



Merchants Quay Ireland

Homeless & Drugs Services

The background of the cover is a solid purple color. It features several light purple circles of various sizes scattered across the page. One large circle is in the top left, another large one is on the right side, and a cluster of three circles (one large, one medium, one small) is in the bottom left.

Annual Review 2004

...opportunities and options for homeless people and drug users...

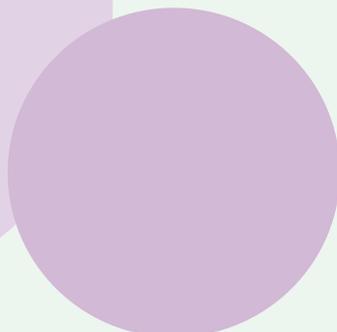
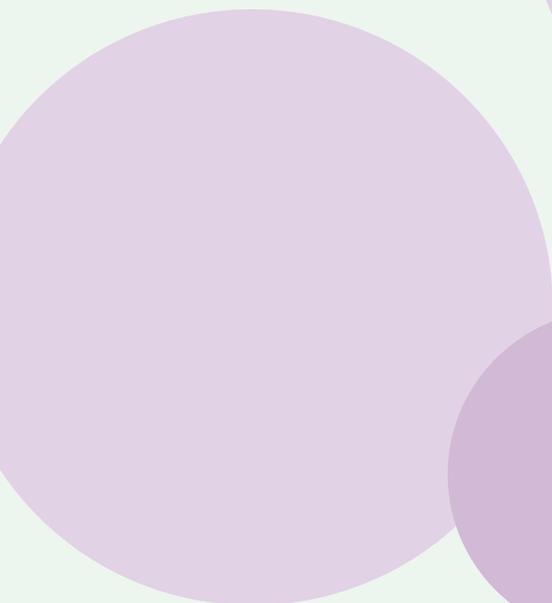
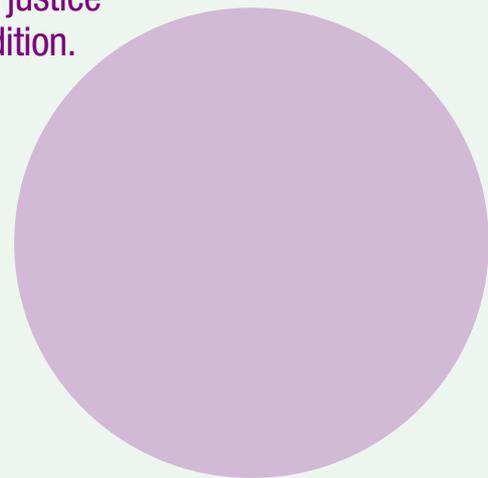
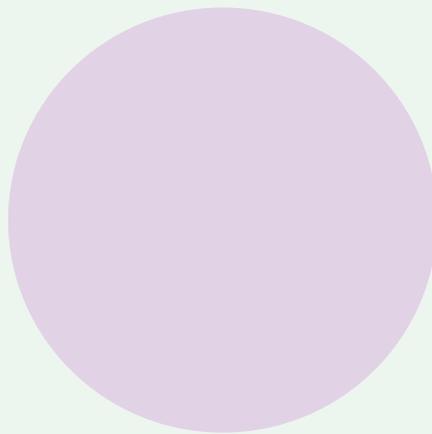
Mission Statement

Merchants Quay Ireland is a community of hospitality, hope and justice We work for justice and opportunity for those who are excluded, in partnership with those who share our aims.

We create a place of safety, compassion and welcome for all who enter our doors and offer high quality services to meet their needs.

We are committed to supporting all who work in Merchants Quay to enable us to achieve our full potential in our various roles.

We 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.





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Homeless & Drugs Services

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A Community of Hospitality, Hope and Justice

Annual Review 2004

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Homeless & Drugs Services

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Directors Review

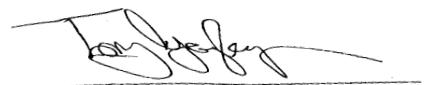
2004 MARKED THE FIFTEENTH anniversary of the Merchants Quay Drug Project. When we first opened our doors in 1989 we were operating out of one room in the Franciscan Friary in Merchants Quay as a small team of volunteers. The Project was a response to the growing levels of injecting drug use at that time. Many of those using drugs were contracting the AIDS virus. The prevailing philosophy of the day was that you couldn't and, indeed, shouldn't work with injecting drug users until they made the commitment to become drug-free. At Merchants Quay we felt that our first duty was to help them reduce the risk of HIV infection and other harm associated with drug use and when that was achieved, to provide every assistance to those ready to become drug free. Our approach offered a real life line for those at risk. In time, as this approach became more widely adopted, the rate of HIV infection amongst drug users in Ireland began to drop sharply. The Merchants Quay Project continued to develop. We started offering training and education programmes for service users, access to methadone and other treatment and we opened two residential drug-free programmes, assisting many people to kick the drugs habit for good.

The Franciscans at Merchants Quay had been providing a meals service for homeless people since 1969 at the "Tea Rooms" on Cook Street. In 1996 a new crisis emerged, a massive growth in homelessness. By then there were hundreds of people sleeping rough in Dublin's city centre. In response the Tea Rooms service was expanded to become the Faltiu Resource Centre, to meet the wide range of needs that homeless people have. The homeless population was larger than ever before and was composed of younger people, women and even whole families. The majority had a range of complex needs sometimes including alcohol, drug and mental health problems. In 2002 Faltiu and the Merchants Quay Project merged under a single management structure to become Merchants Quay Ireland allowing us to provide more coherent responses to the issues of problem drug use and homelessness.

Fifteen years on, the problems of drug use and homelessness continue to devastate many thousands of people across the country every year however we are now much better equipped to address these problems. We are able to work with between two and three hundred homeless people and drug users every day. The services we provide for homeless people include meals, primary healthcare, counselling, crisis support, advice and information, settlement services and transitional housing. For drug users we offer needle exchange and health promotion services, structured day programmes, family support services, group and individual counselling, a range of treatment options, two residential drug-free treatment programmes and aftercare services. Our experience is that where resources have been invested and where services have been established, people's lives have been transformed.

Nonetheless there are still important groups who have not benefited from the increased availability of services over the past number of years. Single homeless men and homeless drug users have been left behind. We need to provide more housing, more outreach support and more drug treatment services.

It is clear that with the combined action of the voluntary sector, the government agencies and the wider community, the problem of homelessness can be eliminated by 2010. It is also clear that where sufficient resources are put in place the harm caused by drug use can be kept to a minimum and that with time and with a wide range of treatment options available, huge numbers of those addicted to drugs can be helped to become drug-free. It can be done, but it is about resources. I call on the Government, the Business Community and the wider public to do everything possible to make it happen.



Tony Geoghegan
Director

Merchants Quay Ireland

MERCHANTS QUAY IRELAND is a national voluntary agency providing services for homeless people and for drug users. We provide creative and innovative responses to the drugs and homeless problems in Ireland.

Vision

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

Values

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

Mission

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

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

Homelessness – The Human Cost

Claire's Story

Claire first became homeless when she was twelve years old as a result of continuous family problems. For years she alternated between living on the streets and returning to the family home, where eventually the ongoing arguments and rows would lead her to return to the streets again. She began using drugs when she was on the streets and first came to Merchants Quay Ireland seeking help when she was in her early twenties. At that time she was sleeping rough in the grounds of a housing estate in the South Inner City. Claire initially just came for breakfast and lunch in our drop in centre, but after a while she decided that she wasn't going to sort out her homelessness until she sorted out her drugs problem. She asked to take part in our residential drug free programme at St. Francis Farm.

After successfully engaging in treatment at St. Francis Farm in Carlow, Claire was no longer using drugs but she was still homeless. We referred her to the Merchants Quay Ireland settlement team who provided help for homeless people in finding somewhere stable and safe to stay. The team offered her a place in our transitional accommodation project which offers homeless people who have completed residential treatment a six month stay in a drug free environment. During her time there the focus was on helping Claire to address issues underpinning her homelessness. Claire was able to take part in aftercare support and personal development training, in a range of life skills programmes including money management and cookery and relapse prevention training. At the end of six months Claire was again ready to face the world.

Claire is now living independently in her own apartment and is working as a chef in a Dublin restaurant. She is now one step closer to fulfilling her dream of working as a chef in New York.

Homelessness by numbers*

- 48,413: Number of households on Local Authority housing lists
- 5,581: Number of people homeless in Ireland
- 4,060: Number homeless in Dublin
- 2,009: Estimated number of homeless drug users
- 1,140: Number of homeless children in Dublin
- 723: Number homeless for more than 3 years in Dublin.
- 312: Number of rough sleepers in Dublin
- 42–53: Average age of death of those recorded as homeless persons

* Sources include: Irish Examiner 9/3/05, Assessment of Homelessness 2002 (DOEHLG), Counted In 2002 (Dublin City Council & Homeless Agency), Drug Use Among Homeless Population NACD (Lawless & Corr 2005), UK corners reports.

Services for Homeless Persons

Open Access Homeless Services

The Drop-in Centre (Faiiltiu)

The aim of the Drop-in Service is to provide a “one stop shop” offering a range of interlinked services meeting the key daytime needs of homeless persons with the twin purpose of minimising harm associated with life on the streets and offering clear pathways towards settlement and reintegration. Our Cook Street Centre is open seven days a week from 7a.m. to 5p.m. with shorter hours at weekends. There were 71,688 visits to this centre in 2004 this is an increase of 20% on 2003.

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

Information, Advice and Crisis Support Service: This drop-in service includes assessment of clients’ needs, advice and information on health, social welfare, emergency accommodation, long-term housing and other issues. In 2004, 1,240 people accessed this service and approximately 7,200 supportive interventions with clients of our homeless service took place. 72% of service users were male and 28% were female. Interventions include key working sessions, referrals to emergency accommodation, social work services, medical services and social welfare services, help in contacting friends or family, access to drug treatment and support in a variety of other matters. Dublin Simon Outreach Team link in with this service on a weekly basis. Of the 1,240 clients of this service, 473 agreed to have their information shared on the LINKS system – a computerised database that allows co-ordinated working between different homeless services under the auspices of the Homeless Agency.

Meals Service: Homeless persons are offered two meals a day (breakfast and lunch). 40,928 meals were provided in 2004 – 17,770 breakfasts and 23,158 lunches. 89% of persons using the meals service were male and 11% were female.

Primary Health Care Service: MQI is working in partnership with the South Western Area Health Board in providing a primary health care service for homeless people. The service has a dentist, nurses, a counsellor and other health professionals. A general practitioner and a chiropodist began working with this service in 2004.

Nursing: In 2004 there was a total of 2,841 nursing interventions, 237 per month. Issues dealt with on an ongoing basis included abscesses, leg ulcers, cuts and wounds, skin rashes and burns. As well as providing direct nursing care, the primary health care nurse also makes numerous referrals to hospitals and to other health care professionals.

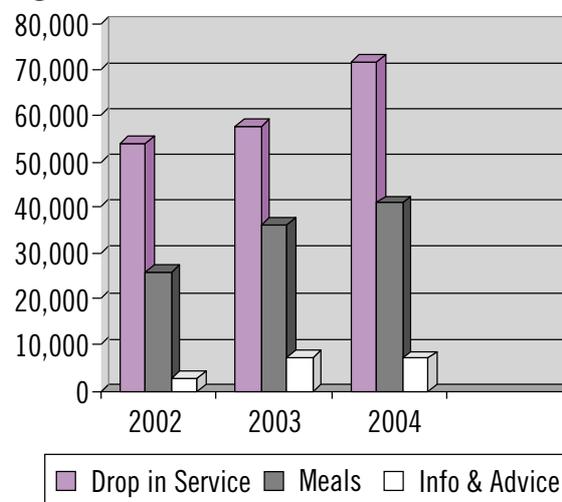
Counselling: Homelessness is often associated with severe stresses and difficulties in life, and it is not surprising that many people find it hard to cope. The Counselling Service for homeless people works at two levels – firstly providing a brief crisis counselling service targeted at clients in distress and secondly offering medium to long-term counselling by appointment. In addition we provide group support for homeless clients attending our day programmes. We provide an average of 15 formal counselling sessions per month as well as dozens of once off interventions.

Dental Service: In 2004 there were an average of 33 dental interventions each month.

G.P. Service: A GP started offering a primary care service for our homeless clients on a sessional basis from December 2004. She worked with 27 persons in her first month.

Chiropodist: This person works with an average of 12-15 homeless persons every month.

Figure 1



Structured Support Services

Personal Development Opportunities: These are focused on both learning and leisure and incorporate such topics as personal development, holistic therapies, life skills training, arts and crafts and women's support groups. One-to-one literacy tuition is also provided as is a FETAC/NCVA Foundation Level Communications and Mathematics course. The Catering Training Programme (see below) also offers work training for homeless persons. This training program is aimed at people who have issues with drugs and homelessness. This is located in the friary kitchen and can cater for up to twenty participants.

Settlement Service: The Settlement Service is delivered to those seeking to move away from being homeless and we actively seek to include those who have a history of drug and alcohol problems. In this regard we find that those participating on a stabilisation programme or a controlled drinking programme or who have become free of problem drug or alcohol use are more likely to settle. We work with homeless people from a variety of settings - rough sleeping, hostels, B&B's, short-term arrangements with friends/families and transitional and supported accommodation. We have a dedicated settlement service targeted at those using our residential drug treatment services, where a high proportion of participants have effectively no home to return to on completing the programme.

We use assessment interviews, individual support plans, one-to-one key working sessions, group support, personal development and life skills training, advocacy and pre and post settlement support to assist our service users to find, access, and sustain long-term appropriate accommodation.

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

In 2004 we assisted 150 service users towards settlement. In addition we also saw increased use of services such as money advice services and counselling, improved relationships with family members and friends and a return to employment, education or vocational training.

The Integration Programme: This innovative programme offers transitional accommodation to drug users who find themselves homeless after completing residential drug treatment. The programme aims at assisting the integration of former drug users into mainstream society by providing opportunities for those who had drug or alcohol problems to participate in group and one-to-one therapeutic sessions and activities. These clients have transitional accommodation in a house in the Dublin suburbs for a period of up to twenty four weeks. Clients must partake in a full time course while residing in the house. The residents of Ballymount house are offered one-to-one support, an aftercare group and a weekly community night with staff. Clients' settlement needs are addressed from the start of their stay in Ballymount house. In 2004 there were 12 residents in the house.

Pre- and Post -Settlement Support: Our settlement and integration service includes a pre-settlement support group and a drug free aftercare group particularly targeted at meeting the needs of persons with drug and alcohol problems. The aftercare group worked with 15 clients during 2004 with an average of 6-8 people attended the group each week.

Pre – Tenancy Group: The pre-tenancy group is attended weekly by between 5 – 7 clients. The program is run in twelve week modules and includes such sessions as accommodation seeking skills, budgeting, cookery, tenant responsibilities, problem solving and coping strategies. All clients are also offered a one-to-one service.

Catering Training Programme: Merchants Quay Ireland, with assistance from FAS, Failte Ireland and the Homeless Agency, began a new programme focused on providing “on the job” training in hygiene, cookery, food service and life-skills at a practical level, primarily aimed at homeless adults and persons in recovery. The Catering Training Programme services the main kitchen at Merchants Quay Ireland and the kitchen in our drop in service for homeless people.

A total of 20 persons participated in the programme in 2004 and all of these went on to gain the FETAC National Certificate in Culinary Skills through the auspices of Failte Ireland.

Drugs – The Human Cost

John's Story

I suppose I started just because all my mates were at it. We'd meet up evenings and head down to the park. I was trying all sorts, glue, hash, trips, anything that came by. I would have been about sixteen when my brother took me to a rave with his mates. I had my first bit of coke that night.

I went on like that for a while, going out raving at the weekend, an E, a bit of coke. I thought I knew it all. Everything was just fine. Sure I had a few problems at home, but that was because they just didn't understand me.

When I first tried heroin, I didn't know what it was. It wasn't long before I was using it all the time though. I kept missing work and getting into trouble at home. Eventually my parents asked me to leave and soon after, I lost my job. I still needed money though, so I started robbing. Like many others I was spending a lot of my time drinking or using drugs on the streets, there's no better way to kill the time. I lost loads of weight from all the drugs and from not eating properly. I knew I needed to sort out my drugs problem.

I went to Merchants Quay for help. They suggested High Park. I was there for 17 weeks. It was tough but I got through it. I don't use drugs any more. Because I had no home to go back to their settlement worker fixed me up with a referral to transitional housing when I was leaving. I have an interview next week. Here's hoping...

Heroin by Numbers*

14,452:	Number of people using heroin in Ireland
12,456:	Number of people using heroin in Dublin
7,515–12,862:	Number of drug users infected with Hepatitis C to date
7,300:	Number involved in methadone treatment
7,052:	Heroin users not in treatment
2,009:	Estimated number of homeless drug users
1,174:	Number of drug users infected with HIV to date
150:	Approximate number of residential drug free treatment places
91:	Number of drug related deaths in 2002

Sources Include: Kelly, A (2004) Prevalence of Opiate Use in Ireland 2000-2001, Health Services Executive Central Treatment List, National Disease Surveillance Centre, Drug Use Among Homeless Population NACD (Lawless & Corr 2005), Long, J., Lynn, E. & Keating J. (2005) Drug-related deaths in Ireland, 1990-2002) Dublin: Health Research Board.

Services for Drug Users

Open Access Drugs Services

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

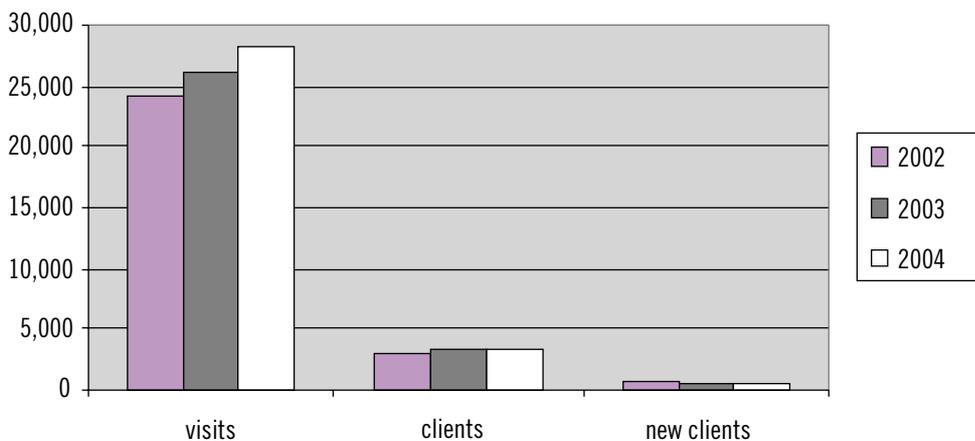
Needle Exchange –Health Promotion Unit: Here we provide drug users with information about the risks associated with drug use and the means to minimise such risks. We also offer drug users a pathway into treatment and the possibility of living life without drugs.

“I’m not sharing works anymore” – 19 year old male rough sleeper

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

“I am now more aware of viruses such as Hep B and C” – Female Service User.

Figure 2. Attendance at HPU between 2002 and 2004.



As can be seen from the above chart the number of visits to the needle exchange increased by 9% to just over 28,000. The number of clients stayed steady at just under 3,300. A total of 450 new injectors presented in 2004.

In addition a total of 256 safer injecting workshops were undertaken with injecting drug users.

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

Women’s Project: Since 1998 MQI has been providing a specialised service targeted at vulnerable female drug users. The Women’s Project offers one to one support, weekly group support and targeted advice.

Outreach Service: The aim of this service is to allow us make contact with drug users not engaged with services and to make referrals to Merchants Quay Ireland services as well as to other external agencies. In 2004 the outreach team contacted vulnerable drug users on the street, collected used needles and syringes and also liaised with local community groups, the Gardai, Dublin City Council and others.



Lord Mayor Royston Brady takes note of conversation between Mary Higgins of the Homeless Agency and Patricia O'Connor of the National Drugs Strategy at the launch of "Pieces in the Jigsaw"

M Q I
Merchants Quay Ireland



Joe Duffy and the Liveline listeners donate a portacabin to Merchants Quay Ireland

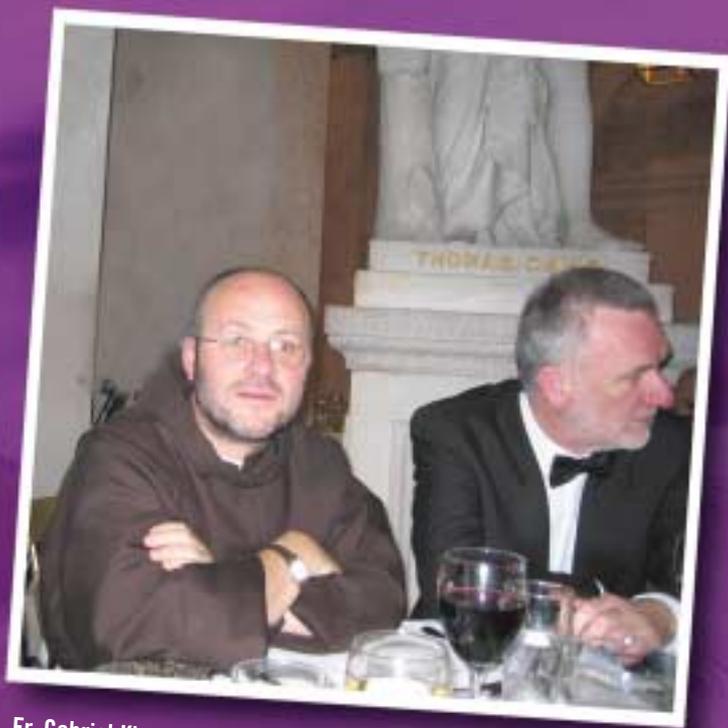


"Jigsaw" authors Caroline Corr, Marie Lawless and Gemma Cox at the launch.





Minister Noel Ahern addresses those assembled for the presentation of the FETAC Elementary Cookery Certificate to participants on the catering training programme at Merchants Quay Ireland.



Fr. Gabriel Kinahan with Tony Geoghegan at the feet of Thomas Davis, Lord Mayors Award to Merchants Quay Ireland.



Colm Folan, Mary O'Shea and Fr. Kieran Cronin share a joke at the presentation of the Lord Mayors Award to Merchants Quay Ireland



Spot the Ball - Merchants Quay Ireland Team with stars of Fair City before taking part in a match against a League of Ireland eleven in aid of Goal, Christmas 2004



Tending the crops at St. Francis Farm



Christmas is coming...
A Turkey at St. Francis Farm

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

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

Stabilisation Services

These services offer the first steps away from crisis drug use and towards stability. These are aimed at people who are currently using street drugs, or those recently engaged in treatment and seeking more stability and structure in their lives.

Services include:

Methadone Prescribing Treatment and Support: Methadone substitution therapy helps people to break their links with illegal and high-risk drug use – The 30 clients on this programme made an average of 160 visits per month.

“I’ve been on it three or four years now, and saying that, with the methadone I think it has helped me more than anything else. I’m after saving up and going on holidays coz like, when I was on the drugs I never went anywhere. Like, touch wood, I have no problems with it” – Female client of Methadone Programme.

Supportive Day Programmes offering therapeutic groups, life skills training, personal development work and pre-employment training to help drug users to reintegrate into society.

Links with the City of Dublin VEC allow us to include a strong educational component in our stabilisation services, which is of considerable importance in addressing the educational disadvantage experienced by so many of our clients. The 12 participants on this programme made an average of 176 visits per month.

“This is the first time I’ve been on a course. I enjoy getting up in the mornings, and then when I get home I clean the place. When the little lad gets home from school I cook his dinner...even help with his homework...I think this is great, I really enjoy it” – 41 year old mother.

“I used to get out of bed at four or five in the day or if I was up early I’d go back to bed at 12 o’clock. Now I’m up early and stay up. It (Day Programme) gives you a routine and ye know it helps with your bills so you don’t get back into debt, it helps with everyday things” – Client of Day Programme

The Gateway Programme offers a bridge between crisis services and stabilisation services. This Programme provides one to one support linked to a range of leisure and learning opportunities. The aim is to encourage clients to examine alternatives to drug use. The programme offers access to more structured treatment, education and training.

One-to-one Counselling assists clients availing of the Stabilisation Day Services to deal with emotional and psychological issues relating to their drug use. This service is provided for all of those availing of the prescribing service as well as those involved in the supportive day programme. Relationship and bereavement support is a key part of this service.

Drug Free Treatment Services

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

High Park Residential Programme:

“High Park was my first time being in a residential so it was a new experience. In a way it was scary, it was happy, it was fun, you know. I went through a whole range of emotions during my stay there but overall it was a great experience. I’ll always remember the happy times being there”. – 21 year old man

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

“Addiction, you could say, is the absence of speech (A-Diction). It’s the abstinence of language. So all the therapies that we do out here, whether it be group therapy or individual therapy, or some of the psychological education that we do (is) basically all about getting the clients to talk about themselves. To talk about themselves in a full way, to put their being into language as it were” – Staff Member

In May 2004 the service was disrupted by a fire in the neighboring Respond premises making access to our premises temporarily impossible. This resulted in the service being relocated to an alternative premises, generously provided by Dublin City Council, for one month. The disruption caused by the fire had negative impact on the service that was felt for many months. Nonetheless the overall occupancy level was good at 75%.

In 2004 there were 71 admissions to the High Park programme, 65% were male and 35% were female. Their average age was 25. One quarter of those admitted were homeless. Thirteen persons were admitted for detoxification in 2004 and 10 of these (77%) successfully completed the detoxification.

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

“Everyday waking in the morning I know I’m not going to touch drugs – still to this day I have to say that every day Merchants Quay gave me that.” – 21 year old former resident

St. Francis Farm:

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

The programme covers areas of Relapse Prevention, One to One Counselling, Group Therapy, Self Esteem Seminars, Assertiveness Training, Anger Management, Farm Training, Literacy Skills, and Computer Skills Training (ECDL). Clients also receive training in Emergency First Aid and in Life Skills and Budgeting. In addition clients are offered the opportunity to participate in Yoga classes and Reflexology and fortnightly Spirituality workshops.

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

The St. Francis Farm programme had 22 participants in 2004, 2 women and 20 men. Twelve residents moved on, with support from the staff team, after completing individual care plans of 3 to 12 months duration. Six left after completing 4-8 weeks at the Farm. A further four were due to complete the programme in 2005.

Shared Services

Training and Work Programmes

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

In 2004 a total of 120 persons participated in CE programmes at Merchants Quay Ireland. Just under half (43%) of those who completed a FAS placement at Merchants Quay in 2004 secured permanent employment or moved into full time further education. The others are actively seeking work.

Research

The aim of this department is to increase the knowledge available on drug use, homelessness and related issues, to effectively evaluate the work of the organisation, to ensure that appropriate monitoring systems are in place and to take a leading role in developing highest quality standards across all of our services. In 2004 Merchants Quay Ireland carried out two major pieces of research, one focusing on homelessness and drug use and the other on drug use among new communities in Ireland.

Drug Use Among the Homeless Population in Ireland:

Merchants Quay Ireland carried out Ireland's first major study on drug use and homelessness. The report revealed that drug use and homelessness are clearly linked both complicating and aggravating one another. The research, commissioned by the National Advisory Committee on Drugs involved interviews with 355 homeless people across the country (70% were from Dublin) and 14 focus groups with 64 homeless and drug service providers.

Key findings from the report include:

- ◆ Whilst drug use is not the primary reason for people becoming homeless, it is a key reason for them remaining homeless;
- ◆ Other reasons for remaining homelessness include access to housing, money problems, family conflict and continuing alcohol use;
- ◆ The prevalence of drug use within the homeless population was high with lifetime (74%), recent (64%) and current rates (52%) substantially higher than those found in the general population (19%, 6% and 3% respectively);
- ◆ Alcohol remains the primary drug of choice among the homeless population (70%);
- ◆ Over half (52%) of the homeless population surveyed are currently drug users;
- ◆ 36% of those surveyed were problematic drug users;
- ◆ 19% of the study population were currently injecting drugs, of these 1-in-2 injected in public spaces.

Drug Use among New Communities in Ireland:

This research, funded by an award from the National Advisory Committee on Drugs was conducted by Merchants Quay Ireland to develop an in-depth understanding of problematic drug use among new communities in Ireland. Findings were as follows:

- ◆ Numerous barriers exist which prevent drug users in new communities from accessing drug services in Ireland.
- ◆ Issues such as displacement, lack of family or social support, insecure legal status all contribute to the risk of problematic drug use.

- ◆ There is no evidence that drug use is more prevalent amongst new communities than amongst the native Irish community.

Recommendations

- ◆ Information about drugs and drug services should be available in different languages in a wide variety of formats.
- ◆ Drug programmes need to provide accessible services that are welcoming to people from different cultures.
- ◆ Dedicated services should be provided focusing on drug users from new communities.

In 2004 we also published “Pieces of the Jigsaw”. This was a collection of six research or evaluation studies addressing homelessness and drug use in Ireland in the last few years.

Social Policy and Communications

In 2004 Merchants Quay Ireland supported measures to raise awareness of the issues of homelessness, problem drug use, poverty and social exclusion in a variety of forums most notably in policy oriented networks including the Voluntary Drug Treatment Network and the Voluntary Homeless Services Network. We were also involved in the Primary Care Steering Group and the Rent Supplement Coalition.

Over the course of 2004 we contributed to the Mid Term Review of the National Drugs Strategy, the development of the second homeless action plan for Dublin and to the Lord Mayor’s Commission on Crime and Policing.

Training

The Training Department addresses the training needs of all workers, paid and voluntary, at MQI and offers a high quality training service to other agencies and interested individuals concerned about issues faced by drug users and homeless people.

External training courses included the following: -

- ◆ *MQI / University College Dublin: Certificate in Drugs Counselling Theory and Intervention Skills* – This is a one year course accredited by University College Dublin. A total of 23 persons graduated in 2004.
- ◆ *MQI / University College Dublin: Diploma in Drugs Counselling Theory and Intervention Skills* – 25 students graduated in 2004.
- ◆ *Drugs Awareness Courses* – These include introductory courses aimed at assisting people working in a variety of different settings to respond effectively to the needs of drug users and courses tailored to the needs of specific organisations. A total of 110 persons took up these courses in 2004.
- ◆ *Drug Use and Homelessness* – This two-day course was delivered as part of the Homeless Agency training programme in 2004. It was designed for those working in homeless services who wished to understand the relationship between homelessness and drug issues to respond effectively to the needs of drug users accessing homeless services. 18 persons participated on this course.
- ◆ *Drugs Awareness Training for FAS CE Supervisors* – delivered to 117 persons in Cork, Limerick, Galway, Monaghan, Tullamore and Tralee.

Staff Training

Staff of Merchants Quay Ireland availed of a range of both accredited and non-accredited training options aimed at assisting them in developing skills for working with homeless people and drug users in a wide variety of areas including Drugs Awareness, Prevention and Management of Violence and Aggression, Groupwork and Facilitation Skills, Gathering Information, Referral and Advocacy, Effective Written Communication and Assessment Skills

Staff were also supported in accessing external training and education opportunities. These ranged from one-day workshops, international conferences to various Certificate and Diploma options.

Training for Managers in 2004 included Bullying and Harassment in the Workplace, Equality, Disability and Diversity at Work and Supervisory Skills Training

Finance, Administration, Fundraising and Human Resources

Finance: Effective and prudent financial management continues to be a priority at MQI. It is essential that the financial resources of the organisation be managed so as to deliver the greatest level of quality services by achieving the best value for money.

The emphasis is on improving consistency and accountability across the organisation, integrating financial planning into overall strategic planning and providing high quality financial input into decision making at Merchant Quay Ireland.

Fundraising: In 2004 we raised in excess of €250,000 from fundraising. This was an increase of 52% on the previous year. More than half of this was as a result of the very positive responses from a wide range of companies and individuals to our direct mail appeals, with the remainder coming from events, such as the Charity Ball we held in the Berkley Court Hotel in May, from Trusts, and a wide range of large and small unsolicited donations from persons who wish to remain anonymous. To all who supported us we offer heartfelt thanks.

Administration: Merchants Quay Ireland has a centralised administration office which provides an efficient and comprehensive service to the entire organisation. Services provided include diary management, mail management, typing, photocopying, document production and a wide variety of other administrative tasks.

Human Resources:

"It's challenging rewarding and interesting work" – John, Settlement Worker

In 2004 there were 76 full-time and 77 part-time staff including Community Employment trainees, providing a wide range of services at Merchants Quay Ireland. The HR Department which was established in 2002 works to ensure that the organization has human resources policies that are in line with existing legislation and that achieve best practice in this area.

Volunteers: Volunteers have always been essential in the delivery of our services. In the early days the majority of staff were volunteers. Merchants Quay Ireland values the contribution and commitment that volunteers offer at all levels in the organization. The organization appreciates the invaluable contribution made by their experience, knowledge, skills, vitality, diversity and dedication. At any one time there are 20 – 30 volunteers involved in our various projects and services.

Volunteers work with multi-disciplinary teams providing services to drug users, homeless people and their families. It is fulfilling and challenging work and all volunteers are offered supervision, support and a comprehensive training programme.

In 2004, 41 volunteers assisted in the work of Merchants Quay Ireland and their continued support and dedication is greatly appreciated.

Financial Report

EFFECTIVE AND PRUDENT FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT continues to be a priority at MQI. It is essential that the financial resources of the organisation be managed so as to deliver the greatest level of quality services by achieving the best value for money.

The emphasis is on improving consistency and accountability across the organisation, integrating financial planning into overall strategic planning and providing high quality financial input into decision making at Merchant Quay Ireland.

The accounts of Merchant Quay Ireland are summarised below. These accounts cover the activities of Merchant Quay Project Limited (MQP) and Franciscan Social Justice Initiatives Limited (FSJI). These companies relate broadly to the organisation's drug and homeless services respectively.

Income and Expenditure Accounts: Total income and expenditure for MQP and FSJI for the year ending 31st December 2004 was as follows:

	MQP	FSJI	Total
	€ ,000	€ ,000	€ ,000
Income	3,094	1,556	4,650
Less: Expenditure	3,194	1,576	4,770
Surplus/(Deficit)	(99)	(20)	(119)

Income: Income from statutory agencies represents more than 80% of the income of MQP and FSJI. The remaining income in these companies was raised from grants and donations from charitable trusts, from individuals, from the corporate sector and through other fundraising activities. The relatively poor result for 2004 is largely attributable to the reduction in certain categories of income. It is expected that this situation will be recovered in 2005.

Expenditure: Wages and salaries represent 72% of total overhead expenditure. Remaining overhead expenditure is broadly in line with that in previous years.

Balance Sheets: The Balance Sheets of MQP and FSJI as at 31st December 2003 are set out as follows:

Merchants Quay Project

	2004 €,000	2003 €,000
Fixed Assets	166	238
Current Assets		
Debtors	966	747
Cash at Bank and on hand	553	173
	1,519	920
<i>Less:</i>		
Current Liabilities		
Creditors	(1,414)	(769)
Net Current Assets	105	151
Deferred Income	(25)	(43)
Net Assets	246	346
<i>Represented by:</i>		
Accumulated Surplus	246	346

Franciscan Social Justice Initiatives

	2004 €,000	2003 €,000
Fixed Assets	232	228
Current Assets		
Debtors	138	205
Cash at Bank and on hand	83	6
	221	211
<i>Less:</i>		
Current Liabilities		
Creditors	(121)	(149)
	(121)	(149)
Net Current Assets	100	62
Creditors: amt falling due after one year	(111)	(92)
Deferred Income	(238)	(195)
Net Assets	(17)	3
<i>Represented by:</i>		
Accumulated (Deficit) Surplus	(17)	3

Thank You

This year as in so many previous years our work at Merchants Quay has received enormous support from many people across the country and from all walks of life.

The **Friars at Merchants Quay** remain generous and caring hosts to our services. I would like to thank all the Friars for their continuing support and generosity.

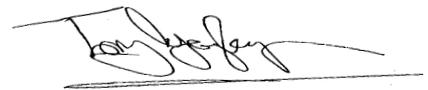
I would like to thank the many kind persons who have sent us unsolicited and sometimes anonymous donations, and those who donate to St Anthony's Bread and other appeals in the Church.

I wish to thank all those businesses who supported our **Direct Mail Appeals**. Thanks also go to the **Ireland Funds (particularly the Ireland Fund of Canada and America)**, to **Mrs Jane Pfeiffer**, to **Mrs Mary McGrath** and to **Construction Spares Ltd.** for their generous support in 2004.

There are so many people who continue to support us through providing help and services to us including Joe Whitaker, McInnes Photography, Ray O'Sullivan from GenPrint, Carmel White, Ellen Lynch of the Bank of Ireland Arts Centre, Bob Jeffers from AIB Bank Tullow, Brian Whelan, The Rathfarnham Lions Club and The Dublin Viking Rotary Club.

I wish to thank our statutory funders: The Aids and Drugs Services and the Homeless Services of the **Health Services Executive (South Western Area)**, the staff of **Dublin City Council** and the **Homeless Agency**, the **Blanchardstown and South Inner City** and **Local Drugs Task Forces** and the **National Drug Strategy Team**, the **FAS Community Services Section** at Jervis Street, **Failte Ireland**, the Department of Justice's **Probation and Welfare Service**, **Area Development Management Ltd.**, the **Combat Poverty Agency**, the **National Advisory Committee on Drugs** and the **Family Support Agency**.

I wish to thank all of our staff and volunteers as well as those on our **Governing Body, Management Committee** and the many other groups and committees that ensure that our programme of work moves forward. Finally, and most importantly, a special thanks to all persons who avail of our services. That so many choose to come to Merchants Quay and show such confidence in our services gives us all great encouragement.



Tony Geoghegan
Director

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- Corr, C (2004) Drug Use Among New Communities in Ireland: An Exploratory Study:* National Advisory Committee on Drugs. Dublin
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