

Quay Times



Merchants Quay Ireland
Homeless & Drugs Services

The Newsletter for Supporters of Merchants Quay Ireland

SUMMER 2026

A safe place to heal, a chance to rebuild: Sandra's journey to a fresh start.

Imagine growing up surrounded by addiction and violence, always afraid, always looking out for your younger siblings. That's what Sandra endured until the weight of it became unbearable and she turned to drugs in search of escape. Soon, she found herself trapped in the brutal cycle of homelessness and addiction on the streets where sustaining recovery is nearly impossible without a safe place to stay. But thanks to you, everything changed. Your support provided the secure sanctuary and the team who believed in her, setting Sandra on the vital bridge to long-term recovery.



Thank you, for giving people like Sandra the chance of long-term recovery.

To show how vital your kindness was in helping Sandra break free from addiction, we need to go right back to the beginning, to that house in Dublin, and the fearful situation that she and her siblings were born into.

"There was a lot of violence, crime, and drug use," says Sandra. "My Dad was involved in bank robberies and my mum was an addict..."

Imagine being a small child amid all this chaos.

And as the oldest, Sandra

tried to protect her brothers and sister.

"I'd be looking after them, looking after my mother, and looking out for Guards coming into the house." Plus, her mum always told her, 'Don't say anything or they'll take you away and you'll be put into homes.'

There was never a time she wasn't afraid.

The need for escape

It's easy to see why a child like Sandra would seek

out escape.

By 13, she was drinking with an older crowd who gave her the acceptance she craved. By 14, she was taking ecstasy. And at 15, she had her first encounter with heroin.

"A lot of my uncles and aunts were drug abusers," she says. "It amazed me what it did to them – it made them sleepy and really happy. So, one day, I picked up a spoon and put some heroin on it..." And that's how addiction got its grip.

Sandra spent the next few years using drugs as a crutch. But at 21, she fell pregnant and managed to get herself

"My MQI counsellor was the one person that helped me and believed in me, and that changed everything."

MQI client, Sandra.

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stable. Then her partner died suddenly, and as she explains, *"It was the perfect reason to go 'flat to the mat' to drug use."*

No place to call home

Sandra spiralled further then, and life became more about existing than living. With no safe place to call home, she relied on MQI's Riverbank drop-in services for essentials such as hot food and showers, just as she relied on drugs to get through the pain of every day.

It was crack cocaine that finally brought Sandra to her knees. She ended up in an intensive care unit, then on a psychiatric ward, and finally in prison.

"Everything was falling apart," she says. *"I'd had enough of it. I just wanted to die,"* But what felt like the end, was actually the start

of a remarkable turnaround.

In prison, Sandra stopped using drugs and found new determination to make amends with her children. But still, she was terrified.

"I thought 'I can't go back out there, because I'll die.' So, they got me a MQI counsellor who believed in me, guided me, and got me looking at rehabilitation programmes. That's how I came to be at High Park and it was the best 14 weeks of my life."

A vital bridge to the world

At first, Sandra's experience of rehab was overwhelming. She even wanted to go back to prison, because it felt safer. But thanks to your generosity, she persisted, not just at High Park, but right the way through our drug-free Aftercare programme. Sandra found she simply couldn't

sustain her recovery without a place to call home. Under a safe roof, she finally benefited hugely from the healthy routine and structure she'd never had as a child. She also learned the

importance of things like boundaries and self-care and discovered a passion for fitness, which she's now turning into a career.

Generational change

Today, Sandra is 15 months drug-free and studying for an advanced qualification in health and fitness. She's also undertaking a work placement and keeping up a steady routine of recovery meetings and going to the gym. Most important of all, she has a great relationship with her two children, built on consistency. "Once I got well, everyone got well in my family," she says. This is the ripple effect of your kindness.

Now, it's the ordinary everyday things she values. "Sometimes I have to pinch myself. Like, is this happening? Being a member of society." It's an extraordinary gift and she could not be more thankful to you.

Thank you for providing the safe place and steady reliable support essential for recovery, and for giving people like Sandra the chance to really live again.■



"I'm so proud of where I am today, I've done a whole 180. It's like being born again."

Sandra

AT THE COALFACE

Our Lead Project Worker & Addiction Counsellor, Declan, on the powerful role you play in helping the most vulnerable people in our society have a safe place to call home while they recover

Sandra's keyworker, Declan, has been part of our Aftercare team for the last eight years. Aftercare is the crucial next step for someone leaving our residential rehab - a dedicated six month period of transitional housing that builds trust in their ability to live a life without drugs. Here, he shares his perspective on Aftercare, and why in his experience, it is the most important part of the recovery process.

Everyone in recovery needs a safe place to live or how can you build on anything else?

Having a roof over your head is key to helping clients stay in recovery and reintegrate back into society. But they also need a bit of hope. They have to feel 'good enough' to assume their place in that society, so a big part of my job is building people up when the core beliefs they have around themselves are often so poor.

Take Sandra. Her confidence was on the floor when we first met. Now she's doing amazingly well, thanks to goodhearted people like you.

"Reality hits when you come out"

When people stop using any sort of substance, whether it's alcohol or a drug, it leaves a massive void behind.

Going to 15 meetings a week will not keep your recovery on track after rehab unless you've something meaningful to work towards. That's how Aftercare started

really. So many people were coming out of treatment centres then relapsing; because they didn't have anything to fill that void especially for those with no where to stay.

Our Aftercare Services give people routine, shelter, and structure, as well as support to work through their traumas, to reconnect with family, and to build their life skills. They leave with a clear head, a plan for the future, and a newfound self-belief, which pours out into their families too.

"Small wins are massive wins"

We don't hear stories like Sandra's often enough. But when people reintegrate back into society, that's massive, because they have to change everything about their lives.

And women in recovery have it especially hard. They often have concerns for their safety, childcare

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When reality hits after treatment, a tent on the street shouldn't be the only option. Together, we provide the safety of a home.



“What addiction is, is people disconnecting – from family, from life, from work... Recovery is about reconnecting with everything and it isn’t easy – especially when people have spent a lifetime feeling critical of themselves.”

Declan

responsibilities, or shame about their children being in care. That’s why they need women-only spaces like our Jane’s Place service, where they can talk openly without fear or judgment.

“Your support makes this possible”

It’s a myth that addiction is simply a choice. People aren’t using because they enjoy it. It’s about trauma and survival. They’re trying to kill the pain and just get through the day.

I can’t thank you enough for understanding that – and for being part of the MOI family.

Whether its your kind giving or granny and grandad’s €5 a month, it’s generosity like this that keeps us going. On behalf of everyone here, a massive **THANK YOU.**

Our warmest thanks... From everyone at Jane’s Place to everyone at yours

Our recent appeal focusing on our all-female service Jane’s Place, once again revealed the wonderful compassion and generosity of our MOI family. Thanks to you, we can continue to provide the services and support that women need to heal from trauma and move on in their lives.



Thanks to our wonderful MOI family, no woman here in Dublin should feel too ashamed, too stigmatised, or too afraid to seek the help they need with homelessness and addiction issues.

Instead, they can expect the warmest of welcomes at Jane’s Place.

Your recent gifts will enable people to see a doctor, to have their wounds cleaned and dressed, to receive life-changing counselling, and to take part in Wellbeing Groups, and Self-Care Days. They will enable our team to make clients feel supported, comfortable, safe, and cared for. And they will enable more women to reach a place of physical and mental wellbeing that many had never thought possible.

Thank you.



“I love the kindness, generosity and resilience I see everyday between women in Jane’s Place”

Service Co-ordinator, Susan

Your exclusive invitation to visit High Park

On Saturday September 5th, we'll be welcoming supporters to our High Park Residential Rehabilitation Centre in Drumcondra for a behind-the-scenes visit.

This is your chance to hear directly from staff members and to meet MOI clients who, like Sandra, have experienced the life-changing benefits of rehab, thanks to your kind giving.

It's very relaxed – more tea and biscuits than formal occasion – but we do need you to RSVP to secure your place by 31st August. Spaces are first-come, first-served, so please sign up quickly.

We hope to see you there!

When: Saturday September 5th, 11am – 2pm

Where: High Park Residential Rehabilitation Centre, Dublin.

How: To claim your free place, please call Ellie on **01 524 0139** and she'll add your name to the guest list.

A Summer Wish List

It's not just the cold, wind, and rain of the winter months that provide a challenge to people living on the streets. Summer may usher in calmer weather, but it also brings with it the need for sun protection, lighter clothing, and other essentials.

Can you help with any of these items?

- ✓ Small bottles of sunscreen
- ✓ Caps and sunhats
- ✓ Bottles of water (for rough sleepers to stay hydrated)
- ✓ Handheld fans
- ✓ New (packaged) underwear for men and women
- ✓ Tampons and regular sized sanitary pads
- ✓ Women's and men's clothing in Small and Medium sizes, specifically:
 - ✓ Leggings
 - ✓ Tracksuit bottoms
 - ✓ Coats
 - ✓ Jackets
- ✓ Men's and women's shoes



Please ring your Donor Care team on **01 524 0139** to arrange a drop-off at our fundraising office.

Big Wish

The priceless gift of a good night's sleep

A comfortable place to lay your head is synonymous with 'home'. And while we aim to deliver a good night's sleep to every resident at High Park, our actual beds are in dire need of replacing. That's why we're asking the MOI family to come together and raise the **€3,700** we need to buy 13 cosy and durable beds.

If you can help with a contribution of any amount, our Donor Care team would love to hear from you on **01 524 0139**.

If there is any money left over after the purchase of the beds, funds will be directed straight to our frontline services.

And please spread the word, about the life-saving work you are part of

Stick with us and help raise the profile of MQIs work

In our line of work, small acts of kindness can have a very big impact.

The MQI address labels we've sent are just a little thank-you gift to you. But it's a big help to us if you can use them on your everyday correspondence as it helps

to raise our profile. And as we print them ourselves, it's a very low-cost way to let the world know we're here.

If you'd like more labels, please contact your Donor Care team on 01 524 0139. They'd be happy to send some out to you. ■



A message from our CEO, Eddie Mullins...

Thank you so much for choosing to be part of the MQI family. Your kindness touches people when they are at their most vulnerable.

Right now, one of the challenges we face is supporting clients who complete our residential rehab services but have no home to return to. Leaving treatment is a massive achievement, but without a roof over their heads, a person in early recovery is incredibly exposed.

That is why Aftercare housing is so vital. Through our transitional residential housing, we provide supported accommodation. Your generosity helps provide that critical safe space and lasting shelter. It is the protective layer someone needs to stay safe, maintain their recovery, and build an independent future.

For every Sandra who finds a home instead of returning to the streets, and for every family who feels that positive ripple effect, THANK YOU. We truly couldn't do it without you.



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Homeless & Drugs Services

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Email: supporter@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.