quay Ireland was established in 1997. It has a role in evaluating all our services and engages in original research on homelessness and drug use in Ireland. The Research Department provides management, staff and external agencies with information about the profile of clients using our services and changes in their needs.

**Overall Objective:**

To engage in high quality research and evaluation as a means of increasing our knowledge about the issues of homelessness and problem drug use and improving our responses to them.



### Original Research

The Research Department has been producing original research particularly in the field of problem drug use since its inception in 1997. This research includes studies on the relationship between homelessness and problem drug use, drug use among new communities in Ireland and the health status of male and female drug users. We plan to build on our growing reputation as a centre of excellence for research on drugs issues and to address important knowledge gaps relating to problem drug use and particularly the interface between problem drug use and homelessness.

**Objective:**

To address knowledge gaps regarding drugs and homelessness in Ireland.

### Dissemination

We have been reasonably good at disseminating research findings to external audiences via the publication of reports, in print format or in electronic format. We have also organised seminars and other similar events. We have used our contacts in the media to ensure that findings of our research and evaluation are widely known. We have perhaps been less good at disseminating our findings internally and this is an issue that will be addressed over the coming year.

**Objective:**

To disseminate findings from research and evaluation to as wide an audience as possible including our service users, our staff, people working in external agencies and decision-makers in the fields of policy and government

### Evaluation of MQI Services

The Research Department of Merchants Quay Ireland has been engaging in evaluation of our services since its inception. Over the past number of years the needle exchange service, the outreach service, the Faightu Information and Advice service and the methadone prescribing service have all undergone evaluation. Over the next three year period we hope to arrive at a stage where all our services will undergo internal or external evaluation at least once every five years.

**Objective:**

To evaluate and make recommendations regarding the services at Merchants Quay Ireland so as to make them more relevant and effective.

### Communication

Communication between the Research Department and other parts of the organisation and the external world to date has been relatively informal and unstructured. Very often staff and service users are unaware of what

the Research Department is doing and feel that they have little input into this area. On the other hand researchers may feel isolated from the rest of the organisation in that their work is viewed as marginal. In line with the MQI strategy on Communication, we hope to develop a number of structures that would address this issue in the next year.

**Objective:**

To improve communication between the Research Department and other parts of Merchants Quay Ireland.

**Monitoring Trends at MQI**

The management and other stakeholders in Merchants Quay Ireland need up to date information about the profile, needs and issues of our service users in order to effectively plan services. For example, we need to know the number of clients using services, the breakdown of clients in terms of gender, membership of minority groups, age profile, homeless status, drug using status. The development of a database will be important in ensuring that such knowledge gaps are addressed and the Research Department will have an important role in gathering and collating the information needed.

**Objective:**

To monitor trends in service usage and profile of service users for the purposes of good management, development of services and improved awareness of client need.

**Policy**

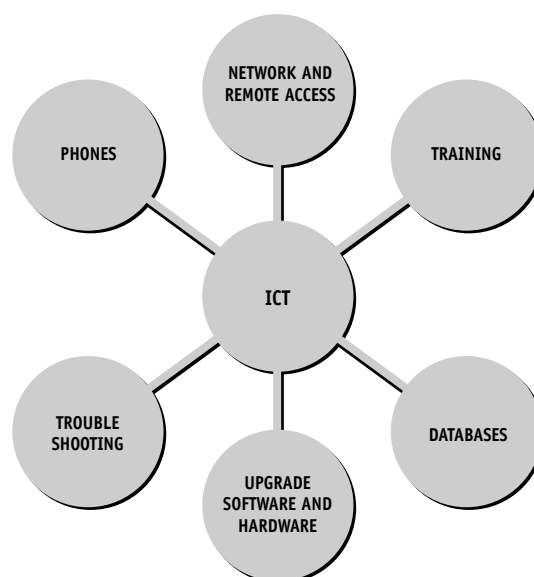
Research can play an important role in policy development. For example our research shows that needle exchange services are an effective way of reducing harm among problem drug users. This has a clear policy implication. All research or evaluation studies examine the policy implications of the work carried out and make appropriate recommendations. We plan to continue this policy and to ensure the dissemination of our findings.

**Objective:**

To ensure that our research informs policy development on drugs and homelessness in Ireland.

**6.9 Information and Communications Technology**

Over the past number of years Merchants Quay Ireland has installed a fifty user computer network. We also have in place a somewhat outdated telephone system. Computers are used in all departments with up to date software. We also operate a number of computer databases, specifically LINK and the needle exchange database to monitor and assist work with our clients. We have just changed our network system to a more stable one and over the next year we hope to provide training in the use of this network and in the use of relevant computer applications to staff at Merchants Quay Ireland.



**Overall Objective:**

To ensure that Merchants Quay Ireland’s information and communications technology is effective, stable and suited to the needs of the organisation.

**Network/Remote Access**

The computer network at Merchants Quay Ireland facilitates communication throughout the organisation through the use of internal e-mail, file sharing, appointment scheduling and so on. It allows us to store data safely, share relevant applications, and allows users access to the internet in a secure fashion. Our new network will ensure that communication between MQI and High Park and Tullow will be greatly improved.

**Objective:**

To provide an effective and stable network in terms of uptime and usage monitoring, and to ensure remote access to the network as appropriate.

## **Training**

The level of IT skills of staff at Merchants Quay Ireland varies. There are some staff who have no experience in working with computers while there are others who are extremely experienced and skilled. In 2004 we want to reach a situation where all staff know how to use the network and at least have a basic knowledge of the applications relevant to their work.

### **Objective:**

To facilitate a consistent level of IT skills across the organisation.

## **Databases**

Databases are useful across a variety of services in storing important information about our clients and their needs, about donors to Merchants Quay Ireland and their interests or about our own staff and their qualifications, training needs and salary levels. We have a number of databases including the LINK system, the needle exchange database and VIP human resources database. We want to put in place a single client information database for all our services that interacts with the LINK system. We also wish to install a fundraising database and other databases that may be required to improve our performance.

### **Objective:**

To define, design and implement databases appropriate to the organisation's needs

## **Upgrade Hardware and Software**

On average we replace about 10% of our computers each year and we upgrade our software as often as is required by licensing agreements.

### **Objective:**

To continue replacing obsolete machines and upgrading software to current versions.

## **Troubleshooting**

Troubleshooting takes up a considerable amount of time. Computers and the software that is on them appear to be inherently unstable. Telephone systems also tend to be temperamental. Troubleshooting will remain an ongoing issue at Merchants Quay Ireland.

### **Objective:**

To provide effective support for users for troubleshooting computer, telephone and other communication problems.

## **Telephones**

Merchants Quay Ireland has a telephone system originally installed in the late 1990s by Alcatel and currently approaching the end of its useful life. This system will probably need to be replaced within the next three years but for the moment we are working to ensure that it continues to meet our needs in the current year.

### **Objective:**

We will increase the number of DDI lines at Merchants Quay Ireland.

## 6.10 Finance Department

The organisation has grown very rapidly in volume of transactions and complexity over the past five years and has offered a significant challenge to the Finance Department to deal with all the demands placed upon it. The key services provided by the Department are Financial Planning, Reporting, and Value for Money, Payments/Receipts, Central Services and Community Employment Schemes.

### Overall Objective:

To provide an effective and efficient financial function for Merchants Quay Ireland.

### Community Employment (FAS)

The Community Employment (FAS) Department covers four Community Employment projects. The financial records are maintained independently of those of the rest of the organisation and are only added in at the year-end. We now need to integrate the records into the mainstream financial records and to close bank accounts which are no longer required.

### Objective:

To integrate the Community Employment financial records into the mainstream Merchants Quay Ireland records and to close bank accounts when they are no longer required.

### Financial Planning

Up to 80% of the organisation's funding comes from the statutory sector. As this funding is principally received on an annual basis, the organisation has concentrated its financial planning on the annual budget. There is now a need to look beyond the end of the year to our medium and long-term financial requirements. This is particularly important in the context of continuing to build reserves. The increasing demands on the department have made it increasingly difficult to meet agreed timetables for budget preparation and other reporting. There is now a need to review our resources and in particular to re-evaluate the effectiveness of our "Take 5" accounting software.

There is a need to integrate the financial process more fully into the operational management of other departments. In this regard a pilot study has been underway in the High Park Service over the past year which involved the Service Manager taking responsibility for its financial planning and management. The results of the pilot study have been encouraging. We now need to delegate prime responsibility for financial planning to service managers with the Finance Department concentrating on their co-ordination into an organisation-wide plan.

### Objectives:

To prepare an outline financial plan to cover the life of the Strategic Plan.

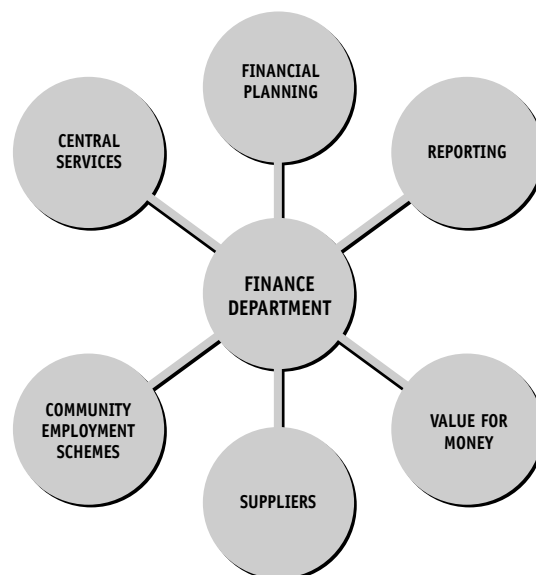
To review the "Take 5" accounting system and, in this regard, to consult with other voluntary agencies providing similar services.

To complete the pilot study at High Park Residential Service.

To assess the resources and training necessary to delegate prime responsibility for financial planning to the service departments.

### Reporting

The Finance Department is increasingly finding it difficult to meet its monthly internal reporting requirements. When the accounts are prepared there is sometimes insufficient time for meaningful discussion with the managers. There is a need to review both the accounting system "Take 5" (which may well have to be replaced) and the staffing resources. In the short-term we may need to revert to quarterly rather than monthly management reporting.



**Objectives:**

To review the “Take 5” accounting system.

To review the staff requirements necessary to allow us to meet all our reporting requirements.

**Value for Money**

The Finance Department will take the lead in ensuring value for money across the entire organisation. Audit procedures will ensure that our existing suppliers continue to provide value for money and that all new suppliers are properly assessed in these terms.

**Objectives:**

To review the terms and conditions of trade of all our suppliers in terms of value for money.

To review the current procedures for introducing new suppliers and to put in place safeguards to ensure that we are getting value for money.

**Suppliers**

Merchants Quay Ireland deals with approximately 350 suppliers. Standard terms of trade are thirty days. In the past we have had difficulties in collecting all the invoices and supporting documentation necessary to allow us to make payments and this has caused delays. Also cash flow problems have sometimes resulted in payments been held back. There have been significant improvements in these areas over the past few years. However, we must continue to monitor our relationship with our suppliers as difficulties can very quickly impact on the reputation of the organisation.

**Objective:**

To review our procedures and policies relating to ordering and approval of documentation and payments to suppliers.

**Central Services**

The Central Services division accounts for those overheads which have been regarded as indirect. This expenditure has been charged to the service divisions through the medium of a service charge. We now need to re-evaluate this service charge so as to identify direct but shared expenditure which should be charged directly to the service divisions.

**Objectives:**

Review the composition of the Central Services Division.

Allocate the service charge to the various departments.

**6.11 Fundraising**

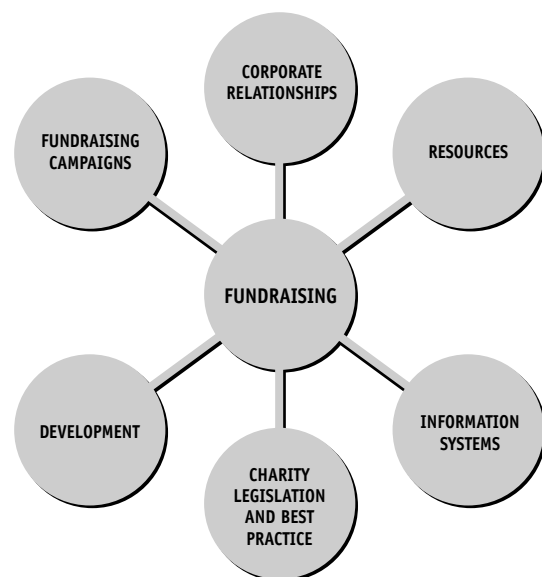
MQI receives nearly 80% of its funds from statutory sources. We need to increase the proportion of voluntary income raised by MQI to ensure our continued development and independence. The Fundraising Department of Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI) was established in November 2001. The aim of the Department is to ensure that additional sources of funds will be tapped into, and thus decreasing over reliance in Statutory funding.

**Overall Objective:**

To maximise the amount of voluntary funding coming into the organisation.

**Fundraising Campaigns**

Raising money is the key objective of the Fundraising Department. A revised fundraising strategy setting out the detail of the methods and campaigns will be used to achieve this will be produced by September '04.



**Objective:**

To raise funds for our work in addressing the issues of homelessness and problem drug use.

**Resources**

To ensure the success of the Fundraising Department, and enable us to reach our targets adequate resources need to be made available. These resources come in the form of both staff and finance. The detail of this will be set out in the Revised Fundraising Strategy.

**Objective:**

To ensure that adequate resources are available so that the Fundraising Department meets fundraising targets as set out by the Executive Team.

**Development**

We need to continually develop the fundraising capacity of MQI. The details of how this will be achieved will be set out in the Revised Fundraising Strategy.

**Objective:**

To continually develop new and innovative approaches to meet the funding needs of MQI.

**Management Information Systems**

There needs to be clear administration and management systems in place to ensure reporting is easily accessible and accurate thus creating a clear audit trail for tracking, recording, monitoring and analysis of all monies and support received by Merchants Quay Ireland through it's Fundraising Department and to develop reporting systems to ensure that all activities are monitored and a clear template in put in place to report daily, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually and as and when needed.

**Objective:**

To ensure that there adequate management information systems are in place from which clear, concise and accurate reports can be drawn from.

**Charity Legislation & Best Practice**

We will continue to implement all relevant Charities Legislation and to implement best practice in fundraising.

**Objective:**

That MQI continues to conform with all legislation governing the operation of Charities and puts in place best practice guidelines and a codes of ethics for its fundraising department.

**Corporate Relations**

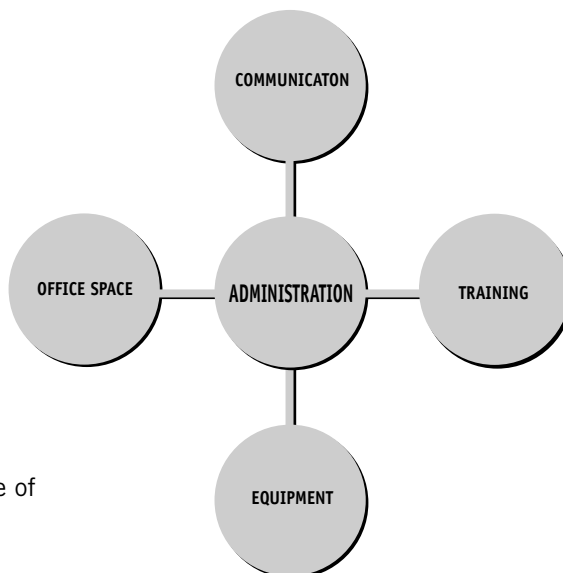
Merchants Quay Ireland needs to develop its relationships with business, the media and local community interests to develop meaningful partnerships to ensure sustainability and growth:

**Objective:**

To develop strong strategic partnership, and other positive relationships with businesses, the media and the wider community.

**6.12 Administration**

At present there is a central administration office for Merchants Quay Ireland. This service acts as a resource for Executive, Management and services, both those based in Merchants Quay and outside. While there is a pattern of ongoing tasks, the work of this office is mainly contingent on the work of other departments, therefore the strategic objectives of the Administration Department are at many levels fundamentally linked to those of departments that work is done for.





**Overall Objective:**

To effect the smooth and efficient running of the administration function of the organisation as a whole.

**Communications**

In terms of Merchants Quay Ireland as an organisation the Administration Department is involved in the collection and dissemination of information in terms of faxes, post, telephone communications to various departments and individuals. This work involves the collection and recording of all incoming mail on a daily basis, the franking and recording of all outgoing mail on a daily basis, dealing appropriately with incoming faxes and other documentation. Also involved is the distribution of material for meetings e.g. agendas, minutes, relevant documentation both internally and externally. Information distribution could be improved if longer lead-time was given in terms of information pertaining to upcoming meetings, etc.

At present communication between the Administration Department and other departments is through e-mails, memos and informal channels. In line with the MQI Communication Strategy, communication within the Department itself and with other departments will be improved. Such an improvement would assist in forward planning for work engaged in by the Administration Department on behalf of other departments.

**Objectives:**

To improve communication with the Executive and other departments.

In addition to attendance at planning meetings, administrative staff will meet regularly to discuss upcoming work and to plan time accordingly.

**Training**

While some internal training has taken place i.e. Microsoft Powerpoint and Publisher, further training, particularly in the area of software, would be beneficial. Also basic training around services delivered by Merchants Quay Ireland would be valuable in providing insight and forging closer links between staff working in direct service provision and support staff.

To this end, in conjunction with the Training Department, a training needs assessment will take place and a training plan for the Administration Department will be developed.

**Objective:**

To review training needs through means of a training needs assessment and to develop a training plan.

**Equipment**

The Administration Department works with a wide range of equipment on a daily basis; to ensure that work is carried out in the most efficient manner possible, it is essential that all available equipment is capable of working to full capacity at all times. With the assistance of the ICT Department it would be beneficial to look at currently available equipment and go over any recurring problems towards finding permanent solutions. Additionally with regard to training programmes/presentations etc scheduling of equipment use would be useful and would also make it easier to keep track of the whereabouts/expected return time of equipment during busy times.

**Objectives:**

To undertake an audit of equipment in conjunction with ICT Department.

To establish an equipment use schedule to be held in Administrative Office.

**Office Space**

The Administrative Department would benefit from more storage space, particularly for stationery supplies/equipment that is infrequently used. It is hoped to free up some space through the shredding of no longer useful files/other materials and subsequently to build more storage space nearer to the office. Additionally ongoing recycling of paper/toners etc would remove a lot of clutter from the office space.

**Objective:**

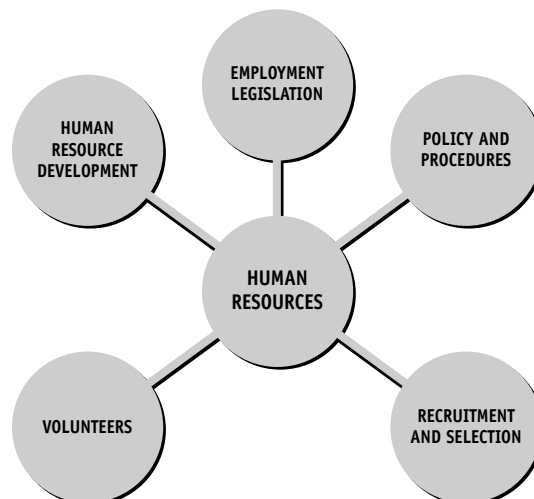
To work with an external shredding company and the Maintenance Section to dispose of paper/cardboard towards creating more storage space.

## 6.13 Human Resources

As Merchants Quay Ireland grew from a volunteer-based organisation to an organisation with a large paid staff, we have had to pay increasing attention at management level to human resources issues. The Human Resources Department was established in 2002 and works to ensure that Merchants Quay Ireland has human resource policies that are in line with existing legislation and that are aimed at achieving best practice in this area.

### Overall Objective:

To achieve best practice in Human Resource management.



### Employment Legislation

Employment legislation is a vast and complex area. There is a wide range of both national and European legislation that impacts on practice and policy at Merchants Quay Ireland. In the current year, for example, we have had to comply with the new legislation on smoking in the workplace and we need to constantly monitor our compliance with all other legislation.

### Objective:

To ensure that MQI is in compliance with all relevant employment legislation.

### Policies and Procedures

A good policy framework allied to clear procedural guidelines is essential if we are to achieve best practice at Merchants Quay Ireland. We have over the years developed a wide range of operating policies and procedures covering issues as diverse as dealing with a needle find on the premises to policies on respecting the dignity of men and women in workplace. In 2002 we published a staff handbook outlining the main policies and procedures currently operational and each department has developed it's own procedural guidelines. Over the next three years we plan to produce a revised staff handbook and to update procedures across all departments.

### Objective:

To update existing policies and procedures and to create new policies where necessary.

### Recruitment and Selection

Our staff are our major asset at Merchants Quay. Recruiting staff with the necessary skills, experience and commitment to meeting the needs of our clients is one of the most important tasks undertaken by the organisation. The recruitment process at Merchants Quay Ireland is reasonably thorough but there is room for improvement.

### Objective:

To develop an effective recruitment and selection system, which meets best practice standards.

### Volunteers

Merchants Quay Ireland began as completely volunteer organisation. While we have needed over the years to recruit appropriate professional staff to deliver the vital services which we offer, we are very keen to keep the spirit of volunteerism at the heart of our work. The number of volunteers involved in the work of Merchants Quay Ireland has declined over the past few years. There are a number of reasons which may underline this decline including a much higher level of participation in the paid work force by persons who might previously have engaged in voluntary work and the fact that we have traditionally sought volunteers to work weekdays when many people are now engaged in paid work. We see it as very important to value our volunteers and we have tried to do this by offering volunteers training opportunities and by, of course, reimbursing them for any out of pocket expenses they may have in the course of their work. Over the next three years we want to look again at how best we can encourage people to volunteer to work in our services and how best we can support them when they come on board so that they find the experience to be valuable and rewarding.

**Objective:**

To increase the number of volunteers involved in the work of Merchants Quay Ireland.

**Human Resource Development**

Developing our staff, whether full-time paid workers, Community Employment workers or volunteers, is important, not only in meeting the professional development needs of the individual staff members, but also in terms of the organisation delivering the best quality of services to its service users. Staff training and development has largely been the function of the Training Department at Merchants Quay Ireland to date but over the next three years it would seem more appropriate that it would become a function of the Human Resources Department.

**Objective:**

To ensure that all staff have the knowledge and skills required to carry out their roles effectively and to meet their professional development needs.

**Performance Planning and Review**

Everybody working at Merchants Quay Ireland is interested in ensuring that their efforts are achieving the outcomes they hope for. People working with clients want to know that their interventions are effective in improving the situation of that homeless or drug-using client. People working in Accounts or Salaries want to be sure that the work they produce is accurate and meets the organisation's needs. Performance planning and review is about having a system in place whereby all workers receive feedback about their performance and have an opportunity to reflect on what areas of work they excel at and on those areas in which there is room for improvement. To date performance planning and review has been approached in different ways in different parts of the organisation. For some it has been part of their supervision, others may have had regular meetings dedicated to performance planning and review. Over the next three years we want to move to a situation where there is a performance planning and review system that applies to everybody in the organisation.

**Objective:**

Work with the Executive Team and Service managers to ensure that a system for effective planning and review of performance is identified and implemented at MQI.

## Notes