

Merchants Quay Ireland Annual Review 2022



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

mqi.ie

Company Structure

Merchants Quay Ireland CLG (“MQI”) is incorporated as a Company Limited by Guarantee and not having share capital. It was registered on 12 July 1991 with Company number 176421. MQI is registered for the charitable purpose of promoting health and to provide the stepping-stones for every point of a man or woman’s journey out of homelessness and addiction, and toward a drug free life. MQI provides services ranging from crisis intervention and health promotion services to day-support programmes, residential detox and rehabilitation, and prison-based counselling.

MQI is governed by its Constitution (comprising the Memorandum and Articles of Association) updated 26th June 2019. The Company is a public benefit entity and is registered with the Charities Regulator, charity registration number 20026240, and is granted charitable tax exemption, charity tax reference number CHY 10311 with the Revenue Commissioners.

Merchants Quay Ireland CLG is one of three companies operating under the banner name of Merchants Quay Ireland (MQI) carrying out activities for social justice for homeless persons and drug users on a nationwide basis. The other companies are St. Francis Housing Association CLG (SFHA) and Merchants Quay Project CE Scheme CLG (MQPCE).



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

Merchants Quay Ireland

Merchants Court
24 Merchants Quay
PO Box 11958
Dublin 8

Services 01 524 0160

Donations 01 524 0139

Email info@mqi.ie

Web www.mqi.ie

Facebook

Merchants Quay Ireland

Twitter

@MerchantsQuayIR

Instagram

@MerchantsQuayIR

Merchants Quay Ireland CLG

CRO Number: 176421

Revenue CHY Number: 10311

CRA Number: 20026240

St Francis Housing Association CLG

CRO Number: 449783

Revenue CHY Number: 18159

CRA Number: 20069117

Merchants Quay Project CE Scheme CLG

CRO Number: 533762

Revenue CHY Number: 21187

CRA Number: 20084325

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I was in active addiction for 30 years, but I'm in recovery now. Everybody deserves a second chance and it means a lot that people donate to Merchants Quay.

Nichola, MQI Client



At MQI we respect everyone who turns to us for help – and many are just beginning their fresh start in life. So while client stories are genuine and true, names are changed and stock photographs of models are used for illustrative purposes and to protect client privacy. Thank you for your understanding.

Our Vision, Mission, and Values

Our Vision

An inclusive society that supports the integration and well-being of all. We believe in a just society where no-one has to face homelessness or addiction alone, and where everyone has the support they need to reduce the harm caused by homelessness and addiction and to build a better life; an inclusive society where everyone is treated with dignity and respect.

Our Mission

We work as a collaborative community to reduce the harm caused by addiction and homelessness. Our mission is to offer people dealing with homelessness and addiction in Ireland, accessible, high quality and effective services, which meet their complex needs in a non-judgemental and compassionate way.

Our Values

Collaboration

We work together

Professionalism, Teamwork, Adaptability

Compassion

We meet people where they are

Acceptance, Commitment, Support

Courage

We speak up, challenge & advocate

Integrity, Respect, Diversity

“

I've a great relationship with my family, they have peace of mind now. They stayed with me last week and my dad said 'This is a lovely little place you have, I'm so proud of you how far you're after coming.' So, that meant a lot to me.

Nichola, MQI Client

”



Our Work at a Glance

97,736

overall engagements with clients



3,606

visits to the GP



725

supported by MQI DATS in the Midlands



12,764

total unique clients



43,047

Meals for people who are homeless and hungry



3,390

crisis contact team interventions



144

families supported nationwide



114

people admitted to detox and rehab



331

supported by MQI CAMDAS



166

young people between 18 - 24 supported by our team



2,126

unique clients supported with in-prison counselling interventions



361

people supported by our mental health team



3,808

unique clients supported by the harm reduction team



273

families supported by MQI CRIS in the East



668

over 55 year olds supported



Chairman's Introduction

“ As Chair of MQI I am delighted to launch our Annual Review for 2022.

Yet again, 2022 saw a significant increase in the demand for support and MQI staff responded with increased support levels across all our services reaching a total of 12,764 unique individuals. As society emerged from Covid 19 we were able to adapt our regional services, our homeless day services, our health services and our rehabilitation services to meet the needs of our clients.

Many of the people we support have multiple needs. Homelessness, addiction, and mental health problems often go hand-in-hand which is why we at MQI strive to provide a full range of integrated support services. We have been told over and over again by our clients just how vital our services are to them and MQI staff will continue to reach out to provide support and to advocate strongly on their behalf.

At Merchants Quay we work as a collaborative community to reduce the harm caused by addiction and homelessness and we continue to develop our services to deliver to the highest standards. Year after year we continue to adapt and innovate in response to the ongoing needs of some of the most marginalised and vulnerable members of society. In 2022 we saw significantly increased demand for support from both younger and older age groups and for female specific support in a safe accessible environment. We have continued the ongoing development of our services to meet the specific needs of our clients and to work, in particular, with those who are homeless for the first time.

The staff at MQI continue to adapt and innovate in everything we do. In 2023 we strengthened our collaboration with St James' Hospital and partnered with Dr. Julie Broderick in TCD and Dr. Sarah Morton in UCD and with international peers to help support the services we provide.

“ *Year after year we continue to adapt and innovate in response to the ongoing needs of some of the most marginalised and vulnerable members of society.*

Ray Langton, Chairman

”

I want to recognise the work of the Department of Health, the HSE, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, Dublin City Council, Section 39 Homeless and Addiction services, Voluntary and Community organisations for the ongoing provision they made in terms of accommodation and support for those who are homeless and/or are impacted by substance use or mental health issues. The dedication and compassion shown by all the frontline workers in the hospitals, the care centres, the Gardaí, Fire and Ambulance services, the Prison services as well as support staff in food provision and cleaning, has been exemplary. The level of inter-agency cooperation and engagement has also been exceptional, and I want to thank each and every one of the MQI staff and all the frontline workers for all they have done for so many people in 2022.

Our strategic focus falls under four main themes: MQI Core Services, Research, Advocacy & Engagement, Organisational Excellence and Funding, Risk & Technology. This strategy is not meant to be a static document but rather a direction and guide that for an ever-evolving set of plans, that respond as the priorities and needs of our clients change over time.

It is the responsibility of the Board of MQI to ensure that we have a well-governed, efficient organisation that is fit for purpose to meet client needs. In this regard we are proud to be part of the “triple lock” concept of good governance – our accounts are SORP compliant, we have adopted and comply with the Good Governance Code and we have formally adopted the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations on Fundraising from the Public.

To all our donors, whether statutory, corporate, or personal, I extend my heartfelt thanks. With your extraordinary generosity, many lives have been saved and improved. I also want to express our deep gratitude to our executive team, staff, and volunteers. All at MQI continue to go the extra mile for our clients.



Ray Langton, MQI
Board Chairman

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Ray Langton, Chairman

Message from the CEO

A core focus of MQI's work is to deliver integrated services to clients who are at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness. Our clients, in addition to the trauma of homelessness, often have the further complexities of mental ill health and substance misuse issues to deal with.

Last year alone, MQI offered support to 12,764 unique individuals from different age groups, backgrounds, and nationalities, which is a 10% increase on the number of unique clients who accessed our services in 2021. Despite substantial challenges including the residual effects of Covid 19, we were able to offer a total of 97,736 engagements across our homeless, healthcare and addiction services in Dublin and Regionally.

In 2022, MQI provided services to 1,019 non-Irish EU/Non-EU unique residents, 166 young people and 668 people aged 55+. These cohorts of people have specific needs and in respect of youth, migrants and older people, the demand for our services continued to grow. Most recent data indicated that the number of individuals aged 55+ using the service in the period January to June 2022 had increased by 23% from the same period in 2019. Another significant cohort using the service is women. In the period 2017-2022, there was a 42% increase in women accessing MQI's services.



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Paula Byrne, CEO



Homelessness

An independent review of MQI Day Services (Kelly 2022) highlighted the pivotal role MQI plays in responding to the needs of those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity, many of whom have complex needs, including mental health. The review details the range of wrap around services supporting people who are homeless, in addiction and/or struggle with mental and physical ill-health. In tandem with accommodation-based supports, day services have a role within the wider framework of homeless service provision by making an important contribution to and enabling people to exit homelessness across the spectrum of prevention, protection, and progression.

Covid-19 job losses, the lifting of eviction bans, the worsening housing crisis and rising cost of living, all contributed to an increase in people becoming homeless. In Q2 of 2022, the number of clients presenting to MQI as newly homeless increased by a staggering 178% compared to the same quarter in the previous year, 2021. Overall, we have seen a 112% increase this year in those presenting as homeless for the first time – a 83% increase on the previous year (2021:29%). This figure illustrates how soaring prices, limited rental opportunities and insufficient social housing is making it increasingly difficult for people to move out of homelessness. We are operating against a backdrop of a housing and cost-of-living crisis that impacts vulnerable people the most.

In our harm reduction service in Dublin, we supported 3,808 unique individuals which accounted for a total of 35,787 interventions in the year.

Paula Byrne, CEO

Primary Health Care

Homelessness and addiction have a profound and long-lasting impact on health. The demand for our health services continued to rise in 2022, with a 6% overall increase of unique clients compared to 2021. In 2022, 61% of our homeless clients availed of our health service, many of them wouldn't have accessed healthcare elsewhere. In 2022, there was a 55% increase of unique clients engaging with our mental health team.

Our Hepatitis C Worker, in conjunction with St James Hospital and the National Hepatitis C treatment programme, works with clients who inject drugs to screen for blood borne viruses. MQI supported 176 (198% increase from 2021) unique clients to refer for blood testing, screening, and treatment.

Walk the Talk Toolkit focuses on the recovery principles to develop a unique, collaborative, and planning process and is about transforming services and systems that support clients with mental health. Mental health recovery shifts the focus beyond 'curing' individual symptoms and seeks to help clients live a satisfying, hopeful and fulfilling life despite obstacles they might face related to their mental health. This toolkit is supported by the Mental Health Commission of Canada who will be supporting MQI to implement this in 2023, the first time to be rolled out in a service in Europe.

Addiction

Addiction is a serious and challenging social issue that impacts every community in Ireland. The impact of addiction can be all encompassing. Its effects are chronic, traumatic and can catch families unawares. People lose decades of their lives to addiction. Sometimes they lose their life.

In our harm reduction service in Dublin, we supported 3,808 unique individuals which accounted for a total of 35,787 interventions in the year.

Both our residential and community detox and rehabilitation services supported a total of 138 unique individuals.

The MSIF is a key element of the National Drug Strategy and is also a commitment in the Programme for Government. Notwithstanding the support for the MSIF by successive governments, there have been a few challenges to overcome. However significant progress was achieved in 2022 in our work to advance the establishment of Ireland's first Medically Supervised Injecting Facility with planning permission granted in December.

We know that problematic drug use remains a very serious issue right across the country and is not exclusive to Dublin. In 2022, our regional services provided support to 1,484 unique clients through 15,114 interventions. This is an increase of 11% in unique clients.

If we as a society cannot speak about an issue, we cannot address it. The problem of addiction weighs more heavily on the people who carry it with them every day. The isolation that accompanies addiction is not just for people dealing with their substance misuse. It affects family and friends too. MQI have expanded their support to families in the Northeast and East (Wicklow) of the country. We supported 144 family members across our services.

Jane's Place (Gender Specific Service)

Over the last number of years, you will have heard us speak about the need for gender responsive and trauma informed services and how difficult it is for women to speak about their past trauma in mixed services. In early 2022, we opened Jane's Place and 63 women engaged with the service. We are passionate about delivering real and lasting change to the experience of women – providing them with a space where they feel safe. We will develop this service even further in 2023.

Both our CRIS and CAMDAS Regional Services developed programmes tailored specifically to women's needs.

These initiatives form part of our commitment to meet the complex needs of women who use substances.

Research

MQI continued its focus on research to better inform the delivery of services and meet the needs of our clients. In partnership with Dr. Julie Broderick, TCD, a study was conducted which looked at how appropriate exercise/physical rehabilitation strategies can stabilise/reverse fragility, general physical decline in the homeless population and how this would work in practice.

MQI partnered with Dr. Sarah Morton, UCD Community Drugs Programme and secured funding from the Irish Research Council New Foundation Scheme to undertake a study exploring the intersectionality of Women's Problematic Drug Use within the Irish Context. The findings of this study will be published in 2023.

British-Irish Council (BIC) Joint Housing and Drug & Alcohol Symposium – In 2022, MQI attended this symposium, which afforded us the opportunity to participate, along with two of our services users, in a panel discussion capturing the experience of homelessness and addiction. Capturing the lived experience of people is of paramount importance and their contribution and reflection at the meeting was hugely impactful.

The isolation that accompanies addiction is not just for people dealing with their substance misuse. It affects family and friends too.

Paula Byrne, CEO

This event was jointly organised by the BIC's Housing and Drugs & Alcohol work sectors, chaired by the Northern Ireland Executive and the Government of Ireland.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge all our colleagues across the statutory, voluntary and community services who work with us to ensure that those who come through our doors are supported.

I wish to thank our colleagues in the Department of Health, the Health Service, the Irish Prison Services, An Gardaí Síochána, the Probation Service, the Dublin Regional Homeless Executive, Tulsa and the Regional and Local task forces.

As well as our statutory funders, I want to say thank you to all our incredible supporters for your ongoing support. You make such a difference to the men and women who need our help.

I would like to thank our staff and volunteers most sincerely, their care for and humanity towards the people we help is an inspiration.

As we face into another turbulent year, with increased numbers accessing our services, the rising cost of living, people finding themselves homeless for the first time or trapped in homelessness for longer, our service users' priorities evolve with changing circumstances and experiences – we need to ensure that the appropriate supports are available when people need them. Providing effective services for people with complex needs is a huge challenge.

“

As well as our statutory funders, I want to say thank you to all our incredible supporters for your ongoing support. You make such a difference to the men and women who need our help.

Paula Byrne, CEO

”



Thomas's Story: MQI Client

MQI client Thomas shares his experience of addiction and the support he receives from MQI.

“ I've been on drugs since 1978. My childhood was bad, and my parents didn't notice or care that I was coming in at four in the morning when I was eleven and twelve years of age. I wanted to fit in with the bigger lads, so when they went on heroin, I went on heroin. My father was a night worker and an alcoholic, and my mother let me do whatever I wanted. It was different for my sister, cos my ma would worry about her getting pregnant. But for me, I was let run loose.

I've been coming to MQI for help for years. I get my methadone here, food, I go to the doctor, everything. At Merchants Quay, I'm like a daddy. Everybody comes and tells me their problems. I look out for the girls and make sure they're safe. This is my family now. My father and brother died one after the other a few Christmases ago, and my ma went a few years later. I have my place at MQI. I feel accepted. I'm on the list for a house, and that's good, but I'm a bit worried. I don't think I can live on my own, because when I get lonely, I just go in on myself, and I cannot do anything for weeks, I just cry. I'm no good without people. I've spent a lot of time in prison, and I currently sleep in a shared room in a hostel, so I'm not used to being alone.

I'm very forgetful, as well. I could walk into town and forget where I am. I used to carry around a note with me that I could give to the Gardaí, saying I was lost and where to bring me. They'd walk me back to where I came from. I'm not so bad now, and my key worker in MQI lets me know when I have any appointments, so that's good. But I'm still worried about how I'll get on living by myself.

After my da died, my ma was that lonely, so I'd go up to the house and prepare the turkey and the ham for her at Christmas, because she couldn't cook a boiled egg, couldn't cook to save her life. I used to give my ma money that I robbed. I'd bring her money and she'd bring it to the chapel to be blessed. But she didn't have any money of her own, and I wanted to support her. If I was too sick to help her get the shopping, she'd go and buy my drugs for me. I used to wonder, would I have been better off if she'd kicked me out when I started on drugs, rather than letting me do whatever I wanted? But I think if I hadn't had a place to go, I'd have got worse faster, because I'd have been out all the time. But yeah, she let me away with everything, for better or for worse.

My da was a nightworker. From when I was sixteen, if I did a robbery at night, say I robbed an amusement arcade, I'd call him and he'd drive over and wait for me outside. He was my getaway driver. We'd have sacks of money in the house. So you see, my life was never really going to go any other way.

But if people said to me, would you change your life? Would you like to go back to thirteen or fourteen, and change your life all over again? No. I wouldn't. I know I've been through a lot, but I lived the life I was given. I lived the life I was given. I can't turn around and blame anyone else for my misfortunes. I speak straight from the heart when I tell you that I'm very grateful for Merchants Quay. I'm grateful for all the support I've got over the years.



“

At Merchants Quay, I'm like a daddy. Everybody comes and tells me their problems. I look out for the girls and make sure they're safe. This is my family now.

Thomas, MQI Client

”

Key Goals of our Strategic Plan 2020 - 2024

Goal 1

Deliver high impact, high quality services

Priority: To develop and enhance the range and reach of services that respond to the needs of our service users and the community.

Goal 2

Play a leading role in influencing policy makers and the public

Priority: Build the organisations' capacity through research, innovation, collaboration, advocacy & engagement.

Goal 3

Ensure the organisation has the capacity, skills and knowledge to deliver the strategic goals

Priority: Empower our people, develop our culture and strengthen our systems to achieve organisational excellence and maximise our impact.

Goal 4

Develop a funding strategy to ensure our sustainability and support our future direction

Priority: To diversify our funding streams and maintain our reputation for strong financial management & governance.



Homeless Services

Official Dublin Regional Homeless Executive figures for the final quarter of 2022 saw record numbers of people presenting as homeless. As society moved beyond Covid 19 restrictions and lockdowns, MQI was able to fully re-open our services. However, Covid 19 still had an impact on our services and clients.

The cost-of-living crisis and rising rents have particularly impacted the people who use Merchants Quay homeless services as people struggle to meet rent and energy costs. This has been reflected in the increased demand for our drop-in meal service.

For people who are homeless, our drop-in services continue to meet their immediate physiological needs for a safe space, hot food, showers, internet access, opportunities for social interaction. Provision of these basic services enables our team to build relationships with clients and provide information and advocacy supports in relation to issues such as housing advice and tenancy sustainment, assistance with social welfare benefits, financial budgeting and access to medical cards and health services.



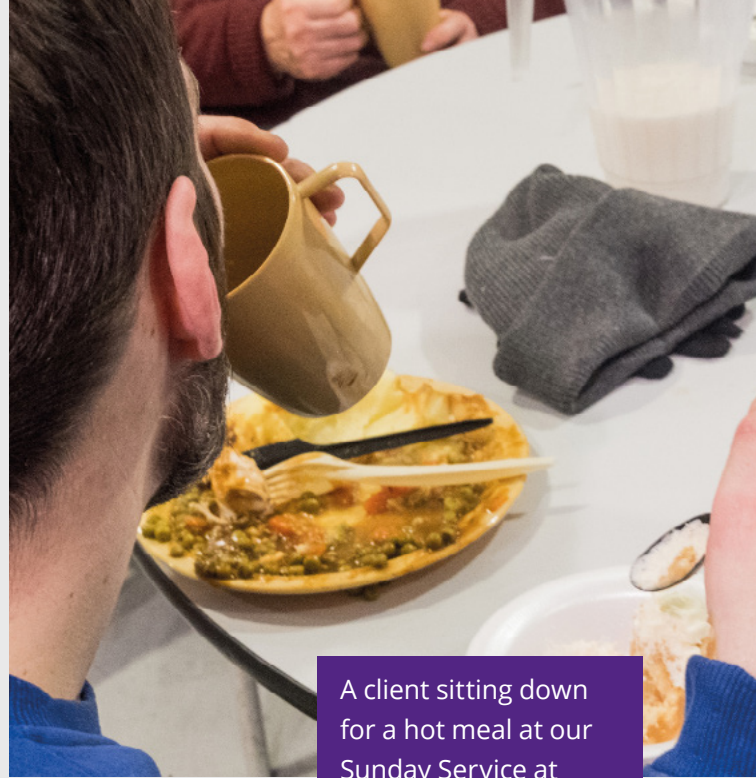
Many a morning you wake up, you don't want to live. For 20 odd years, the soul was gone from me. But I went into treatment with MQI, and now, I'm smiling again.

Finbarr, MQI Client



Sunday Service

With the full removal of Covid 19 restrictions, our Sunday Service was in a position to offer a sit-in meal in 2022. This Service operates on Sundays offering breakfast and dinner to clients. The service is one of the few spaces open on Sunday in Dublin City where clients can access a free hot dinner. The service also provides showers and a change of clothes to clients who require this as well as providing support around access to emergency accommodation. In 2022, our Sunday service supported 1,415 unique clients, 58% of whom were registered on the Pathway Accommodation and Support System (PASS)- the online shared system utilised by homeless service providers and local authorities in Ireland.



A client sitting down for a hot meal at our Sunday Service at our Riverbank Centre in Dublin

Support for Young People

In 2022 MQI noted a marked increase in the numbers of young people between the ages of 18-25 who presented to our Riverbank homeless service. MQI has developed a specialist support service for young people. This service provided 1,248 interventions to 166 unique young people in 2022. As part of this service MQI has developed a **Young Person's Creative Empowerment Programme**.

This programme supports young people faced with homelessness or addiction to build their resilience and enhance their life skills and build supportive and positive networks. A total of 36 young people participated in the programme in 2022. A highlight for the participants was when 9 young people achieved the bronze and silver Gaisce Awards.

Meals

In 2022 a total of 43,047 hot and cold meals were provided to 4,875 unique clients in our Riverbank Service in Dublin. This is an increase of 23% on the number of meals provided in 2021. The increase in meal numbers was due to MQI opening the service fully and removing all Covid 19 restrictions. The meal service is often a first point of contact for many people experiencing homelessness and can create opportunities for clients to engage with staff and receive support addressing their homelessness and other related health and welfare issues.

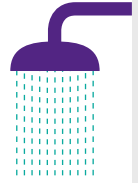
43,047
meals
provided
to Riverbank clients



Showers

In 2022, 703 unique clients availed of hot showers in Riverbank, an increase of 47% on 2021. This equated to 2,189 showers in total. 478 of these clients were rough sleepers and fresh clothing and a hot meal was offered after every shower.

2,189
hot showers
provided
in Riverbank



Crisis Contact Team

Providing support to clients who present to our Riverbank service in crisis, who are either homeless or at risk of homelessness, is a key element of the work carried out in Riverbank. The Crisis Contact team provide information, advice, and advocacy to clients around housing supports including registration on the PASS system, access to the Local Authority Housing Waiting List and the Housing Assistance Payment Scheme (HAP) applications. The Crisis Contact team also support clients with a range of issues such as social welfare payments, identification, PPS numbers, language barriers, access to medical services and basic needs of food and clothing. The team also provide a vital signposting and referral service for clients to specialist support agencies. In 2022 the team supported 1,413 unique clients, an increase of almost 10% on the previous year. The team provided 3,390 interventions for these clients.

A key development of this service in 2022 was supporting clients to engage positively with the criminal justice system whereby representatives of the Homeless Probation Team and the local Community Gardaí held bi-weekly clinics in the Riverbank service. These clinics have enabled clients, who may have legal issues related to probation or outstanding warrants, to resolve them in a manner that prevents further engagement with the court system.

Our Crisis Contact team supported 1,413 unique individuals in 2022



Primary Healthcare



I had a bad infection in my leg, and I came to MQI and saw a wonderful nurse. She treated me at Riverbank then took me to St. James's where I needed an emergency operation. She stayed with me the whole time, and when I came out of the anaesthetic just to see her still there, it meant the whole wide world to me.

Linda, Riverbank client

The Covid 19 pandemic has left severe and lasting consequences for economies, health services and individuals. The impact on physical and mental health is widely acknowledged and services are stretched beyond resources. This environment has been particularly difficult for clients who use Merchant Quay Ireland services, and this can be found throughout our primary care and addiction services.

At our Riverbank service throughout 2022, the MQI clinical team continued to work with and address the complex medical and psychosocial needs of our clients following the lifting of the majority of lockdown measures. Unfortunately, our socially excluded population frequently experience multiple adverse events and have a mortality rate eight times higher than the average for men, and nearly 12 times higher for women.

In 2022, the clinical services within MQI supported 2,126 unique clients with their primary care needs through 9,058 interventions. This was achieved through the GP, nurse, dentist, mental health team, Hep C worker and counsellor. MQI also partnered with St James Hospital to pilot a social inclusion link worker in the hospital, to work as part of the interdisciplinary team, in order to provide assertive support and advocacy to Inclusion Health patients experiencing homelessness with complex health and/or addiction needs.

GP Service

The GP service in Riverbank is accessible to everyone who comes into the service. The GP provides a full range of medical services and onward referral to additional support healthcare services where appropriate. The service has seen a reduction in GP hours in 2022 but, despite this, our GP service supported 917 unique individuals in 3,606 different consultations. There is a further initiative to apply for medical cards for all homeless clients to support their access to mainstream medical services where necessary.

Our GP service also provided our clients with access to addiction support and treatment. In 2022, 144 clients accessed Opioid Substitution Therapy (OST) for their addiction and 100 clients completed OST. Individuals finish OST therapy for a variety of reasons including moving to other clinics which are nearer in location, disengagement from the programme or successful detox from OST and begin their recovery journey, with the help and support of our substance use case worker.

Nursing Services

The nursing team continued to deliver nursing care and interventions onsite in our primary care facility in Riverbank. The services offered by the team range from wound care, physical health checks, blood testing, psychological support, and onward referral to support additional healthcare needs. With the ongoing advancement of the Hep C treatment programme in Riverbank, the nursing team have seen an increase in the unique visits for one-off blood testing for blood borne viruses, from 675 unique visits in 2021 up to 756 unique visits in 2022. Because of the established relationships with clients, the team have also seen an increase in clients who present more quickly for simple wound care treatment which reduces the likelihood of more complex wounds developing.



People who are homeless can find accessing healthcare appointments difficult as they often can't afford bus fare

Primary health care:



9,058 interventions

2,126 unique clients

GP visits:

3,606 visits

917 unique clients

Mental Health Team

Mental health issues continue to impact the lives of people who are homeless and in addiction. Our mental health team offer one to one support for individuals with mental ill health as well as support to access the HSE's Homeless Mental Health link team and carry out risk assessments and care planning to manage symptoms. The team has provided support to 361 unique individuals, with 3,175 tailored mental health interventions. The team also provide education and support to the teams in Riverbank to further support clients. The mental health team have introduced a referral pathway to support the most vulnerable clients at the most vulnerable time and have equipped the team on the floor to provide support to clients also.

In 2022, MQI partnered with DCU to offer clinical placements to student nurses completing their mental health nurse training. Our nurses and mental health case workers have given the students an opportunity to work first-hand with our marginalised client cohort in the service who need, not only mental health supports, but an array of physical and psychological supports in an empathetic manner.

“

I had a really, really tough childhood. I was bullied badly and my drug use started at twelve. Now, I have everything that a person could want in life: a beautiful partner, a little daughter, a lovely home. But it took a lot to get here, and MQI helped me the whole way.

Ben, MQI Client

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Community Detox

Our substance use case worker continued to support people to reduce and stop their drug use with the support of our GP. We offered a community detox service supported by our nursing team and addiction counsellor. In 2022, 60 clients commenced a community benzodiazepine detox and a further 12 clients commenced a community alcohol detox.

Hep C Worker

Our Hepatitis C worker, in conjunction with St James Hospital and the National Hepatitis C treatment programme, works with clients who inject drugs to screen for blood borne viruses. Our Hep C worker supported 176 unique clients to refer for blood testing and screening. The role also involves supporting individuals to access accommodation, apply for a medical card, attend appointments, and access treatment in a holistic manner.

Dental Service

Our dental team provide ongoing screening and treatment for clients and 2022 saw an increase to 216 visits, up from 148 in 2021 for 92 unique clients. The team also provides oral health promotion and education to clients and key support workers have created pathways that enable patients with multiple co-morbidities to access dentistry/oral surgery in the appropriate setting. The focus for the team in 2022 has been on prevention rather than cure and through established relationships with the client cohort, the dental team addressed issues quickly.

216

dental visits,
up from 148 in 2021



Counselling Service

Our addiction counselling service in Riverbank offers holistic support to individuals who are dealing with substance misuse and addiction. Our counsellor offers one to one assistance for many mental health and life issues such as depression, anxiety, low mood, bereavement, mental ill-health and family and relationship issues. In 2022, the service was accessed by 70 unique individuals and 434 counselling sessions were provided.

Our counselling service offers one to one assistance for many mental health and life issues



Addiction Services

Merchants Quay Ireland are committed to a health-led approach to drug treatment. Our services aim to reduce the harm associated with drug use for our clients. We offer onsite and mobile needle exchange services in addition to providing information and guidance on safer drug use, overdose prevention and pathways to recovery via residential and community-based treatment and support services.

Within the MQI residential detox and rehabilitation programmes, the teams supported 114 individuals into recovery across the services. This was done through a trauma-informed and holistic approach which allowed our clients to progress at their own pace and according to their individual needs.

When you're deep in addiction, life just passes you by. You don't even look up to see the blue sky, you don't hear the birds singing, you don't see the sun. If it's sunny, you draw the curtains. You live in a constant state of darkness.

Finbarr, MQI Client

Harm Reduction Services

Merchant Quay Ireland's harm reduction services aim to minimise the negative health and social impact associated with drug use by focusing on positive change and working with people without judgement or discrimination. In 2022 we provided health-led, harm reduction services, including needle exchange to 3,808 unique clients providing 35,787 interventions in our Riverbank service.

Assertive In-Reach Service

The role of the Assertive In-Reach Service is to support and empower clients to link in with different services in order to access appropriate and specialist supports. Last year, the Assertive In-Reach worker supported 82 unique clients and provided 197 interventions.

Community Engagement Team

The Community Engagement Team operate in the neighbourhood around Riverbank to strengthen relationships with the local community and stakeholders and proactively engage with clients and people sleeping rough in the area. The team also respond to calls and queries from the general public in relation to the local area as well as collecting drug litter discarded in the area. The team carried out 687 patrols in 2022, engaged with residents and local businesses and collected 3,200 items of drug litter.

Family Support Service (Dublin, Midlands, and Louth/Meath)

MQI currently engages Family Support Specialists across our services who support families of active drug and/or alcohol users and act as a reliable source of support, information, and advice on drug and/or alcohol use and related issues. The service aims to provide effective coping strategies to families as well as optimising the role of the family in directing the drug user into recovery. The services provide support on either a one-to-one basis or within a group setting. In 2022 MQI provided support to 144 family members nationwide.

Community Detox and Opioid Substitution Therapy (in Dublin):

82 clients accessed community detox

144 clients accessed opioid substitution therapy

60 clients accessed benzodiazepine detox

12 clients accessed alcohol detox

Irish Prison-based Addiction Counselling Service (IPS)

MQI work in partnership with the Irish Prison Service to provide addiction-based counselling services across the prison network. This service gives prisoners access to one-to-one counselling enabling them to develop clear treatment plans to assist them to maintain stability and abstinence from alcohol or other drugs misuse. In 2022 counselling supports were provided to 2,126 unique individuals, an increase of 10% on the previous year. MQI also operates a national phonenumber where prisoners can access phone-based support, the service received 6,943 calls in 2022.

MQI DATS (Drug and Alcohol Treatment Supports)

This service provides a range of supports to individuals and families in the Midlands counties of Laois, Offaly, Longford, and Westmeath. These services include mobile harm reduction and needle exchange in each county, dedicated family support specialist and rehabilitation and aftercare support. In 2022 this service provided 9,008 interventions to 725 unique individuals. In 2022, MQI opened Tanyard in Tullamore which will operate as a base for the running of groups and programmes for service users.

MQI CRIS (Community and Recovery Integration Supports Project)

The MQI CRIS service is based in Greystones, Arklow and Wicklow town and operates on an outreach basis. The service provides community-based drug and alcohol supports to drug users and their families including stabilisation programmes, family support groups and one-to-one interventions. In 2022 the service expanded in Wicklow Town to provide a dedicated counselling service to clients. The CRIS service carried out 2,094 interventions and supported 273 unique clients, an increase of 23% on the previous year.

MQI CAMDAS (Cavan and Monaghan Drug and Alcohol Service)

MQI CAMDAS offers a range of education, information, advocacy and support services to individuals, families, and the wider community in the counties of Cavan and Monaghan. The services CAMDAS offers include Key Working, Family Support Information, Education, Advocacy and Support and a Drug Rehabilitation Community Employment Scheme. In 2022 CAMDAS facilitated 2,506 interventions and worked with 331 unique clients, an increase of 19% on the previous year.

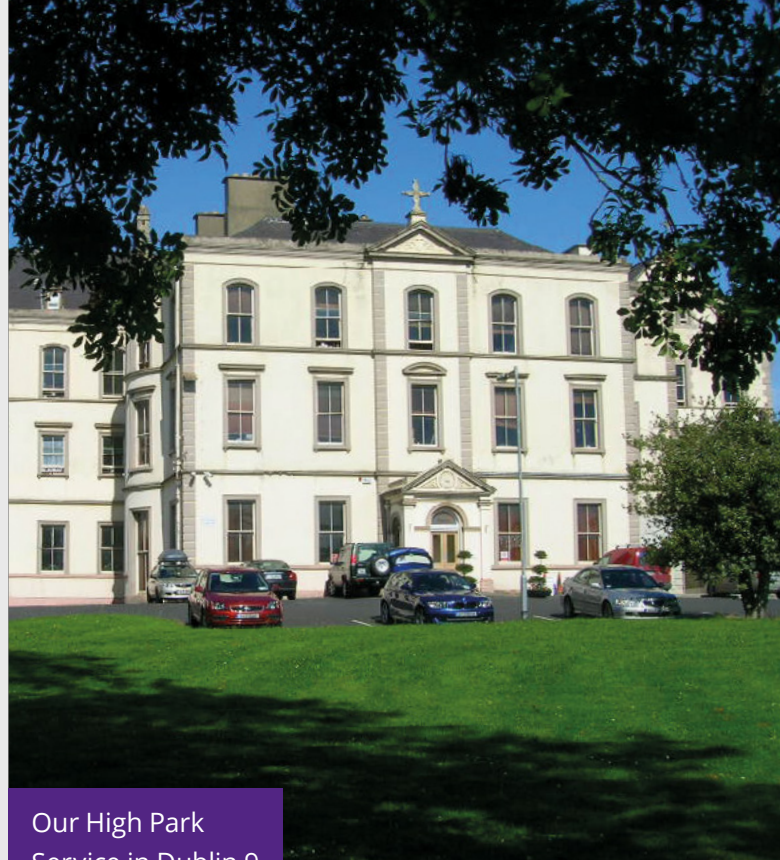
MQI CAMDAS, based in Cavan, supported 331 unique clients last year



MQI Aftercare Service

This service offers supports to clients who have completed primary residential treatment in the MQI High Park or St. Francis Farm services. The aftercare programme consists of a drug-free transitional housing project in Kildare, developed in partnership with Respond Housing Association. The programme supports service users to maintain and develop the skills required to sustain a healthy and productive lifestyle. The programme also supports those interested in returning to education or employment. In 2022 MQI supported 24 clients in the Aftercare service, an increase of 14% on the previous year.

The aftercare programme also incorporates a 'life-after' group which supports clients to maintain their recovery journey; to connect with others who share their experiences; including a LGBTQI+ recovery group. All these groups meet monthly.



Our High Park Service in Dublin 9

Residential Rehabilitation, High Park

The residential programme operating from High Park, Drumcondra, Co. Dublin runs for 14 weeks, the facility has capacity for 13 clients at any given time. The programme assists clients to explore the issues that underpin their drug use and to develop individual plans that will support them to remain drug-free and prevent relapse.

The programme operates on a therapeutic basis offering one-to-one counselling, group therapy, fitness, horticulture and life skills development. In 2022, despite Covid 19 related disruptions, the service received 235 referrals, of these 205 people completed assessments, 39 were admitted and 27 completed treatment.

St Francis Farm Detox Programme

St Francis Farm Residential Detox service is based on a working farm in Co Carlow. The service provides 6-8-week, 24-hour medically supervised, residential detox programmes, delivering four detox types.

- Methadone
- Benzodiazepine
- Methadone & benzodiazepine combined
- Suboxone

The purpose-built unit has 8 beds, all with ensuite facilities, catering for both males and females over 18 years old. The structured programme includes individual one-to-one care planning, group work, addiction and health education workshops, complementary therapies, fitness gym, NA/AA meetings and onward referral support to post detox rehabilitation and aftercare services. Working with the land offers clients the opportunity to plant, care for, and grow vegetables.

In 2022, there were 237 referrals to the detox service. Despite being forced to close the centre for a short period of time in 2022, due to staffing issues, 35 individuals were admitted to the detox programme and 23 people completed the programme.

Detox and rehab: (across all MQI services)

114 unique clients admitted

77 unique clients completed treatment

St. Francis Farm Residential Rehabilitation Programme

The rehabilitation programme in St Francis Farm offers a 14-week residential structured programme. The programme is situated on the same working farm in Co Carlow and offers a drug free, rehabilitation programme which supports individuals in addressing the issues underpinning their addiction. The structured programme includes individual care planning, therapeutic group work, addiction and health education workshops, complementary therapies, fitness gym, house maintenance, NA/AA meetings and onward referral support to post rehabilitation and aftercare services.

In 2022, there were 173 referrals to the service which was an increase of 4% from 2021 figures. There were 40 individuals admitted to the programme and 27 people completed.

St. Francis Farm Residential Rehabilitation Centre, Tullow, Co. Carlow



Niamh's Story: MQI Client

MQI client Niamh shares her experience of addiction and her journey towards recovery with the support of MQI's residential rehabilitation service.

“ I found out around the age of eight my dad wasn't my father. I felt like a bit of an outcast in my own family, then. Around the same time, I was abused by a family member. Then my nanny passed away. I remember it was the day before the Twin Towers fell down. My ma decided to move us out to live with my granddad then, but he was a chronic alcoholic, which was a problem. My two uncles moved in. They were addicted to heroin. I had to give up my bedroom to them and sleep on the floor of my ma's room. My brothers were with us in the house as well, so it was crowded, with a lot of drug and alcohol use.

In school, I went with the wrong crowd, where I got the attention that I didn't get at home. I felt wanted, but that came at the price of taking drugs. I started smoking hash. I didn't really like it at the time, but I liked the fact that people were laughing with me. It was like I was a part of something. I never wanted to go home, because I would be getting abuse flung at me the whole time from my uncles and my granddad. When my granddad tried to physically abuse me, I ran away. My mother got a council house and I moved back in with her but by that stage, I was running amok. I was drinking with my friends, I was robbing from shops to get





Before I thought I just took drugs because I wanted to, but it turns out there's a lot of reasons why I did what I did.

Niamh, MQI Client



money for drugs. I'd be smoking weed and taking tablets to numb myself. I was groomed around then, too. I was fifteen and he was twenty-three, but I thought it was alright. I was young and didn't know any better. My ma tried to get me to stop seeing him, but I fought back. I didn't realise what was happening to me. When I was eighteen, my ma threw me out over my behaviour and I was homeless then. I was living in a B&B. I was only there about three weeks and a man knocked on my door and said "Have you any sugar on you?" But he was holding out heroin on tinfoil, trying to give it to me. I remember pushing him away and slamming the door, I was so in shock. I found out the next morning that I was pregnant with my daughter. I was like, "What am I going to do?" but I was so glad then I hadn't taken heroin when I so easily could have. It's so easy to throw your life away for a spoonful of sugar. In one way, finding out I was having a baby gave me a reason to exist, a sense of purpose I hadn't had before, but still, I had nowhere to live. I got a key worker with a homeless service, and they got me into emergency accommodation for women. After I had my baby, I remember just sitting there in the accommodation with the baby in a car seat and nothing else at all, thinking, "What am I supposed to do?" I remember that was the year of all the snow, in 2010.

My baby's father and I split up. When she was about eight months old, I got a council flat. I was okay for a while. I stopped smoking weed, I literally only drank once a month when I was going out with the girls. But then I got with a new partner, and I got pregnant. That's when things got worse for me, because my partner wasn't great, and he

was taking tablets and it was hard for me to stay off them, then. I took them to numb myself. It was a vicious cycle, I couldn't get away from them. When my partner left, leaving me with the kids, I thought, "I'm grand, I'm managing, I can cope." But I couldn't. I had postnatal depression after all pregnancies and I got it again after my last baby was born. My mental health just spiralled out of control and I couldn't stop my drug use. I'd take pills that made me extremely productive but then I couldn't remember anything because my brain was knocked off. I'd be cooking and cleaning and then waking up the next day with my kids looking at me going, "Mammy, can we do what you said yesterday?" And I'd look back at them going, "I don't know what you're talking about."

The next Christmas, I had a seizure. I was in hospital for about two weeks. When I got home, I managed to stay alright for about six months, but then Covid 19 hit and I was stuck on my own in the house with four kids. I ended up back drinking and taking drugs to cope and I had another seizure. My oldest child rang 999.

After that, my older kids were going to their da and my youngest baby went to my brother. It would have been this time last year then, when I reached the lowest point of my addiction. I remember lying there in a ball of pain, and the pain was that my kids were gone, and the tablets weren't taking the pain away anymore. I missed them so much and I couldn't see myself getting them back. So I called my kids and told them I loved them. I visited my baby and then I went home and wrote letters to them all, and took an overdose. But as I swallowed the last tablet, I had a realisation and my mind just switched. I thought, "What am I doing?" and I called an ambulance. I woke up in hospital the next day.

When I got home, one of my neighbours stopped me and asked me what was wrong, because she hadn't seen me out with the kids recently and I just broke down and told her everything. She put me on to a service where I started doing meetings and they helped me get on the waiting list for a day programme. That's when things started turning around for me. I ended up getting into the day programme. They suggested Merchants

Quay, so we started that process. I was linking in with MQI's rehab every week and telling them how many days I was clean. I was getting excited being able to say, "Okay I'm this many, and this many and now I'm this many days drug-free." And I was having regular access with my baby and with my kids. I was about four and a half months drug-free when I got into rehab. I knew I needed to figure out why I took drugs in the first place. Before, I thought I just took drugs because I wanted to, but it turns out there's a lot of reasons why I did what I did. From the sexual, physical and emotional abuse I faced, to how neglected I was, the environment I grew up in, with no guidance or support, and a lot of substance abuse, to bad relationships and the trauma of addiction, all these things furthered and exacerbated by dependency.

The baby remembers me, which is what I was really worried about. The first time I did a video call with her from rehab, I was panicking she wouldn't know who I was, but she did. The social workers said they could see how much of a connection that me and her have and that she loves me as much as I love her, and they want

us back together. Every week she goes and sees her brothers and sisters as well, which is great, because I was worried if I came in here, she might not get to see them.

My kids are back in my life now and that's the main thing. I'm looking to go to college in the new year to do addiction studies. I'm excited, but a bit fearful as well because I don't know what's going to happen. I am excited, but it's the fear of the unknown really, isn't it?

I've loads to look forward to now, but there is fear, because I'm going back to my area and I'm going to see everyone and I'm going to be thrown by that. But my key worker reminded me yesterday that I managed to become drug-free outside anyway before I even came here. I got drug-free and stayed drug-free, so I can do it. I'll be fine, because I still have my day programme and I'll do the aftercare. I've learned so much about myself in the process of recovery. I remembered what it was like to be a kid, and who I was then before anything happened to me. I remembered that I loved those little books with the rabbits that told stories. One of the staff was encouraging me to write my feelings and memories down in a journal as they were coming to me, and I was putting it off, then when I did it, I said "Look, I've done it!" and he said, "That's not for me, that's for you." That's a lesson I've learned in here: that recovery is nothing got to do with anyone else, it's all got to do with me, and understanding myself. I get it now.

I've learned so much about myself in the process of recovery. I remembered what it was like to be a kid, and who I was then before anything happened to me.

Niamh, MQI Client



The programme for young people at MQI makes me feel less alone. It's so nice to have a cup of tea and chat with people who understand what I'm going through.

Tara, Young Person Creative Empowerment Programme



New Developments

MQI CRIS

In 2022, the MQI Community Recovery and Integrated Support (CRIS) service expanded its presence in Wicklow town to provide a dedicated counselling service to clients. Another new service added during the year was the delivery of supports to family members of those impacted by addiction in the Wicklow area.

MQI Northeast Family Support Service

This service was established in mid-2022 as a specialized family support service which caters for adult family members of people impacted by addiction. The service covers the counties of Meath and Louth. The service focuses on personal well-being, self-care, knowledge and understanding of addiction and awareness of their ways of coping and responding to their loved one's addiction. This service commenced operation in July last year and since then has supported 52 individuals through 386 interventions.

Janes Place - Gender Specific Service

In February 2022 Merchants Quay launched Jane's Place, an all-female service that offers one-to-one and group supports to women who are dealing with homelessness and addiction issues. For the women who access Jane's Place, it is a safe warm and welcoming environment that provides holistic, trauma-informed services such as, one-to-one Case Management, Psycho-educational health and wellbeing groups and Holistic Therapies.

In the first year of operation of Jane's Place, 63 women accessed the service with a total of 563 interventions. In Q4, 2022 Merchants Quay received funding from the HSE Community Enhancement Fund via the South Inner-City Drugs and Alcohol Task Force for the recruitment of a full-time counsellor and a project worker for the service.

St. Francis Farm, Recovery Support (online)

In 2022, the team in St Francis Farm worked with the HSE substance misuse service to develop an online recovery support package to offer clients on completion of their programme. This programme offers support to individuals who have completed their residential journey with MQI to help them stay safe, connected, and supported while continuing on their individual recovery journey.

Inclusion Health Link Worker, St. James's Hospital

The Inclusion Health Link Worker supports the Inclusion Health team in St James hospital in the provision of assertive engagement support services for individuals in hospital. This new role in 2022 acts as the link between the hospital and community services, in order to prevent first time homelessness on discharge from hospital. The role also provides appropriate follow-up care for individuals already experiencing homelessness with complex health and/or addiction needs. The Link Worker develops and builds effective working relationships with the appropriate statutory, voluntary agencies and healthcare providers to ensure access to services and accommodation for the client, whilst in hospital and post discharge. In 2022, the Inclusion Health Link Worker assisted 217 individuals (39 female and 178 male) in a variety of areas, where needs were identified.



The signs that lead into St. Francis Farm in Tullow, Carlow

“

When I was using drugs, I felt so broken and ashamed I was often on the brink of suicide then, and now I can go to work, and have conversations with my mother. St. Francis Farm saved my life.

Adam, former MQI client

”

Katie's Story: MQI Client

MQI client Katie shares her journey of recovery from addiction.

“ Both of my parents were in addiction. I grew up around a lot of drug dealing, addiction and violence, and then I was put in the care system. I was in and out of residentials, foster homes and secure care. I always fell in with the wrong crowds. My drug addiction took off after I witnessed my father's death. I was traumatised. After that I ended up in a relationship with someone who was violent and controlling. I have two children from that relationship. After my kids were taken into care, my addiction got much worse and my life spiralled out of control. I didn't care about my life. I was sleeping on the streets. I got extremely sick and I nearly died. I walked out of hospital early, knowing it could kill me and not caring. Then, as a cry for help, I went into criminality and got a criminal charge. I had never been charged with anything in my life until that. I went to prison for three years, and honestly, that saved me. I went on a methadone detox straight away and then I detoxed myself off the methadone. I built myself up to be a model prisoner. At that stage, they give you a bit more trust and responsibility. It's great for your self-esteem.

I completed a course while I was in prison which taught me how to deal with my emotions and triggers. What ways to deal with it and what you could do in a situation. I think prison was my eye opener. It is not going to be that revolving door cycle for me. So, I am glad in a way, in hindsight, that I got a severe sentence for my first time in jail because it taught me that I never wanted to go back.

Towards the end of my sentence, I started getting sent pictures of my kids and their school reports, and I felt like there was potential for me to be in their lives again. Then I was offered treatment.

It was a massive change for me coming to High Park. I remember having an appointment with the dentist on my second day here, and they had to bring me to the area I'm from for the appointment. When the staff member handed me the money to pay the dentist, I felt so scared, because I knew where I could go to buy drugs instead. But I didn't, and I came back and I sat in the group and I voiced how I was feeling and I got through it.

“ *I find the all-female groups great. I think it is needed in treatment centres to have gender groups.*

Katie, MQI Client



Even talking about how I'm feeling is new for me. Where I come from, you keep your mouth shut. But in treatment, it is not like that. You're being supported and you're supporting others. Everyone progresses in here, as long as they actually take what is being offered to them. You get out of it what you put into it. There is no point in coming here unless you actually properly give yourself over to the programme.

You're learning all the time. For instance, going and taking biscuits without asking or taking four biscuits instead of three. Those little behaviours are what would take you back into addiction on the outside. You might say, 'Ah, go away, three biscuits is no big deal,' but it is all rooted in little behaviours like dishonesty and sneakiness. For me it is not just about getting off drugs, it's making sure my behaviours don't lead me back into addiction.

The biggest thing I have learned since coming to High Park is where certain aspects of my behaviours come from. I would have been very, very defensive, and I didn't understand that about myself, I thought it was just what I was like. It was through conversations and one-to-ones and groups that I established that for me, it was power. My power had been taken when I was younger when I was sexually abused in the care system. That person took my power and took advantage of me. So, my defensiveness was me trying to take my power back and protect myself. I have learned now to challenge that in a positive manner and not to become so defensive. It is hard, but for me connecting the dots was a relief.

I thought that coming in here, I wouldn't be able to relate to anyone, but that wasn't the case. We all get on very well.

Katie, MQI Client

Nothing happens for you immediately. You have to go through the journey. But you have peers in here, who are on that journey with you. I thought that coming in here, I wouldn't be able to relate to anyone, but that wasn't the case. We all get on very well. They've helped me connect a lot. It's helped so much, having conversations with the girls and finding people who relate to what you've been through.

I find the all-female groups great. I think it is needed in treatment centres to have gender groups. I will bring certain things to the women's group and that will help me talk about them. Then when I become comfortable, then I might bring those things to the mixed group, but it is actually just voicing it first of all and getting comfortable with speaking about it that really helps. I remember saying to my key worker when I came in here 'Oh, they will never know that about me because they will look at me differently.' But the support you have in the room, you just can't put it into words, you really can't. I think that is majorly important for women to have the gender group, because a lot of women would have massive trauma around men and they just don't feel comfortable opening up straight away. It allows us to adjust at our own pace.

My dream from here is to have my kids back with me. Then it's getting an education. I'll strive to have a career. I am driven to have that. I would love to work in psychology, that would be a major dream. I think there is nothing better than if I am sitting here in ten years' time and I am saying to someone, "I didn't read this out of a book, I have lived this experience and I am telling you that when you think there is no way out, there is." I would love to be a support and help someone grow and change.

I was really ashamed of going to jail. I was the only female in my family who went to jail. But addiction brought me to the stage where I didn't try and hide my crime, and looking back, that was my cry for help. As sad as it sounds, I almost wanted to go to prison, because at least then, you know where your bed is every night. You have the comfort of your shower. You have your three meals a day. When I finish at High Park, I will go to a recovery house and try that route.

Research and Advocacy



Irish Syringe Analysis Project

In 2022 the findings of the first Irish Syringe Analysis Project were published as part of the European Syringe Collection & Analysis Project Enterprise 'Escape' Research Project. This project is a partnership between MQI, the HSE Drug Treatment Centre Laboratory and the HSE Drug Treatment Office to analyse used syringes collected by MQI staff in both Dublin and the Midlands. This is a European-wide project that analyses and tracks local, national, and European-wide drug use trends and behaviors. This project will run on an annual basis and the collection of syringes for the second phase of the project was completed in September 2022.

MQI Participation in Research

People who are homeless are more likely to experience poor mental health and addiction as well as suffering from non-communicable diseases. Research has provided concrete evidence of frailty and accelerated physical ageing among people experiencing homelessness. Appropriate exercise/physical rehabilitation strategies can stabilise or reverse frailty and general physical decline, but it is not known how an intervention would work in practice in this population. MQI participated as a Research Partner in the following Study: 'Disrupting Premature Ageing Trajectories in Non-Communicable Disease; Feasibility of a frailty-focussed intervention in a Population Experiencing Homelessness' carried out by Dr. Julie Broderick, Assistant Professor, Discipline of Physiotherapy, School of Medicine, Trinity College Dublin. The results of the study will be published in 2023.

MQI, in partnership with Dr. Sarah Morton, were successful in obtaining a research grant in 2022 from the Irish Research Council under their New Foundations Scheme to explore the intersectionality of women's problematic substance use, within the Irish context. The research will be carried out in early 2023.

Implementation of Quality Standards in drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction.

MQI's application for a new EU funded project that the European Harm Reduction Network (C-EHRN) is involved in, was successful. The objective is for nine selected organisations to roll out a new toolkit and provide feedback on the results. The project aims to enhance the implementation of quality standards in drug prevention, treatment and harm reduction throughout the EU. Project partners cover all EU member states and DDR areas and include four academic partners based in Belgium (UGent), Croatia (ERFUNIZG), France (Lyon) and the Czech Republic (CUNI) and four pan-European networks – IREFREA, Correlation C-EHRN, Euro-TC and EUFAS. It is expected that the standards will be published by the end of March 2023.

Walk the Talk Toolkit

The Walk the Talk toolkit is about transforming services and systems that support client with mental health. Mental health recovery shifts the focus beyond 'curing' individual symptoms and seeks to help clients live a satisfying, hopeful and fulfilling life despite obstacles they might face related to their mental health. This toolkit focuses on the recovery principles to develop a unique, collaborative, and planning process. This toolkit is supported by the Mental Health Commission of Canada who will be supporting MQI to roll out this initiative in 2023, a first in Europe.



I was 15 when I found heroin. I don't remember choosing, 'this is what I'm going to do.' I just knew for that short space of time, it gave me a break from my mind and what I was thinking. My head was absolutely tortured with the memories of the stuff that had happened to me. It completely stopped me from thinking or feeling.

Joanne, MQI client



Sean's Story: MQI Client

MQI client Sean shares his experience of homelessness as a young person.

“ I'm twenty-one years old and I'm currently homeless. I'd a good upbringing. My mam worked really hard to provide for me and my siblings and keep a roof over our heads when my dad left.

I did feel very isolated growing up, I always felt like the black sheep. I didn't get much of my mam's attention, because she was working all the time. I don't blame her at all for that, she did what she had to do. But at that young age, I felt like it was me against the world. My dad left when I was six, so I had this real anger, this vendetta. I had something to prove.

My story begins when I was about fifteen. I wanted attention, I wanted power, I wanted love, I wanted to be recognised, you know? I ended up getting involved in criminality. I felt alone and broken, and if I look at my situation now, not much has changed. I ended up in prison. Between the ages of fifteen and eighteen, I went to hell and back. I had more than enough, materially, growing up, but due to my loneliness, my own interior pain that I felt too ashamed and guilty to share with another person, I travelled down a dark path. I lost connection with everyone I loved.

I've managed to get out of criminality now, but instead, developed a gambling problem. It's severely accessible. I'm currently in a shared hostel in a room with four older men, two of them drug users. It's not an ideal situation for me to be living in. It's not somewhere I wake up happy in the morning.

“ *Young people will go to any lengths to make sure they don't look homeless, because it's embarrassing.* ”

Sean, MQI Client



I'm only on the Young Person's programme a short time, but I feel it's really going to help me. I'm out of work at the minute because I was recently in a car crash and I'm unfulfilled. There's no satisfaction for me. I get to the end of each day and feel like I've accomplished nothing. And when I feel loneliness, or emptiness like this, then I get the urge to seek a thrill or seek adrenaline or a dopamine rush where I'm instantaneously forgetting about the loneliness and I'm filled with pleasure, or filled with happiness or excitement. So I think the programme will help me channel that energy.

“

All that I want is to have a sound place to lay my head and to help people. A purpose.

Sean, MQI Client

”

I understand how my own head works. There's one thing that I believe everybody has in common and it's that everybody carries something, carries hurt in their heart. But if you can get your head and your heart in line, there's nothing you can't conquer. To do that, you have to have support networks like Merchants Quay and youth groups. Seeing other people that have been through situations that might be very different to you but have things you can relate to. Nobody ever gains success on their own. It's achieved as a collective, you know? And I believe the work that Merchants Quay is doing at the minute is really helping people like me to get back on their feet.

I'd say one of the main things that young people in homelessness have to deal with is the sense of social anxiety. When you're young, if you're on drugs, and you're not washing yourself, you're not presentable, your confidence is damaged. Young people will go to any lengths to make sure they don't look homeless, because it's embarrassing. There's a lot of shame, because you know you have potential, that you could have a future, and if you feel you're not living up to that or you don't have the right supports, it can really make you feel like a failure. That's motivated me to commit to the Young Person Support Programme. This programme is the first chance I've had to talk about these things in a long time and I'm looking forward to moving forward and progressing.

My dreams would be to help people like me. I've no financial or material ambition. It's nice to have nice things, but I've had them before, and really all that I want is to have a sound place to lay my head at night and be able to help people. A purpose. Whether they're a youth, whether they're old, whether they're homeless, it doesn't matter to me. Helping people gives me this bright feeling inside. It brings me back to playing with toys with my nanny, when I was small. She had Alzheimer's and she enjoyed when we played together. It just gives me this bubbly happy feeling. That's real happiness, you know?

Our People



Our Community Outreach Team

Volunteers and Student Placements

Following an easing of Covid 19 restrictions in 2022, MQI recommenced our volunteer and student placement programmes. We currently have volunteers who provide vital support to staff and clients in our Riverbank food service and in our residential support services at High Park, Aftercare and St. Francis Farm. We have also been able to provide students on placement with work experience opportunities across our services.

Community Employment Schemes

Merchants Quay Project CE Scheme CLG operates dedicated drug rehabilitation Community Employment Schemes in Athlone and Cavan Town. The schemes assist participants to access training, education, and work experience opportunities with a view to potentially entering or re-entering the labour market. The scheme also supports participants through their recovery by facilitating relapse prevention and stabilisation groups, mindfulness, and motivational interviewing.

The scheme works closely with the local Community Drug and Alcohol Services (CADS), local addiction support practitioners and Tier 4 residential treatment centres who refer individuals who may be suitable for the scheme.

MQI currently has a total of 25 CE Scheme participants with 28 available places across the two schemes.

Eamonn's Story: MQI Client



It gets very, very lonely this life, but MQI is always there, with food and warmth.

Eamonn, MQI Client



MQI client Eamon shares his experience of addiction and homelessness.



I had issues with drugs when I was very young, in the nineties, and I had to leave my family home. I got a counsellor with Merchants Quay at that time. I met friends there, and knew it was a safe place to be, to come and sit down and just relax. From there, I got into a detox and I came off drugs. I managed to get out of homelessness. MQI helped me and my partner get our first flat. We had five kids, and I have grandchildren now. My relationship broke down after my last child, who has special needs. I left my ex-partner with the house and everything, and moved back in with my parents. But when COVID hit then, it was hard to stay with my parents, because I was worried if I went anywhere, I'd give them the virus, so I moved out and ended up homeless again, when I never thought I would be.

I was back in my old area, the place I used to hang around when I first got addicted to drugs, and after years of being off them, I fell back into addiction. I didn't know how else to cope with all the pain I'd experienced of losing my relationship, my family and my home. My kids were calling me everyday but I didn't feel able to talk to them. I felt ashamed.

I'm still homeless, I'm living in a tent. Most days I just walk around until I get so tired I have to sleep. That's the only way I can get to sleep because the tent...when it's warm, it's roasting and when it's cold, it's absolutely freezing so it can be hard to sleep.

Loads of times I've come back and my tent's been robbed or taken, with all my clothes, everything I have in it. It's horrible. That's my home now, that's where I live, and people don't see it as that, they see it as just rubbish at the side of the street.

I know this kills my family, but I don't want them to see me in addiction again, so I choose to stay away from them. I feel so ashamed. I talk to my mam and my kids on the phone, but that's the only contact I can bear to have with them.

It gets very, very lonely, this life, but MQI is always there, with food and warmth. I come to MQI most days, for food and support, to have a shower, and a sit down. Honestly, I'd be lost without MQI. If it wasn't for them, I'd never eat. It's great to be able to come in here and chat to people, and you can pop in and out, have it as your base during the day. Some days, there'd be music on, the staff play music or the client music group play. I love that.

I'm grateful to Merchants Quay and everybody who supports them. No matter how much they give, it makes a difference, they're feeding me and an awful lot of people. The services are very good, and without them, there'd be a lot of people struggling at the moment. I'm really hoping to get back on my feet soon, and my keyworker at MQI is supporting me to look at getting into detox and getting my life back. I have children, grandchildren, I have a lot to live for, and I want to. It's just been a really hard time.

Results for the Financial Year at 31 December 2021

The directors present their annual report and the audited financial statements of the company for the financial year ended 31 December 2022. The Statement of Financial Activities, Balance Sheet and Statement of Cash Flows are set out on pages 59, 60 and 61 respectively.

In line with our Strategic Plan MQI are committed to protecting and developing our income / sustainability and are constantly seeking new opportunities and funding lines to maintain and grow our service offering to meet client needs.

MQI is financed by a mix of statutory and voluntary funding. 2022 was another exceptional year for MQI raising a total income of €14.5. (2021 €14.2m). Included in 2022 figure of €14.5m are donations received of €800k (€400k 2021) from the Immigrant Investment Programme (IIP), operated by the Department of Justice and Equality's Irish Naturalisation and Immigration Service, which to date has supported our goal to purchase the building known as Riverbank, the main hub of our Dublin based services with and other capital refurbishment projects to be funded in 2023.

The remainder of this income was generated from various sources with 41% from Statutory Government funding mainly from the HSE/ Dublin Regional Homeless Executive and the balance raised through our fundraising activities, other small income streams, and training. Fundraising (excluding the aforementioned IIP donations) generated €7.6m, making up 52% of our income for 2022.

I have such a void in me some days, I can't describe how lonely it feels. To come into MQI, to be warm, to be among people who are kind, it keeps me going. There are a lot of good people in MQI.

Edward, MQI client



Our work would not have been possible without the continued support from our state funders and voluntary funders. We and all those we support would like to pay tribute to the generosity of all our donors in what was a difficult year. As a result of our fundraising income and expenditure management, 2022 was a positive year financially; this will allow MQI to focus on the implementation of our other strategic priorities and to ensure we give the best of care and service to our clients whilst operating a sustainable and compliant organisation.

We continue to commit voluntary income to all our services; the continuum of all core services remains one of our key goals.

The Board of Directors also consider the need to provide against any future income shortfall and allow funds to be available to support service developments. The reserves are reviewed by the Audit & Risk Committee as part of a review and assessment of the organisation's risks.



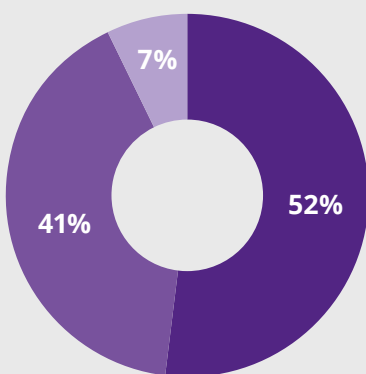
Best Practice in Transparency and Accountability

Governance

Merchants Quay Ireland is dedicated to achieving the highest standards in corporate governance. This process involved a thorough review of our policies, procedures, structures and values to ensure MQI is run as effectively as possible, with a focus on increasing transparency and a reassurance

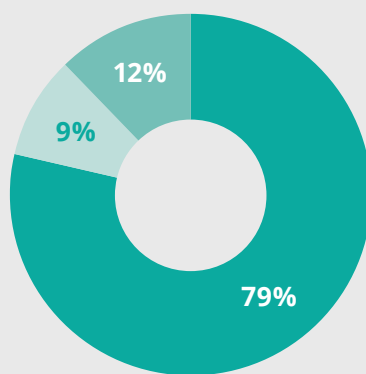
to all stakeholders that funds and donations are well managed. MQI is fully compliant with the Code of Practice for Good Governance, our accounts are SORP compliant, and we are fully committed to achieving the standards contained within the Guidelines for Charitable Organisations Fundraising from the Public.

Income



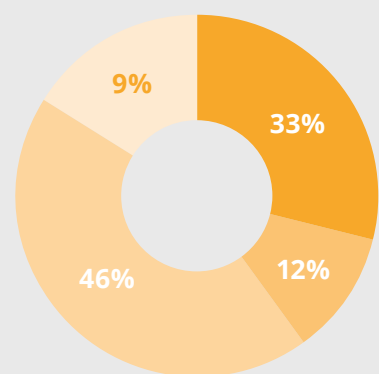
- Statutory Funding ----- 52%
- Donations & Legacies -- 41%
- Other ----- 7%

Expenditure



- Core Services ----- 79%
- Governance and Admin ----- 9%
- Generating Funds and Advocacy ----- 12%

Services Expenditure



- Homeless ----- 33%
- Counselling ----- 12%
- Addiction Services ----- 46%
- Primary Health Care ----- 9%

Statement of Financial Activities

Statement of financial activities for the financial year ended 31 December 2022

	Notes	Designated Funds 2022 €	Unrestricted Funds 2022 €	Restricted Funds 2022 €	Total Funds 2022 €	Designated Funds 2021 €	Unrestricted Funds 2021 €	Restricted Funds 2021 €	Total Funds 2021 €
Income from:									
Charitable activities	4	-	-	5,939,657	5,939,657	-	-	5,739,004	5,739,004
Donations and legacies	5	-	6,798,344	844,753	7,643,097	-	6,884,553	1,048,975	7,933,528
Other incoming resources	6	-	160,310	801,715	962,025	-	205,665	401,500	607,165
Total Income		-	6,958,654	7,586,125	14,544,779	-	7,090,218	7,189,479	14,279,697
Expenditure on:									
Charitable activities	7	53,808	2,570,606	6,333,425	8,957,839	-	2,157,878	6,193,659	8,351,537
Raising funds	8	-	1,801,892	-	1,801,892	-	1,986,440	-	1,986,440
Total Expenditure		53,808	4,372,498	6,333,425	10,759,731	-	4,144,318	6,193,659	10,337,977
Net income/ (expenditure) before taxation and transfers		(53,808)	2,586,156	1,252,700	3,785,048	-	2,945,900	995,820	3,941,720
Taxation	18	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Transfer between funds	17	2,417,298	(2,417,298)	-	-	2,882,365	(2,882,365)	-	-
Net income/ (expenditure) Other recognised gains		2,363,490	168,858	1,252,700	3,785,048	2,882,365	63,535	995,820	3,941,720
Actuarial gain in respect of the pension scheme	16	-	(2,051)	-	(2,051)	-	103,535	-	103,535
Net movement in funds		2,363,490	166,807	1,252,700	3,782,997	2,882,365	167,070	995,820	4,045,255
Reconciliation of funds									
Total funds brought forward	17	10,826,740	732,720	5,439,523	16,998,983	7,944,375	565,650	4,443,703	12,953,728
Total funds carried forward	17	13,190,230	899,527	6,692,223	20,781,980	10,826,740	732,720	5,439,523	16,998,983

The Statement of Financial Activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the financial year.

MQI Nationwide

In response to the needs of those caught up in homelessness and addiction, Merchants Quay Ireland has expanded over the years from being Dublin based to providing services nationwide.

Dublin

Dublin Riverbank Open Access Service,
Riverbank Centre,
Dublin 8

Head Office,
Merchants Court,
24 Merchants Quay,
Dublin 8

Aftercare & Drug-Free Day Programme,
St. John Bosco Youth Centre, Davitt Road,
Dublin 12

Residential Rehab,
High Park, Drumcondra,
Dublin 9

Mountjoy Prison Complex,
Dublin 7

Dóchas Prison Centre,
Dublin 7

Cloverhill (Remand) Prison,
Dublin 22

Wheatfield Prison,
Dublin 22

Jane's Place Women's Services,
7a Dolphin's Barn,
Dublin 8

Kildare

Aftercare Housing,
Leixlip, Co. Kildare

Louth

Northeast Family Support Service,
Dundalk Co. Louth

Wicklow

Shelton Abbey,
Co. Wicklow

Community Recovery & Integration Supports (CRIS) Project,
Co. Wicklow

Carlow

Residential Detox & Rehabilitation Centre,
St. Francis Farm,
Tullow, Co. Carlow

Cork

Cork Prison,
Co. Cork

Limerick

Limerick Prison,
Co. Limerick

Westmeath

MQI Midlands Drug & Alcohol Treatment Supports (DATS),
Co. Westmeath

Open Door, Payne's Lane/Irishtown,
Athlone

Offaly

MQI Midlands Drug & Alcohol Treatment Supports (DATS),
Co. Offaly

Laois

MQI Midlands Drug & Alcohol Treatment Supports (DATS),
Co. Laois

Portlaoise Prison,
Co. Laois

Midlands Prison,
Co. Laois

Longford

MQI Midlands Drug & Alcohol Treatment Supports (DATS),
Co. Longford

Roscommon

Castlerea Prison,
Co. Roscommon

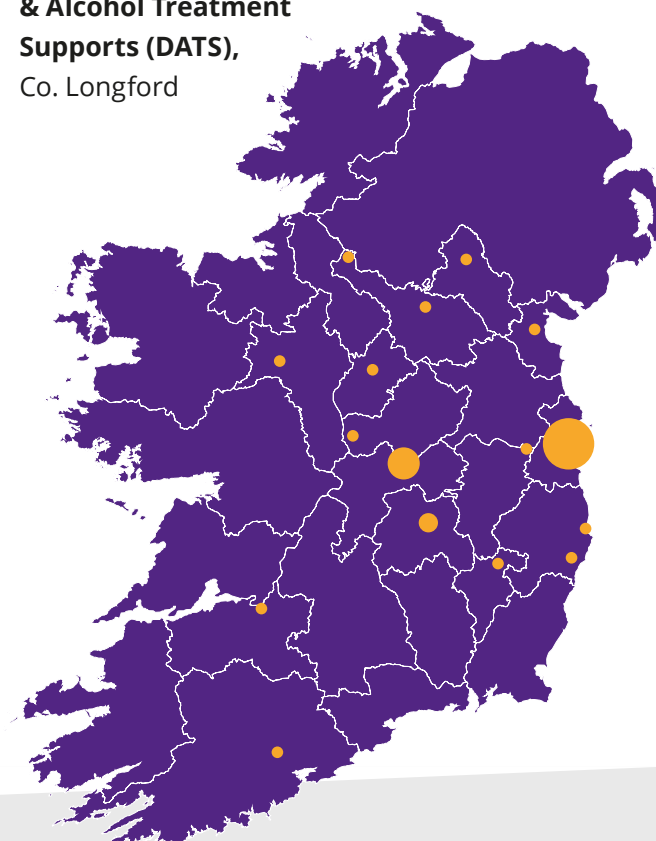
Cavan

MQI CAMDAS,
Acot House, Farnham Road, Drumnavanagh,
Co. Cavan

Loughan House,
Open Centre, Co. Cavan

Monaghan

MQI CAMDAS,
1 Oriel Way,
Mullaghmatt, Co. Monaghan





Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

Thank you

Merchants Quay Ireland is so grateful for the financial support we receive from individuals, families, religious organisations, businesses, voluntary and statutory agencies, charitable trusts and foundations. Without their steadfast support, we would be unable to deliver our vital services to those in need in Ireland. To all our supporters – to you – we extend our enduring gratitude. Thank you for caring about Ireland’s most vulnerable.

Get in touch



info@mqi.ie



@MerchantsQuayIreland



Services: 01 524 0160

Donations: 01 524 0139



@MerchantsQuayIR



24 Merchants Court,
Merchants Quay, Dublin 8



@MerchantsQuayIR



www.mqi.ie



@MerchantsQuayIreland



When I was homeless before I was just in tents, living very rough. MQI have shown me how to help myself. If you put in some work, if they see that you're putting in work, they'll help, and you will go ten steps further then.

Mark, Homeless Services Client

