

# Quay Times



**Merchants Quay Ireland**  
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

WINTER 2024

## A chat with Eddie Mullins, Merchants Quay Ireland's new Chief Executive.

Sit down with Eddie to see the life-changing power of your support, and all we have to be hopeful about in 2024.

### **Eddie, this is your first winter in MQI. What are your first impressions?**

The first thing I notice is the absolute dire need of the people I meet each day who are homeless or living with addiction.

People who have lost practically everything. The level of need is so great. It's

quite shocking. But behind the doors of MQI, there's always hope. Everyone who comes here is given time, attention and care. There are the honest relationships between clients and staff, built on kindness and non-judgement. It's a place you'll be met by caring people who'll look after you... your health, your hygiene, your hunger.

### **You've started your role as CEO in difficult circumstances, when more people are experiencing homelessness than ever before. What's MQI's role in addressing this issue?**

Well firstly, it's important not to be overwhelmed by the numbers – because inaction will get us nowhere. You - our supporters - know this. It's thanks to your incredible dedication and enthusiasm that we're always working to adapt and improve MQI services. Our role is to listen to what clients need and find a solution for them. This ultimately helps more people

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## The life-changing power of your love in 2023



**6,004**

people found sanctuary at our Riverbank crisis drop-in centre



**57,823**

nourishing meals were served for people who would otherwise have gone hungry.



**1,014**

appointments were made with the GP, nurse, dentist and mental health team.



**1,214**

hot showers warmed cold bones and restored dignity.



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[www.mqi.ie](http://www.mqi.ie)

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to move out of homelessness, or into rehabilitation – whatever they may need to start over.

Take for example if you're a young person, you might have just left the care of the State because of your family situation... childhood trauma. You may be sleeping rough or coping by using drugs. With the support of our donors MQI helps young people to get back on track. For some young people that means securing accommodation or exploring education options. Others need help accessing

rehab or our mental health team.

Or you may be a woman who has lived through horrendous violence. Maybe you're in addiction trying to deal with that harm. You just don't know how to start putting yourself back together again. So, we have *Jane's Place*, our specialised service for women, now open – all thanks to MQI supporters. It's a place to heal and rebuild.

Or perhaps you're an older person who has fallen on hard times. If you're feeling utterly alone in the world, disconnected

from family or just have nobody... then step inside, sit down, have a meal that will keep you fit and well. See the doctor or dentist. Talk about your housing options.

In 2024 we'll keep a close eye on what's happening on the ground for MQI clients. We'll listen, we'll adapt – and with you by our side, we'll continue to make a difference.

**It's only through your kindness that this work of the heart is possible. Thank you for all the good you do here. ■**

## As a child Tara's innocence was taken from her. She didn't have dolls. She was given drugs instead.

We meet Tara at MQI's Aftercare House in Kildare. She's such a tiny person. Her stature, her skeleton, are so delicate. Sitting in the chair, cradling her legs into herself, you might think she was a little girl.

**S**he's just 20 years old. Quite pale, with red hair in a long, wavy ponytail. Tara's bright blue eyes look up as she gathers her thoughts, "MQI gave me the feeling I'm worth something," she tells us. "I was shy as a child and I'm still a private person. For the first three weeks with MQI, I wouldn't talk about

why I was really there."

"Something happened to me when I was 12. I didn't tell anyone. Our family didn't encourage talking about our feelings. I was told to 'cop on' growing up. So, I kept that secret inside. One day, I was playing outdoors with a friend, and we went exploring in an abandoned building. We stumbled across

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# You are the safety net for young people in crisis

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people there using drugs, I recognised one of them, a neighbour."

That's how the addiction started for Tara. She missed out on school, surrounded by people who weren't good for her. People who used her. You wouldn't know it to look at her now, but she's come back from three attempts to kill herself.

## There wasn't an hour of the day that Tara didn't want to escape her life.

"I wasn't picky about what I used. I just didn't want to be sober because of the secret." Tara's hands stay tucked inside the sleeves of her black hoodie, as if still protecting herself. "I kept that secret for eight years. I didn't trust anybody until I went to MQI for rehab at High Park. It took weeks of patience with me

“What do you say to someone who's pretty much saved your life?”

before I felt comfortable enough to open up. But MQI has people who are not only willing to listen, they want to listen. And that's huge for someone like me. High Park gave me someone to listen to what I needed to talk about."

Although she looks so childlike,

Tara's wiser than her years. Describing her lost childhood, the classes and opportunities missed, she knows how far she's come in recovery. "I loved art therapy at High Park, it's one of the things that helped me the most. I go to the gym to push myself physically. I didn't think I'd ever like yoga but here I am. Meditation – I could barely sit still for five seconds let alone 15 minutes! We do meditation here in the Aftercare programme every day."

Just like it sounds, Aftercare is MQI's continuing care for clients who've completed rehab at High Park or St Francis Farm. Our six-bed residence in Co. Kildare and the Day Programme offer a safe place to land until secure accommodation is found. Aftercare supports clients to strengthen and challenge their resilience, creating pathways to employment and education.

## "That's gratitude that you can't fully express."

"When I finish the Aftercare Day Programme I want to go to college and actually put all of myself into it. Because, since I've come into recovery everyone's been complimenting me on how smart I am. I never properly tried before, I used to sit at the back of the class, not really there. So, now I'm excited to go to college and just do it!"

Knowing that you've been with her in spirit, all along her journey with MQI, is profoundly meaningful to Tara. "What do you say to someone who's pretty much saved your life? That's gratitude that you can't fully express. Because if people aren't donating, none of this would be here. So, I just want to say thank you. Without you I'd be still stuck in addiction. You are saving people's lives."

**Thank you for helping Tara to find a new, healthy path in life.**



“I just want to say thank you. You are saving people's lives.”

# Thank you for being part of our MQI family



*Alan, Riverbank  
Services Co-Ordinator*

“ On the Sunday you'd nowhere to go because everywhere was closed. Now I come down for the Sunday dinner, for the company. I have the chat, the laugh with them. The only family I have now is the staff in Merchants Quay. They're just better than a family for me.”

Ciaran, MQI client

“ St Francis Farm was a life saver for me. The staff and the nurses, they were the best in the world. It's like a tight family down there. I felt safe. I felt so at peace. I learned how to laugh again because I'd lost it. And I learned to trust people, which was not really something I'd ever done before.”

Marianne, former MQI St Francis Farm client



Martina, Darren & Amy lead the frontline services at Riverbank



“ “ 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.

Grace, Young Person Creative Empowerment Programme



Lourdes, Project Worker



Anto, Welcoming Officer, Riverbank

“ “ It's very lonely this life, but MQI is always there. Without MQI, I'd never eat. I come here and chat to people. I'm grateful to anyone who supports them. No matter how much they give, it makes a difference, they're feeding me and an awful lot of people.

Eamonn, MQI Client

“ “ 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



Orla, Clinical Nurse Manager



Ryan, Project Worker

**You are our heart, our strength, our spirit**

## Tea & a Tour

**Will you join us for Tea and a Tour at our Riverbank Drop-in centre in 2024?**

On the first Thursday of the month there's a window of time where the centre is not in use by clients. The next tours are on March 7th and April 4th. See for yourself how your kindness powers the MQI kitchen and helps healing hands at our medical centre.

Call Shauna on **01 524 0139** to arrange your visit.

**We're looking forward to welcoming you!**



## A Winter Wish List for people on the streets...

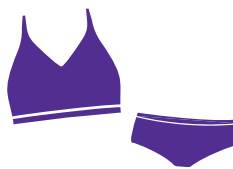
Giving socks, jocks and toiletries is a wonderfully practical way to help. You can bring your donation in person to MQI Fundraising Office at 24 Merchants Quay (just past the Riverbank drop-in centre) from 10am to 3pm Monday to Friday.

Please ring us beforehand at **01 524 0139**.

### URGENTLY NEEDED!



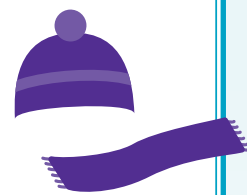
**New, packaged men's socks and jocks to restore dignity**



**New, packaged women's underwear, sports bras and fluffy socks**



**Toiletries and shaving gear for a fresh start**



**Hats, gloves, and scarves for warmth**

**If you're not able to visit in person, you can still help our homeless stay warm and dry. For example, a gift of €15 could provide 2 people with a nourishing meal, a hot shower, a clean set of underwear and a chat with someone who cares.**

## Big Wish

We need to raise **€2,500** for a commercial fridge to keep food fresh in our Riverbank crisis drop-in centre. Please ring us at **01 524 0139** if you'd like to help. Any additional donations will cover the cost of equipment needs we might have in the future.

*Thank you!*



**Merchants Quay Ireland**  
Homeless & Drugs Services

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Dublin 8

**To make your gift by phone: please ring us on 01 524 0139.**

 **Telephone:** 01 524 0139

 **Email:** supporter@mqi.ie

 **Website:** [www.mqi.ie](http://www.mqi.ie)

 **Facebook:** Merchants Quay Ireland

 **Twitter:** @MerchantsQuayIR

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.