

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

SUMMER 2025

You gave Cathy belief that she could overcome addiction and stigma to reclaim her life

When you first meet Cathy, you're immediately struck by her intelligence, strength and the hope that radiates from her.

Cathy has seen and experienced the worst of humanity, and now, thanks to you, the best of it.

We know that you understand that addiction is rarely a choice, but a complex web of trauma, abuse and a desperate lack of support.

For Cathy, addiction wasn't a sudden fall, but a gradual slide that began within a violent childhood.

She grew up with nine siblings, and her parents turned to alcohol when they were unable to make ends meet.

"Mammy and Daddy were both big drinkers, that's how they dealt with things."

But even more damaging was the constant fear of violence.

He used pots, belts, whatever he could lay his hands on. In one of the most horrific beatings, her father beat Cathy with a hammer.

"I couldn't move for two days

after. My sister had to carry me up the stairs. I was in a bad way."

Can you imagine how it must feel for a young girl to be beaten like that by the person she should have been able to rely on to protect her, and love her the most?

To escape the pain, Cathy started using drugs at just ten years old.

She began smoking weed and experimenting with pills to numb the hurt. She began looking for love in all the wrong places. Desperate to feel like she mattered.

"I just wanted to make the fear and pain go away. I just wanted to feel a bit of love I suppose, like I mattered to someone"

Her pain only deepened when



When Cathy was judged and stigmatised, you reached out with love, support and care

her mother passed away. It was at this time that Cathy became involved in a terrifying and abusive relationship that would last almost a decade.

Cathy's partner was violent and controlling, and in her words *"Our relationship went hand-in-hand with my addiction. He'd give me drugs, and I'd need them to cope with the abuse."* She was isolated

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from everyone she knew, and when they'd be in public he would demand that she walk behind him and keep her eyes to the ground.

Cathy lived in fear of her violent boyfriend, afraid to raise her eyes or open her mouth.

"My face never looked normal when I was with him. I always had a black eye or a swollen lip. People would look at me and look away quickly, like they didn't want anything to do with me."

This devastating pattern is one we see too often..

It starts with a traumatic childhood, turning to drugs to cope, and sadly, abused children becoming abused adults, who very often are at risk of experiencing homelessness. From the very beginning, the odds are stacked against them.

For a woman, homelessness comes with more dangers – the threat of violence and exploitation is heightened and constant. For Cathy, each night on the streets brought intense fear, *"I just prayed for safety, but the reality is there's no safety to be found when you have to sleep rough."*

"I felt like nobody cared about me. I remember once walking down the street and seeing two of my oldest friends, and they just



walked straight past me. That destroyed me, I felt worthless.

I wanted to disappear. I started covering myself up, wearing big jackets. Even going to the doctor was difficult because I felt like a burden, I was so worried about being judged."

The weight of stigma is crushing for people like Cathy.

It makes a person feel less than, and in a constant state of shame. It creates a barrier that stops so many from getting the help they need.

Instead of judgement, you offer a helping hand. You made it possible for Cathy to receive a life-changing call from St. Francis Farm Detox and Rehabilitation Centre.

Through the detox and rehab programmes at St. Francis Farm,

and later our aftercare program, Cathy began the journey of healing and self-discovery.

"I'm not afraid to say what I want or how I feel anymore. I've found my voice, found myself again. I hadn't felt like myself in such a long time I didn't know who I was anymore. That's what Merchants Quay and my case worker have done for me, they've

given me back my life"

You supported Cathy throughout her recovery. You did it because you believe in helping others, and so does she.

She's now studying social care in college, with a clear goal of working with children from difficult or abusive homes. She wants to provide the comfort and understanding she never had growing up.

Cathy's story is proof of what you already know. Addiction isn't a moral failing, it's a complex issue often deeply connected to past trauma and a lack of support.

Thank you for your support and commitment, it's transforming lives. Your love and compassion helps women like Cathy find their path to recovery and build a life beyond addiction and homelessness. ■

"I prayed for safety, but the reality is there's no safety to be found when you're sleeping rough."

Because of You, Stigma is Shifting



“MQI clients often tell us that that they feel ‘less than’ other people. They start to believe that they aren’t worthy of respect. That’s what stigma does.”
– Claire, Open Access Co-Ordinator



“Behind every story of addiction, there’s a very vulnerable person who has experienced trauma. Addiction knows no Eircode. You can help break the cycle.”
– Amy, Riverbank Services Co-Ordinator



“Stigma affects how people carry themselves, they keep their head down. I have never met anybody who wanted to be homeless and sleeping in a laneway.”
– Greg, Project Worker

You choose to see the person behind the struggle. That choice, your compassion, is making a real difference. In 1999, a research study asked people how they viewed addiction. We recently asked those same questions again, 25 years later.

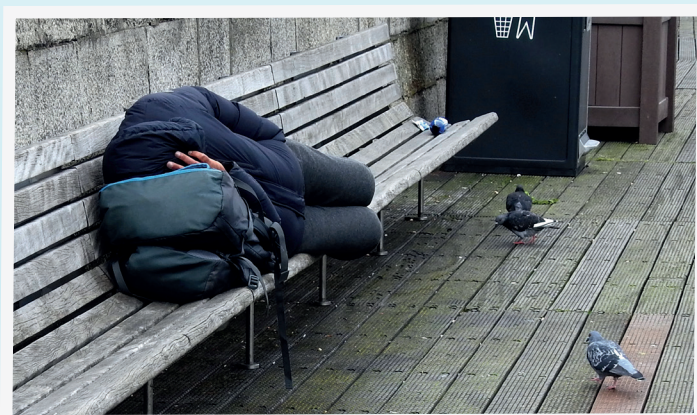
Thanks to you, the stigma that once surrounded drug use is starting to lift..

The research shows that more people, like you, understand that addiction should be met with support, not shame. You are helping Ireland see the people behind the struggle, who often carry significant trauma, and are living with an illness - not a moral failing.

We know that you believe that treating people in addiction as criminals doesn’t work, and you believe that the compassionate response is to instead offer healthcare, support and dignity. And others are starting to believe that too...

Thanks to your support, public attitudes are changing. More people believe in early drug education, in prevention, in harm reduction and support for those who need it. With your help, Ireland is moving closer to a society where everyone affected by addiction has the chance to rebuild, recover, and live their potential.

We won’t pretend that every mind has changed. There’s still a lot of work to be done to eliminate stigma. But with the love of people like you leading the way, we’re building a future where support replaces judgement, and every person has the chance to be seen, heard and given hope. ■



If you want to read more about our stigma research, scan here





From the Postbag of MQI: Your Letters Answered by CEO Eddie Mullins

I want to thank our MQI family for your letters, cards and notes with your kind thoughts and wishes. Each and every one of you are so much a part of our work, and we love reading every letter. I thought I'd share a few of them with you.

E.K. who wrote:

I love knowing there's somewhere like Jane's Place. I love reading about it and I wish all those brave women the best for the future. God bless,.

Dear E.K.,
Jane's Place exists because of people like you. It's your compassion and generosity that has made this women-only safe space possible. Your continued commitment is what will keep the doors open for women who need the safety and support they find in Jane's Place.

S.C. who wrote:

I went on a tour of Riverbank a few years ago. I had always wanted to see what my monthly donation makes possible. Do you have any similar tours coming up?

Dear S.C.,
Thank you so much for your monthly gift - your ongoing support allows us to plan more effectively. This in turn ensures we can offer the support people need, when they need it most. We would be delighted to see you again on our tours at Jane's Place on 10th August and High Park



on 9th September. To book your spot, call us on 01 524 0139 and we'll put you on the guest list.

K.K. who asked:

I hope my small contribution to the Sunday Dinners at Easter gave someone the encouragement they needed to keep going. I know firsthand the difference a kind face and warm meal makes.

Dear K.K.,
Every contribution, big or small, has an impact. And you're right, the Sunday Dinner Service is so much more than a meal, it's a chance for people to feel welcome, heard and supported. It's also 100% funded by donors like you. Thank you for the kindness and

compassion you show for people who really need it.

L.M. who wrote:

Pope Francis's passing reminded me of the need to look out for the most vulnerable in our society. I'd like to thank the staff at MQI for your work and encourage others to support them with donations or however they can. All the best.

Dear L.M.,
Thank you for your kind words and support. I think Pope Francis reminded many of us to value and respect the dignity of every person, especially those experiencing pain and difficulty. We hold those principles close to our hearts at MQI and will continue to do so in his memory. ■

KEEP YOUR CARDS AND LETTERS COMING:

Use the reply envelope enclosed to write to us any time – no gift required. You can also ring or email, on 01 524 0139 or to supportercare@mqi.ie. We'll reply as quickly as we can. You are the heart and soul of this good work, and it is our great joy to hear from you.



"To send a letter is a good way to go somewhere without moving anything but your heart" — Phyllis Theroux, author and essayist

Your Support for Jane's Place Is Changing Lives

Thank you for helping us provide a safe space for vulnerable women. Time and again, we are told by our clients just how calm and safe Jane's Place feels, and that women feel comfortable coming here, knowing that nothing is expected of them, and that they are enough. ■

"Sometimes it's just the small things: a soft towel, the independence to make your own cup of tea, and being able to let your guard down – that's what we focus on in Jane's Place. We offer women respite from the streets, even if just for a short period. **The ladies thank us every day, but that thanks belongs to you.**"

Susan

– Jane's Place Services Co-Ordinator



Read in their own words how much your kindness and compassion mean to the women you're helping:

"At Jane's Place, I really felt at home – I actually haven't felt that safe in 13 years. Having a hot shower, getting advice, I'm grateful for everything that has been made available to me at Jane's Place." – Pauline

"Sleeping on the streets, I wanted to fall apart, but you can't do that, you have to be constantly on your guard. I came to Jane's Place and found the safety I needed. I could fall apart in peace, and today I'm doing so much better. This place has changed my life already." – Trisha

A Summer Wish List

People often associate the harsh conditions of homelessness with the cold and rain of winter, but summer can be just as difficult for vulnerable people - from sun exposure to dehydration and inappropriate clothes.

Can you help with any of these items?

- ☒ New packaged underwear and socks for men and women
- ☒ Toiletries, men's shaving razors and cream
- ☒ Sunscreen and baseball caps to prevent sunburn and heat stroke
- ☒ Clothing for homeless women (small and medium: leggings, jeans, t-shirts, and hoodies)
- ☒ Men's tracksuit bottoms and t-shirts (small and medium)
- ☒ Gently used runners for men and women



BIG WISH

Can you provide **€2,500** to transform the garden in Jane's Place into a safe, therapeutic space for women in recovery?

Please ring your Donor Care Team at 01 524 0139 to arrange dropping off at our fundraising office!

As with previous Big Wishes, any surplus will go to frontline services at MQI, which bring people back from the brink, week on week.

Thank you!

When we come together over a cup of tea or coffee, we create meaningful change

Invoke a few friends over and raise funds for vulnerable people over a cuppa and sweet treats! **This summer, we're inviting supporters to host a coffee morning** - every euro raised makes a true difference in the lives of people seeking warmth, safety and the chance to rebuild their lives. Getting started is easy!

If you have any questions, call us on **01 524 0139** or email us at **communityfundraising@mqi.ie** and we will send you a fundraising pack and everything you need to get started. ■



A Steady Gift, a Stronger Future

When Cathy first came to us, she was broken and scared - scarred by years of violence, addiction and homelessness, and unsure if recovery was even possible. It's thanks to our kind-hearted supporters that we could offer her a second chance. Monthly giving means we can be there every day with meals, healthcare and support.

Would you consider supporting MQI on a monthly basis? It means we can plan ahead and reach more people in crisis. If you are a monthly giver - thank you. Together, we can build a stronger future, one steady gift at a time.

If you would like to learn more about regular giving, scan the QR code on this page. ■

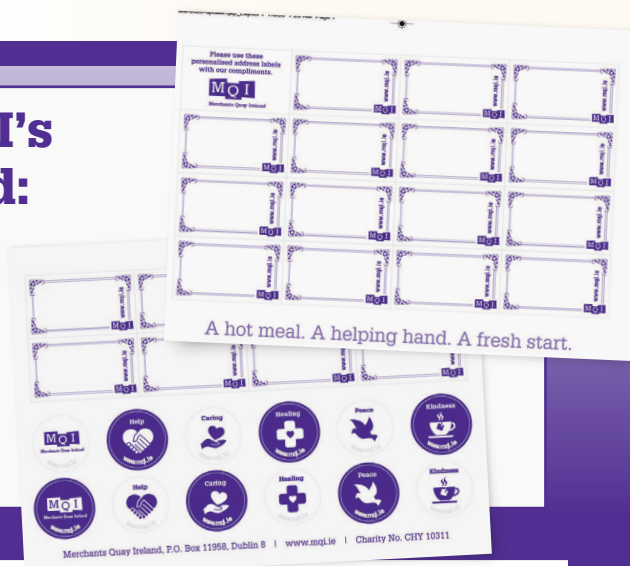
Learn more about
Monthly Giving



Help Spread the Word About MQI's Work With Every Letter You Send:

Please accept your MQI address labels as a little gift from us. Every time you use them, you'll spread the word about the life-saving work you help with - until everyone has an address to call

home. If you'd like more, just ring your Donor Care Team at **01 524 0139**, we print them ourselves, so they cost next-to-nothing. **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: supportercare@mqi.ie

Website: 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.

Thank you for all your kindness.