

Quaker Service Annual Report



2020-2021

Charity Registration Number: NIC 102457

Registered as a company Limited by Guarantee in Northern Ireland Number: NI063929

Contents

Set out in a rich magazine format, our 2020-21 report is designed to be full of stories and information from across the charity. An abridged version of our reporting can be found in our trustees report here: www.quakerservice.com

Please be assured that compliance with Covid 19 regulations and best practice was maintained throughout all activities presented.

Our Vision, Mission and Values

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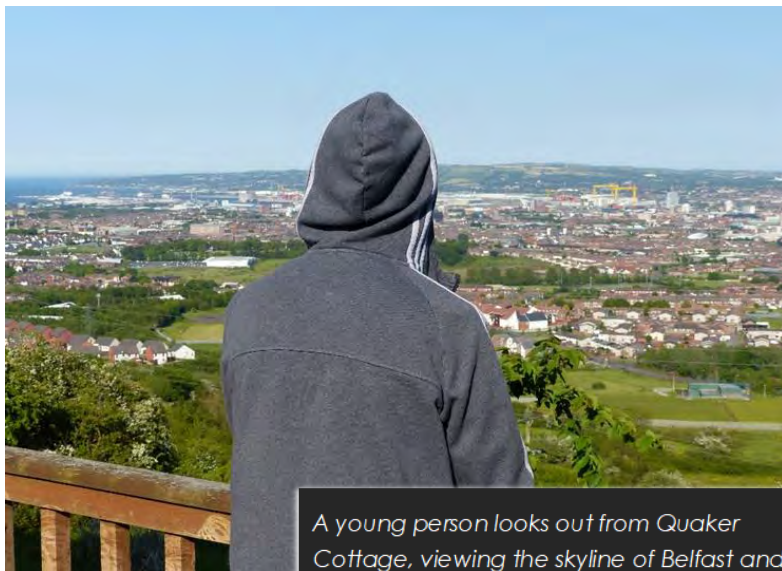
Treasurers Report and Financial Data

Governance and Structure

Our shared concern

Justice, fairness and opportunity are not experienced equally by everyone in our community.

'Are you ready to play your part in building the community we seek – one in which each individual is valued, their voice heard, their need addressed?'



A young person looks out from Quaker Cottage, viewing the skyline of Belfast and the peace walls of the sectarian interface below

Clerk of Britain Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) 2021

Our Purpose

To play our part in creating positive change in our community by supporting, working alongside and advocating for individuals and families in practical, purposeful and resourceful ways. Grounded in our Quaker values of equality, integrity, peace, reconciliation and sustainability, we invest in practical and relationship-based support to address the identified needs.

Our Charity Vision

Our founding Quaker ethos is embedded in our work and approach. Confident and outward looking, we seek as a charity to be purposeful, resourceful, innovative and dynamic in responding to need and to opportunity; collaborative in our relationships and committed to enabling positive change.

Our Values

Quakers have a tradition of putting faith into action and providing service to others. Quaker Service had its beginnings some fifty years ago in 1969 when Friends in Belfast took practical action to provide shelter at the Meeting House for families left homeless due to sectarian violence.

We believe that there is a divine spark in everyone and this leads us to value the worth and unique nature of each person. Our belief in **equality** inspires us to challenge those in power and to try to change systems that cause social injustice and hinder us from being caring communities. We aim to treat all people fairly and without judgement, respecting and accepting all, regardless of individual circumstances. We are true to the commitments we make and steadfast and compassionate in the support we provide. Clear sighted as to our purpose, we work quietly and with **integrity**.

As all human life is of equal worth, we seek to work creatively for **peace** and reconciliation, commit to change and give voice where we feel there is a need, finding creative ways of dealing with conflict by appealing to the capacity for understanding in ourselves and in others. We recognise the importance of human relationships for individuals, families and communities. Working in partnership with others to restore positive relationships can lead to change, develop support structures and bring about **reconciliation**.

As an organisation we seek to ensure that we are financially healthy, that we use our resources responsibly and that we work collaboratively to ensure the best outcomes for those we serve. Aware of our impact on the planet, we recognise our personal and collective role in promoting sustainability and of proactive environmental management.

Chairperson's Foreword

Elizabeth Dickson



For Quaker Service staff and volunteers, themselves of course not exempt from the risk and uncertainty Covid 19 has brought, this has been a year that has called on reserves of energy, resourcefulness and resilience. As detailed across the Annual Report, the priority has been to maintain our services and, when restrictions have closed off one avenue, another way has been found to keep up contact and support. It may well be that new approaches, such as the virtual visits across the prison service, will influence and improve practice in the future. However, the constant amidst upheaval has been the strength of the relationships staff build with those who use our services. As illustrated in the evaluation of Quaker Cottage, published in 2021, there is a trust that comes from that sense of being accepted and valued. In times of adversity its worth is proven.

Our new Chief Executive, Shane Whelehan, took up post in June 2020 and has coped admirably with a situation unimaginable at the time of his appointment to gain a grasp of the charity and to keep all the different aspects of our work moving forward. Our thanks go to him and to each of our staff and volunteers for all that they do.

At the start of the financial year there was understandable concern about funding. Government grants proved to be vital as we grappled with the implications of

periods of shutdown. There is gratitude also for the flexibility and understanding shown by our funders as services were adapted to changed circumstances. The generosity of Quaker Meetings and individual Friends was crucial and underlines the importance of Quaker Service as the charity of Friends. We learned this year details of the most generous bequest our late Friend Joan Huddleston had made to Quaker Service in her will. The use to which it will be put will be a fitting reflection of the interest, support and good will Joan always showed us.

The Management Board has legal and financial responsibility for all the activities of Quaker Service and the number of additional meetings held to address an ever-changing situation demonstrates the responsibilities Board members bear. During the year Christine McCartney and Roger Warnock stepped down from the Board. Their active contribution was greatly valued and it is hoped that each will return to the Board in the future.

Covid 19 has affected the lives of us all, but there can be no doubt that the impact of the pandemic has been felt disproportionately by the most disadvantaged in our community and has exposed the inequalities seemingly built into society here. Recent reports have highlighted the damage to physical and mental health caused by the lockdown and warned of the long-term consequences developmentally for children and young people. The work of Quaker Service is important and necessary.

David Bass

David's untimely death in March 2021 continues to be deeply felt.

David joined what was then the Ulster Quaker Service Committee in January 1991 and served as a Trustee for the next twenty-seven years. For fifteen of those years David was Chairperson, first of the Service Committee and later of the Quaker

Service Board. As Chair, David steered the course of the charity with a wisdom borne out of a lifetime's experience of community and voluntary involvement.

David was farsighted in his governance. On the Finance and Personnel Committee, he researched and developed an ethical investment policy for Quaker Service reserves long before such practice became more common. He developed the social enterprise arm of Quaker Service also, along with Vincent Bent overseeing the opening of the Quaker Care charity shop on the Lisburn Road in 1998. David remained on the Quaker Care Board until the summer of 2018, keenly interested in initiatives such as online sales.

David linked Quaker Service with the Quakers in Criminal Justice group and, from the 1990s, was active in promoting restorative practices. To complement the work carried out at the Visitors' Centre at Maghaberry, David was instrumental in establishing Quaker Connections, which began with plans for a pilot volunteer isolated prisoners befriending programme in 2007. The blow of the loss of the contract to operate the Visitors' Centre in 2015 was lessened by the knowledge that, through Quaker Connections, we had a strong base to continue and indeed expand our prison work.

As Chairperson of Quaker Service, David was unfailingly supportive of fellow Board members, staff and volunteers. Thoughtfulness, kindness and good humour characterised his approach. The interests of those who used our services were always at the forefront.

Quakers say 'let your life speak'. David's life spoke of his commitment to peace and social justice, his belief in the unique worth of each individual and his way of treating everyone with acceptance and respect. He embodied the essence of Quaker Service and for many facing difficult times he made a real and lasting difference.

Chief Executive's Report

Shane Whelehan



It has been a difficult year. The global pandemic of Covid19 has led to the loss of many lives, and still presents an unprecedented challenge to public health. The impact has been acutely felt by the most vulnerable in society, and by those for whom we serve. At the time we entered the new reporting year, we had paused some of our face-to-face services but embraced new systems to continue others. We witnessed the families we support struggle to comprehend the enormity of this change. In the early stages of the pandemic we regularly saw communities coming together to support each other and those in greatest need, and many people took time to reflect on more spiritual considerations. Whilst most of our prison programme moved quite simply online, there was considerable interruption to the both the Family Programme and Munteens at Quaker Cottage. Though our Societal Change programme was able to embrace digital working, our Charity shop on the Lisburn Road was forced to close for most of the year.

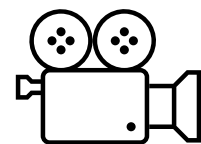
In June, I was fortunate to have the reins of management handed over to me from Janette McKnight and the Board, and I found the Charity in robust health. The Board were keen to concentrate on the sustainability of the Charity under such challenging times and the welfare of our families, volunteers and staff were to the fore coupled with ensuring that resources were made available to continue to service need. Our families who already were experiencing disproportionate inequalities and adverse circumstances were presented anew with social isolation, additional financial hardships and mounting mental health problems. The prison service had halted

visitation and a restricted social regime was necessitated in line with public health guidance. The response to these trials by our volunteers, staff, and Board at all times during this period has left me humbled. Engagement and support with our families and prisoners was sustained in new ways, and we often found consent to continue services when others could not. Our volunteer befrienders maintained contact with prisoners through emails, letters and video conferencing. Our families at Quaker Cottage were supported at their doorsteps, by phone and social media, and when each window of opportunity arose, we welcomed them back to Black Mountain. Our Youth programmes supported young people online, at their garden gates, and in many creative and resourceful ways. The drive and stamina of our staff over the past twelve months has been exceptional.

Whilst focussing on the crisis and ever-changing landscape during the year, the Board have been continuing to develop a new strategic review of the Charity, and ensuring our work effectively translates the testimony of Friends. As the Charity of Friends in Ireland, we were supported throughout the year and held in the thoughts of those from near and far. Friends and supporters rallied to the Charity in their altruism and benevolence. Our Treasurer reports positively on the years financial outturn on page 66 but this does not perhaps adequately account for the manner and swiftness in which Quaker Trusts and Foundations, government agencies and other charities and supporters united to assist services and focus on those in need.

Though we are yet to come through to the other side of this health crisis, we as a service remain focussed on making love visible and resolute on navigating the challenges which lie ahead. I am very grateful for the support and welcome I have received from our Board, staff, volunteers and f/Friends and I take great comfort in the knowledge that this team can face down any adversity. I would like to remember Paul Meyler, a long time committed volunteer and Gabby Connolly a young person who gave so much to our Societal Change programme, who both passed away during the year and we keep their families in our thoughts.

Quaker Cottage Family Programme



Play Video



The ubiquitous nature of the pandemic has meant that we have all been touched and affected by the impact of Coronavirus in some way – and, unfortunately for most of us, this has not been a positive experience. At Quaker Cottage not only have the families, the mothers and children that use our service, felt this negative impact - but it has also weighed heavily on our staff team and volunteer workers.

There can be a perception that carers and support workers are somehow impervious to these types of pressures, but this pandemic, and the subsequent lockdowns, have clearly shown that frontline workers not only need to look after the people they work with but that they themselves also need care and support to be able to continue their work.





‘We are fortunate at Quaker Cottage to have always created a nurturing and supportive group of staff and volunteer colleagues – people often say that our team are like a family’

We are fortunate at Quaker Cottage to have always created a nurturing and supportive group of staff and volunteer colleagues – people often say that our team are like a family - and it is this aspect of our staff dynamics that has helped us all to remain positive, effective, and supportive to both ourselves and our service users, throughout this, the most challenging period of our agency's history.

During the lockdowns our team – even those on furlough – maintained a positive rapport with each other through social media and regular Zoom® meetings. This enabled us to collectively come up with some very creative ways to help keep contact with, and show support to, the

families that we work with - even when our centre was forced to remain closed for long periods. Some of the ways that we did this were by recording children's favourite nursery rhymes, stories and songs and sharing these on the Cottage Facebook page. We received a lot of positive feedback from parents about how excited the children would become when they saw their crèche workers telling them stories on their phones and tablets.

Special thanks to Pam Wheeler-Civita for her dedicated daily reading of Roald Dahls tales which I believe were enjoyed by just as many adults as children. Besides our social media contact we also created a roster of phone calls to the 24 mothers that were currently registered on our programme. These calls were made at least weekly and for some of the women this was the only contact that they had outside of their own homes.



FROM ALL YOUR FRIENDS



QUAKER COTTAGE

#RAINBOWWINDOWS

Everyone found lockdowns difficult and depressing – but for those living with poor mental health, and in need of additional support, it was an especially difficult experience and our ‘check in’ phone calls became increasingly important to some of the most vulnerable in our society. We also made occasional doorstep visits – guidance permitting – which allowed us to acknowledge every child's birthday with a card and some small gifts. We also provided all the families with Easter gift packs – and we were also able to deliver regular care packs filled with a variety of art and craft materials and some small ‘sweets and treats’. All of these small connections helped maintain regular communication and helped our awareness of how the families were coping and adapting to the lockdown experience.

While all this was going on our staff team worked hard to create a new regime, with all the necessary risk assessments and modifications in place, to allow us to reopen our centre doors to host groups again.



With the support of Early Years Services, we reopened our doors in July and I believe that we were among the first agencies permitted to reopen their doors. Initially this was on a 3-day week and ‘children only’ basis but gradually, as restrictions eased, we were able to move to our full 5-day week with all 8 of our regular groups operating including the mothers' groups. These were difficult and challenging times to operate as our staff had to learn new ways to keep everyone safe in a C-17 environment.

We had to double up on bus runs as the number of passengers per bus was strictly limited. Everyone had to be temperature checked at their door before being allowed on our buses and, of course, mask wearing became compulsory – as did the numerous sanitising stations at doorways and throughout our buildings.

Children's groups had to be managed in small bubbles and could not be allowed to cross contaminate. The operation of the building had to modify extensively with signage explaining which doorways could be used by whom – and a 1-way system put in place. Like most of the world, we have now adapted and become largely accustomed to these changes – but initially, when most of the country was still under strict lockdown, it felt quite strange to be back at work and operating even if it was in a strictly modified way.

We continue to deliver our full programme but with an ever-watchful eye on government guidelines and the related restrictions which help to guide



our regular reviewing of our Risk Assessments which, in turn help to shape our management of daily activities in every aspect of our work. This has been a necessary but time-consuming addition to our daily work programme and we are very proud not to have any incidences of Covid within our centre or within our staff/volunteer group. However, a number of families that use our services have not been so fortunate and we continue to support them even when 1 or more family members have tested positive for Covid.

During the periods when face to face work was restricted, our volunteer and staff teams ensured each of the children on our programme received an Easter Egg and Easter Craft Pack, made and distributed 24 pamper packs of toiletries and chocolate treats to each of our mums and celebrated 41 birthdays with birthday packs delivered to the doors of our families

Staff also delivered 25 soup-making packs to our families accompanied by a step by step online tutorial. Have a go!

Feeding a family on less than a fiver? Why not give our super simple 'Quaker Soup' a try?



A comprehensive external Review of the services at Quaker Cottage was completed this year.

It can be accessed in full by clicking on this image:

The outcomes are that mothers and children gain many benefits from the Programme. The mothers who were interviewed identified positive changes in their lives, their children's lives, their relationships with their children and in their confidence and ability

to access help and services in the wider community. They participated in cross-community groups and gained continued contacts and friendships across different groups.

Feedback from the women and from professionals who refer to the service was entirely positive. Referrers see the Family Support Programme as a safe place with skilled workers, effectively meeting the needs of families and children at risk, and one with which families readily engage.

This useful and timely review of our Family Programme provided several helpful and practical recommendations that we will now begin to implement to ensure our programme remains as effective as it can be.

A very generous individual donation allowed us to complete some major renovations to our centre. These included replacing all of the wooden window frames and doors with uPVC ones, replacing all the wood trim around the roofline and replacing all the guttering and downspouts. We also received, and are very grateful for, several Covid related grants that have allowed us to replace a list of old or faulty items including our dishwasher, washing machine, tumble dryer, cooker and an iPad.

2021 Quaker Cottage Family Programme External Evaluation

In 2020, Quaker Service commissioned a comprehensive external review of the Family Programme at Quaker Cottage. Completed by Dr E McShane, the full report can be viewed and downloaded via the link to the right.

Further information about this, and other Quaker Service Programmes, can be found in our Annual Report (below), or by contacting info@quakerservice.com



What is the impact or difference made through our Family Programme?

Throughout this most challenging of years Family Centre contact with families continued by phone, text, and messaging platforms. During periods of closure at the centre or when the programme was operating on a “children only” basis, home visits continued with socially distanced face-to-face meetings with mothers which provided information and reassurance during ongoing restrictions. Daily and weekly contact was maintained with individual support at the forefront of provision. Families reported that these regular home visits and telephone contact were extremely important in combating isolation experienced due to lockdown.

Despite the restrictions imposed due to COVID-19 our staff were particularly resourceful and adapted well to new ways of working and continued to provide parenting advice, counselling and sign posting, as well as a significant number of food bank referrals. Our Family Worker and Centre Staff created and delivered pamper packs to all the parents containing toiletries and Easter gifts that had been generously donated to the work of Quaker Cottage Family Centre. Mums were astounded by these gestures and the feedback given echoed the impact of creating a sense of belonging and that families felt cared for and supported.



A new group of eight families started the rolling programme at the beginning of November and despite the disruption of COVID restrictions and temporary closures, they quickly formed a cohesive group who have already benefitted from the help and support they receive from Cottage Staff and volunteers.

These women also demonstrated a great level of trust in our staff and our work when after only a short time with us they allowed their children to continue to attend even when they themselves were prevented from doing so due to COVID restrictions. One participant recently commented on the “care, love, and support” that she and her family feel, while other group members highlighted the importance of coming to ‘Quakers’ as a way of combating the isolation they have experienced throughout successive periods of lockdown.



Many of the mums reiterated the importance of regular contact with ‘Quakers’ and the knowledge that someone is thinking of them and care about them. One woman said that a home visit was the highlight of her week as she sees no-one else apart from when our childcare staff collect her children for creche and afterschool sessions. This would be true for a lot of the women who attend the programme as they have little or no extended family support, or they experience mental health problems and social anxiety.

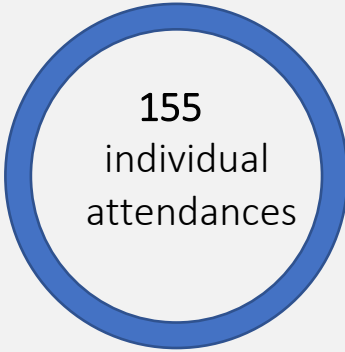
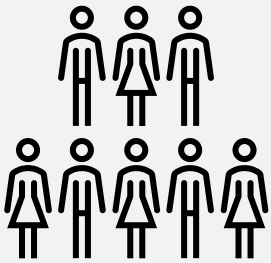
We see growth in self-esteem and self-worth in both mothers and children

The Family Programme offered by Quaker Service at Quaker Cottage makes a huge difference in the lives of the families that we support, as seen by the progression made throughout their time with us. This is evidenced by staff observations and the personal testimonies of group members.

We see growth in self-esteem and self-worth in both mothers and children, as well as the acquisition of new life skills which promotes greater self-confidence and ability in various aspects of daily living and future life opportunities.

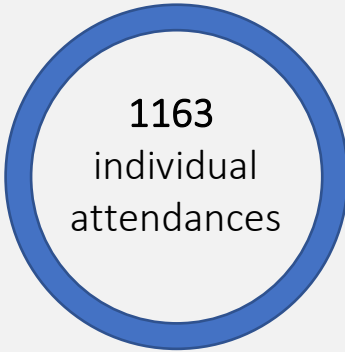
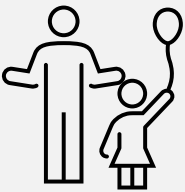
How much has been delivered?

Group Therapy



Creche and Play-Therapy

Creche and play therapy



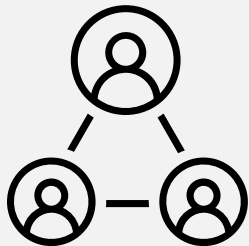
3359 Individual Support Sessions



355 Home Support Visits



16 specialised pro-social modelling sessions (parenting)



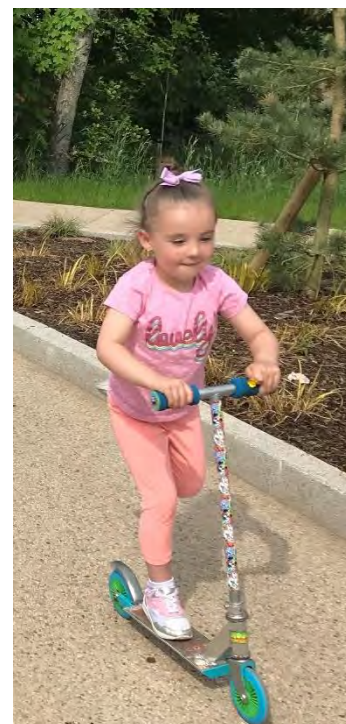
Quaker Cottage After-School Programme

Quaker Cottage never went away during 20/21. Our doors closed for 4 months but we continued virtually to make a difference to our children's lives during a time that will go down in history.

We cannot dwell on Coronavirus, we need to learn to live with it, the impact it has had and the impact it is continuing to have on our lives.

Mental health deteriorated faster than usual, abusive relationships could not be walked away from, Mums were struggling to meet children's basic needs, never mind home schooling.

Children with additional needs were not getting the extra support they desperately needed. For many of our children their self-confidence and self-worth deteriorated too.



School may not always be child's favourite place but for many it is the most consistent place in their lives. School provides routines, regular mealtimes, socializing opportunities, mental and physical stimulation a change of scenery and fresh air. Everything a child needs to positively grow and develop.

Quaker Cottage needed to stay alive.

Our creative childcare team got their thinking caps on and thank goodness for social media and electronic devices! We kept positive connections through stories, songs and games, all from familiar faces and voices. We communicated regularly to reassure our children and their families that they were not alone.

Each child whose birthday occurred during lockdown received a personalized birthday card and cake to their door, not by Royal Mail, but by one of their big friends from Quaker Cottage. This did not just have a positive impact that child, but a positive impact on the whole family. The Easter Bunny did not forget our children either; they received their Easter treats by socially distanced delivery. "Missing you" cards were posted through letter boxes in addition to colouring packs and treat bags were thoughtfully distributed.

We learned it is not what is delivered that is important, but who delivers it. It is not the song or story that is important, its who sings or reads it that makes a difference.

After being physically closed for 4 months, Quaker Cottage was able to open back up. Behind the scenes, risk assessments were being carried out, policies were being rewritten, playrooms were modified to suit new legislation, new posters were displayed, and sanitising stations were installed. Staff consultations and meetings were held to meet our personal concerns and anxieties.

"You do not have to make children into wonderful people. You just have to remind them that they are wonderful people".

These were the complicated steps, but the next step was the greatest: we got back to doing what we do best – changing lives by showing love to the families, playing with the children, and having fun with each of them. We knew we could do it, but we also knew it would be different.

We believe in our children, and they trust us; they feel secure in our care, on our buses and at Quaker Cottage. Some were anxious, cautious, or curious, but all of them were excited.

Our new procedures and routines fell into place. We cannot protect everyone from Covid-19, but our children and their Mums know we will try our best.



Now, there is a lot more outside play, we are ventilating our rooms well and providing extra space to ensure social distancing. All of these shifts do not change the mission of Quaker Cottage: to provide a life-changing opportunity to each child that ventures onto our bus, travels up the mountain, and embraces a unique experience at one of the most beautiful settings in Belfast.

The year-long programme at Quaker Cottage consists of 24 families at any one time, and our afterschool groups are made up of children from these families. No two families are alike, so some have 1 child, or 2 children, while others have 5 or 6 children. Depending on the number of children in each family, we occasionally have spaces available in our groups. Since we do not like to have empty seats on buses or half-empty playrooms at Quaker Cottage, we are able to bring back some children from past programmes.



Afterschool's at Quaker Cottage – a place to talk, to be listened too, to be quiet, to laugh, to relax, to have fun, to be believed in and to be loved for being you.

This could last between a few weeks and a couple of months. Doing this is a great opportunity to keep the relationships with our past families alive.

Recently, we were able to bring back 4 young people to our preteen group. We discussed how they felt when they found out they would be returning to Quakers, what they were most excited about seeing or doing here, what makes Quakers different from other groups they attend, and any special thoughts or memories they have.

On returning to Quakers, the children shared that they were so happy to be coming back! Others were delighted and could not believe it. One child said about the news, “My mum said Quakers phoned and asked me back, and my wee sister said, ‘When am I getting my phone call?’”

As for what they were excited about seeing or doing here at Quakers, most of them simply could not wait to see everyone (“like all yous”), the bus, and even just the place itself, and seeing if anything has changed.

Their memories from Quaker Cottage include the old big buses (they even remembered the names, “Rocky,” “Snowy,” and “Juno”), hiking up the mountain, sleepovers at Corrymeela, having treasure hunts on the beach, playing “Uno,” and going to parks during summer.

The difference between Quakers and other groups they attend is how easy it is for them to make friends here, and one even admitted they did not know why, it just is. One child also shared “you know I don’t have any other friends,” but making friends at Quakers is easier for them. Others said that Quakers is more fun than other places, and the children can do just about anything up here. For one child, just seeing the bus makes them remember everything about Quakers and how much fun they have here.



How much have we delivered?

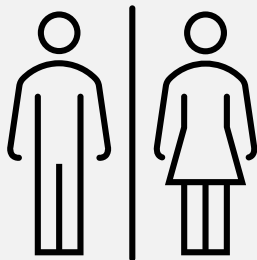
Term-Time Programme

58
full
Sessions

498
individual
attendances

90%
attendance
rate

47
Children
engaged
15 boys
32 girls



3 of whom were from
minority ethnic groups



Bags of
Christmas toys

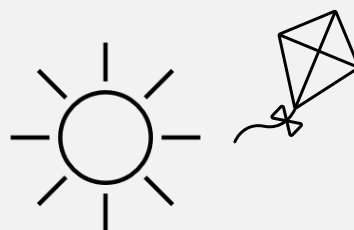
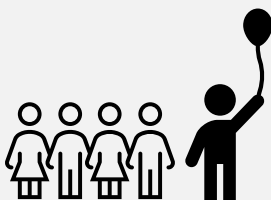
Summer Programme

15
programme
days

123
individual
attendances

98.4%
attendance
rate

31
individual
children



What is the impact or difference made through our afterschool programme?

In their own words, this is what some of our children had to say about their time with us.



"I get so scared going up the mountain in the bus, I think we're going to roll back. But I don't care I still want to come."

"Is it just me or does everyone love Quaker sandwiches?"

"It's good you can be honest up here."

"I like being around this joint [Quakers]. It's a good joint."

"When I seen my picture on the wall, it made me too happy."

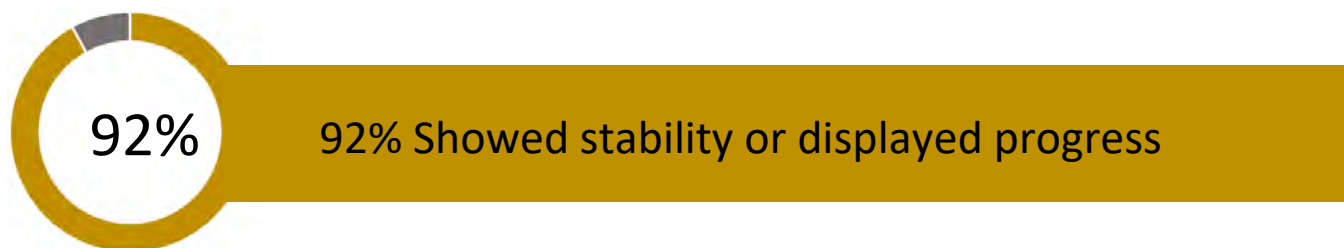
Every year we carry out staff evaluations for each child attending our afterschool groups. The evaluations take place when the children first start their year, halfway through, and just as they finish. In a typical year, we evaluate five areas associated with a child's development. These evaluations give the childcare team a chance to look at our children as individuals within the group and analyse the best way to help them in areas where they may be struggling. We can then see the difference made, how it was made, or why we think it happened.

Due to Covid-19, some children were unable to consistently attend groups, while others were here a little longer than usual as new groups were unable to start. As a result, we observed and evaluated three areas which we felt were the most relevant to our current situation. The first evaluations were carried out when children began (before Covid-19) and the second were carried out one year later.

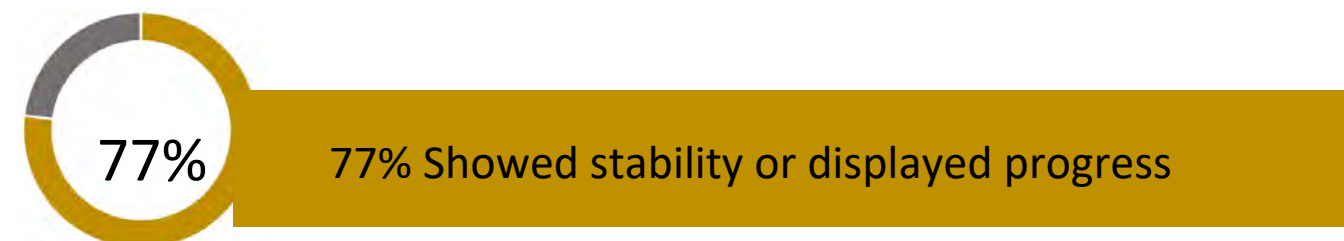
As a team, we recognised (through conversations and placing in groups) that Covid-19 had more of a negative impact on our older children.

The three topics we evaluated this year were:

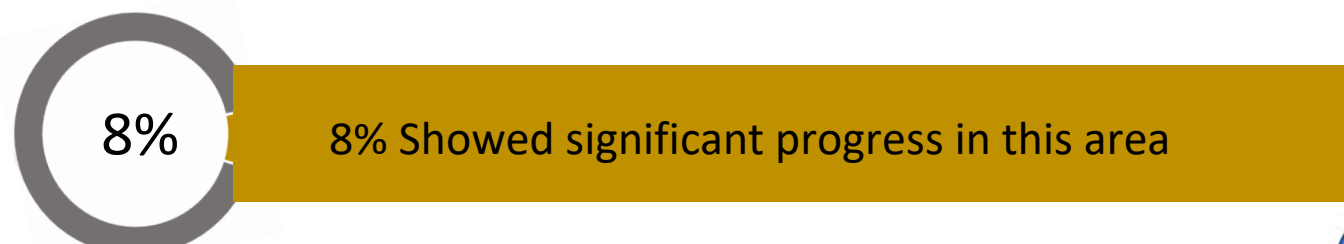
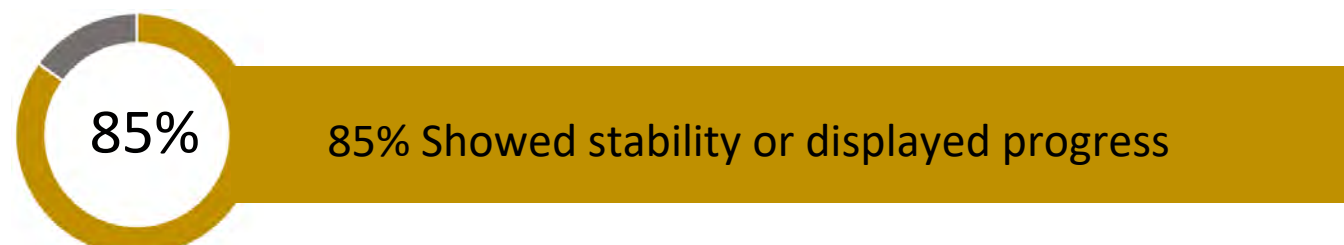
How does child deal with communicating in a group?



How does child manage change/challenging situations?



Child's willingness to engage freely in play/activities.



Teenage Programme at Quaker Cottage

Over the course of this very difficult and testing year we have been flexible in our practice to ensure positive outcomes continued to be delivered across the Mouteens Project.

Project delivery has included:



- One to one/ mentoring
- Remote & online support
- Referral to outside organisations
- Distribution of support packages
- Year-long Mouteen Core programme (combination of face to face & online)
- Shorter term programme (group, face to face & individual support)

This year has presented many challenges for both the project delivery and how support has been provided. Staff reacted to the evolving pandemic in the most productive and practical way allowed, priority overall was understanding and following guidelines, making the Mouteen building space safe and ensuring appropriate risk assessments were up to date. The changing nature of the pandemic and associated restrictions was another challenge, however by forward planning we have been able to work safely around many of restrictions and found that young people continued to engage with staff in some form. Our young people

have been extremely patient and understanding of the difficulties the programme has faced, and at every opportunity have kept staff informed and took part in group-work whenever possible.

Staff used every opportunity for face-to-face and group activities before restrictions were tightened, working with individuals, in smaller groups and co-ordinating larger group activities outside when able to.

Staff used every opportunity to inform and educate young people about Covid, answering any questions and alleviating the anxieties of young people and their families.



Partnership work is always a core element to the support Mounteens provides; this has continued over the year in response to the specific needs faced by young people & their families during the pandemic. We have maintained connections with excellent community organisations including NI Alternatives, Community Family Support Programme, Journey Free, Integrated Services for Children & Youth People, Ground Works NI, Another World Belfast, North/West Belfast Partnership, Include Youth and many others.

Being unable to start any new full groups, we focused our work on supporting those still on the programme. By Nov 2020 we were able to start a small young men's group, however they had only been together for 6 weeks when another lockdown came into force. As a result, we were unable to record any significant changes, coming together and introducing them to group work gave the opportunity to begin developing basic group work skills such as speaking, listening and working as a team.

How well are we delivering the Munteens Programme?



As a team we undertake pre and post programme evaluation surveys and individual self-assessments to measure changes in attitudes, behaviour, skills and knowledge over the course of year with group. Using these processes allows young people to set small achievable goals and celebrate successes and see how far they have come over the course of engagement.

Munteens continues to use an OBA framework based on the 3 core outcomes for the programme:

1. Increased self-worth
2. Improved life skills
3. Enhanced respect for others

Through this framework we are able to see the difference made for young people, and coupled with observations and quotes from the young people themselves we can build a reliable picture of the outcomes being met for each individual young person within the programme.

Group feedback and informal programme evaluation is undertaken to look at what worked well, what could be improved and how we can collectively provide the best project to suit their needs.

All groups are provided with space to have their say. As a needs-led project it is vital that we provide opportunities for service users to input to the design and evaluation of the programmes we deliver.



Each programme has an evaluation stage through informal discussions and activities such as 'Feel, Think, Do' giving young people the tools to express their view point on how well how the programme has delivered for them.

- Staff meet regularly to discuss their shared Observations and team feedback on group formation and individual case studies. Often staff notice and hear different things and being able to continually reflect on our practice and assess how the group is forming, note issues that may be arising, and discuss key areas of development (as set out in the programme outcomes) and the difference being made for each young person allows us to adapt approaches and celebrate changes with those on our programme.

Case study

Young Person M (aged 16)

Initially engagement was sporadic, attending group sometimes and at other times not coming home from school or going out with friends instead of being at home for pick up. Working directly with family who informed staff of bunking off school, suspensions, inappropriate use of social media and conflict this was causing within the home.



(M) was often grounded, however her family felt group was a positive & safe place for her to be. Staff used the bus run as an opportunity to speak directly. They talked about fighting with peers, involvement in arranged fights and disruptive behaviour in school. M stated she hated teachers and school was stupid so she just didn't see the point in going.

M disclosed that risk taking and drinking were causing fights with mum and dad, stating that mum wasn't even her real mum and didn't care about using this to her advantage. M was regularly getting brought home by police for underage drinking or walking home late at night, drunk. Staff used conversations to create resources and have positive discussions around personal safety and consequences, dangers of alcohol, positive friendships and support available.

M often used sectarian & racist language and spoke about her enjoyment fighting with 'ones from the other side'. This happened to the extent that staff

observed others in the group distancing themselves from her. Through one-to-one interventions and group discussions around issues that very much factored in this young person's life, a shift in attitude began to occur. When lock down caused schools to close, this young person would express missing routine and seeing friends. Staff used this as an opportunity to engage in healthy discussion regarding school attendance and opportunities for the future.

Over time attendance began to improve. Gradually she became more aware how her behaviour and attitude had impacted others in the group and made conscious effort to improve friendships. She began distancing herself from others in the community who she felt were having a 'bad influence' and started to report back to staff on how she was ensuring she stayed safe when out, for example not leaving friends and going off on her own. Family reported to staff that they observed an improvement in the household and conflict had reduced.

Schools returning had a massive impact for this young person, stating she wanted to get her GCSE and that her plan was to study engineering. Staff actively encouraged and praised changes to attitude and behaviour.

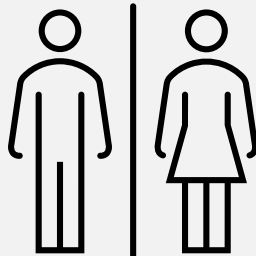
Young person (M) now attends school and group consistently, has reduced alcohol intake, responds positively to parents and takes responsibility for behaviour.

Her attitude towards the police has significantly changed. During a period when they experienced online grooming, M informed her parents immediately and is now actively helping police with enquires.

How much have we delivered?

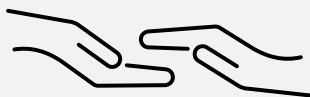
27

Teenagers
within the
programme



10 males
17 females

52% to 48% Catholic /
Protestant split across group



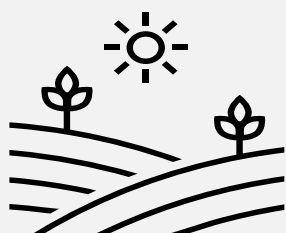
156

1:1 online support
sessions delivered



88

Group sessions
delivered



51 Teenagers
engaged in
outside group
activities



106

Self-Care and gift
packs were made and
delivered



17 Emergency food hampers were provided

46 Lock-down survival (wellbeing) packs were made and distributed

33 Referrals were made for food support

Societal Change Project



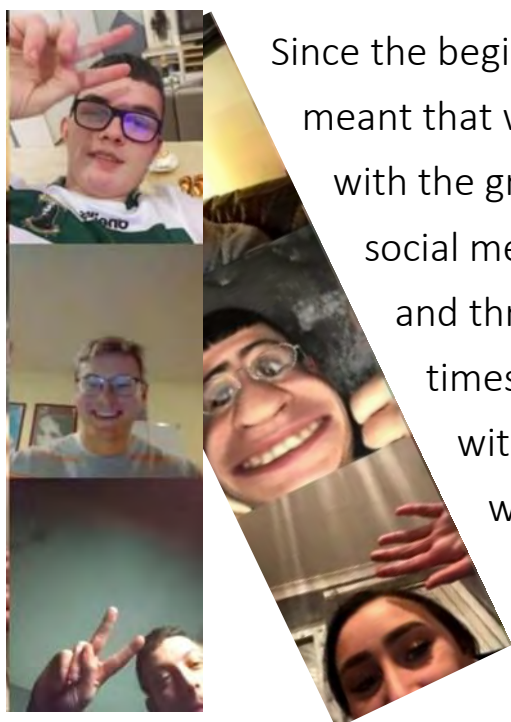
On the 23rd of March 2020 Northern Ireland entered lock-down for the first time in an attempt to control the coronavirus.

This halted MyStoryYourStory during a particularly busy and successful period of momentum and campaign activity. From March to December 2020 we then had to furlough one of our two staff members as the scope for group-work and outreach sessions was limited.

With one staff member working they were providing remote support to our core group of young people. We realise that campaigning at this time was not the absolute priority, given that our young people are reporting deteriorating mental health and deep anxiety issues. Our focus shifted towards working one-on-one with the group and getting them to focus on looking after their own mental health by checking in with them via Facebook Messenger and phone calls.

The number of lockdowns has been extremely difficult for the young people. Many found self-isolating extremely difficult. Most have experienced trauma in the past and the experience of lockdown proved to be emotionally intense for both them individually and within their families. The focus of the project was placed on looking after the mental wellbeing of the group.

Gabby Connelly's sudden passing on the 10th of July left us all within the group extremely shocked and saddened. We were grateful for the additional funding from JRTF to help us source an independent counsellor who has been able to support some of the young people as well as a mother of a young person. When organising counselling for a young person we became aware that she did not have a mobile phone and she had to borrow her mum's phone for the session. We are delighted that we have been able to use funds from the budget and provide her with a mobile device.



Since the beginning of lockdown, the restrictions introduced have meant that we have had to rethink our engagement techniques with the group. We moved to online organising, utilising our social media platforms, and hosting meetings via Zoom calls and through Facebook messenger. This approach has at times been successful, while also proved difficult for some within MyStoryYourStory. At the start their participation was good however, as the weeks, turned into months their engagement has been sporadic.

The stopping and starting of face-to-face engagement and outreach has made it difficult to fully reach the potential of the project. The young people really benefit from face-to-face interaction and gain much needed support from others within the group.

The challenges last year presented has meant some of the young people have decided to take a step back, which has always been understood and supported. We have been successful dealing with this, as care and concern of the young people is at the centre of the work we do. The young people know that the door will always be open to them.

Within the MyStoryYourStory project we worked with mainly 10 young adults who were all experts by experience. We used storytelling to help empower the individuals to use their own story for personal and societal development. Often session plans focusing on further developing the campaigns initiatives were put on hold while time was spent supporting group members. This has been a constant challenge within the project and was expected when the campaign is a youth led mental health campaign with those with lived experience.

Many of the young adults benefited from regular support and check ins. For some the group was a vital support mechanism and indeed many benefited from the support received by their peers from within the group. This was challenging when

“When I was coming towards telling my story, I would say I was sort of shaking a bit in my confidence, but then getting to tell my story and getting used to telling it actually made me more comfortable and confident in helping other young people overcome theirs- because it was like a sort of therapy for me - realising what was going on”.

planning and delivering outreach sessions. We only had a handful of young people who were either up for it or felt comfortable presenting.

The MyStoryYourStory mental health campaign came to an end with a celebration event at Quaker Cottage on the 28th May.



We were delighted that despite the ongoing challenges of Covid, 6 out of the 15 young people and one of the mums involved were able to attend the event.

The event also was an opportunity for the staff at Quaker Cottage and young people to thank Finn Stoneman for his work with Quaker Service, with the 'MyStoryYourStory' campaign and for us to recognise all the work which has gone into the project.

A young person described the end of the project as 'bittersweet', in that the group has achieved many of the original campaign goals.

EXCLUSIVE THE COMEBACK STORY OF MENTAL HEALTH ADVOCATE GERARD

I was fed up with life and I jumped off a bridge... but I live now to inspire others

Outreach volunteer sets his sights on youth work after overcoming his own demons

Gerard, 27, was once a young man who was fed up with life and jumped off a bridge. But now he is a mental health advocate and outreach volunteer, inspiring others to overcome their own struggles.

Gerard's story is a testament to the power of resilience and the importance of seeking help. He has overcome a difficult past and is now using his experiences to help others who are struggling with mental health issues.

Gerard's journey began in a dark place. He was struggling with mental health issues and felt that life was not worth living. In a moment of despair, he jumped off a bridge. However, he was rescued and received the help he needed to get back on his feet.

Gerard's story is a powerful reminder that no matter how dark the night, there is always a way forward. He has shown that it is possible to overcome even the most difficult of challenges and to find a new purpose in life.

Gerard is now an outreach volunteer, helping young people who are struggling with mental health issues. He shares his own experiences and offers support and advice to those who need it. He is a role model for many young people and is helping to reduce the stigma surrounding mental health issues.

Gerard's story is a testament to the power of resilience and the importance of seeking help. He has overcome a difficult past and is now using his experiences to help others who are struggling with mental health issues.

Many of the young activists have become inspiring Mental Health Champions, Role Models and Change Makers.

There have been several successes over the years. To name a few;

Back in 2018 we started lobbying for a Mental Health Champion and welcomed the appointment of Siobhan O’Neil as the interim Mental Health Champion in June 2020. ✓

We also lobbied for Mental Health to be included in the Education and Training Inspectorate (ETI) report and were delighted in July 2020 when the Education Minister Peter Weir wrote to us to state that Mental Health has since been included within the report. ✓

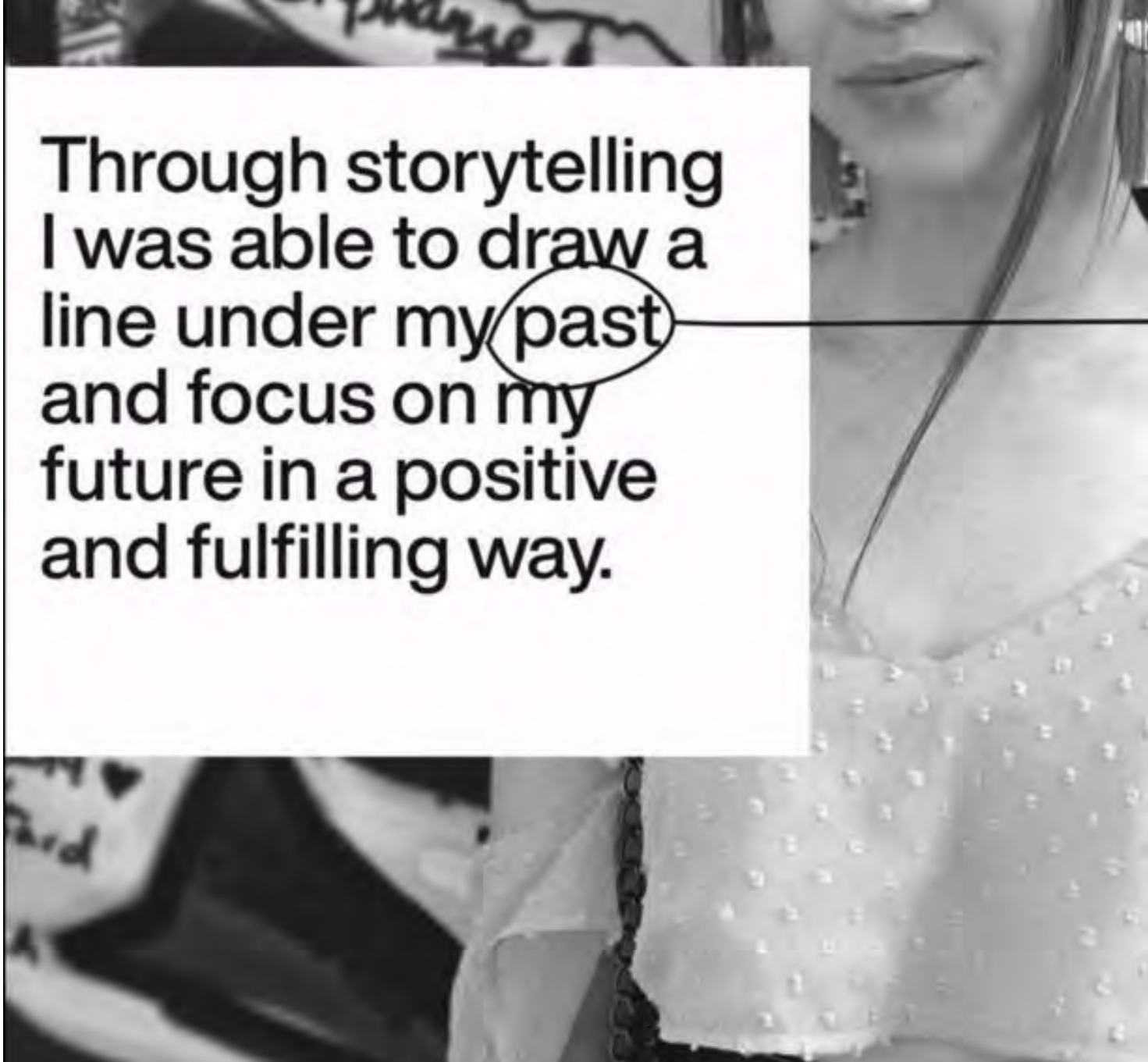
The group also wanted more support within schools for those suffering with their Mental Health and were delighted that the new Children and Young People’s Emotional Health and Wellbeing in Education Framework was launched in February 2021. This is bringing an investment of £6.5million annually which will be provided to support Mental Health and Wellbeing within the Education Sector. ✓

One of our campaign objectives was to provide a platform for young people’s stories to be heard. In Sept 2020, we launched a storytelling toolkit and website titled, ‘Past Present Future Change’ - The power of storytelling for social change within a post conflict society detailed later in this report. ✓



We are by no means taking full or even significant credit for the aforementioned changes. We recognise - just as it takes a village to raise a child it takes a village to bring about SOCIETAL CHANGE.

As the campaign closed, our team worked with the young people to create a support plan for them going forward. 6 of the young people signed up for a course with Youth Action which will give them a qualification in youth work. The young people who have been involved will be offered support and opportunities in the year ahead.



**Through storytelling
I was able to draw a
line under my past
and focus on my
future in a positive
and fulfilling way.**

Partnership work

Collaboration was central to our programme. In the past year we primarily collaborated with PPR, Bytes Project, Uplift, Peace First, SCI and the North West Regional College (NWRC) to great success in each of these combined projects. These partnerships served to marry our skills and articulate young people, with the resources and skills of other organisations.

More recently we worked in partnership with the North West Regional College. During an outreach visit on the 1st Oct 2020, Aidan and Gerard presented the 'PPFC' toolkit and shared their own personal stories while also promoting positive mental health strategies.



Following the session, the media students created a film for Gerard's story titled 'Stigma'. We were able to further develop our partnership with the NWRC as they conducted three interviews remotely and using various material collected throughout the course of the campaign have been successful in completing a short film, titled 'Recovery', which highlights the importance of storytelling as a method of recovery and developing resilience.

We have also worked alongside PPR and supporting their 123GP campaign, which is calling on the Minister for Health, Robin Swann, to ensure that all GP practices are equipped to provide timely access to counselling to all those in need. An interactive map launched on the 15th February enables the user to view what GP practises are providing counselling services and through a few clicks a letter can be sent to a local MLA to address this issue. We have been able to assist the 123GP Campaign through media coverage and by brokering the support of Christopher Hazzard, South Down MP.

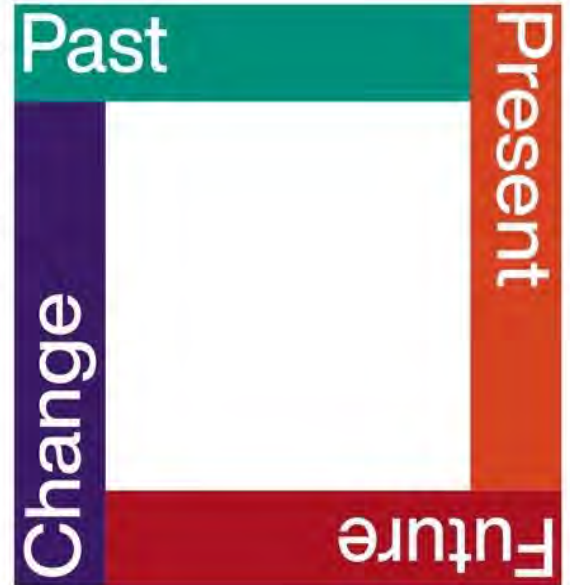
COVID 19:

We realised that campaigning at this time was not the absolute priority, given that our young people were reporting deteriorating mental health and deep anxiety issues. Our focus shifted towards working one-on-one with the group and getting them to focus on looking after their own mental health by checking in with them via Facebook Messenger and phone calls.

Lock-down periods when face to face work was restricted were spent working on the website version of 'Past Present Future Change'

This toolkit is for activists, youth workers and teachers to enable them to share the power of storytelling amongst young people and in turn empower them to participate and share their story for personal development and societal change.

Learn the tools and tactics needed to collect and use personal stories to effect change within the following four stages:



During this time, it was hoped we would have been able to create new online content, like videos for the page promoting positive mental health. Unfortunately, with the difficulties that our young people were facing, this was a challenge. There was only a few who felt comfortable doing this, therefore we were restricted on the videos we could share. This was recognised at the time and efforts were made to include the voices of others from within the group.

Change Happens When....

The third national lockdown, restrictions and the personal challenges our young people had been facing meant their engagement within the MyStoryYourStory project became sporadic.

We decided to think outside the box and in January 2021 we created a series of new initiatives. One of them, 'Change Happens When', was an opportunity for

group members to identify and conduct a zoom interview with a movement, role model or change maker who have also been campaigning for improved mental health services. The young activists were encouraged to think of their own questions and received supported in preparing for the interview.

The themes of the interviews were hope, change and issues young people face in North and West Belfast. Young people were supported to take the lead, identify, reach out and conduct the interview over zoom. The recordings were then edited and sharing in bite size chunks across our social media platforms.

Four young people participated in this project and completed interviews with the following individuals:

- Sorcha Eastwood – Alliance Councillor Lagan Valley
- Clare Bailey – Leader of the Green Party Northern Ireland
- Lindsay Robinson – Maternal & Parental mental health Movement – Have You Seen That Girl.
- Paul McCusker – The deputy Lord Mayor, SDLP – Councillor – Oldpark
- Philip McTaggart – Mental Health Activist
- Dr Michael Pierce – Senior Lecture Queens University Lecture, School of Arts, English and Languages.

Sorcha Eastwood stated, *‘Very open and honest interview with me and @mystoryni on mental health and if A&Es are best place for young people in mental health crisis – I will be including this in my submission to the mental health strategy. Fair play to the young people for organising these interviews.’*

Launch of Past Present Future Change toolkit and

<https://www.pastpresentfuturechange.com/>



The on-line launch of the PPFChange toolkit was attended by 118 people. During the webinar we heard lots of great insights from our guest speakers including, Paddy Heathwood a young activist from Quaker Service, Cristina Jimenez from United We Dream and Koulla Yiasouma, the NI Commissioner for Children.

We have since followed up with everyone who registered with an email including a full recording and some highlights of the event. Much positive feedback was received from people from as far away as South Africa and America who have stated they plan to use the toolkit within their work. *'Thank you - am definitely going to use it for my second round of creative writing workshops in October and will share with other development workers. After this last round, I still need to reflect on what could have been improved in the process. Thank you for the valuable resource. Warm greetings'* - Zaide Harneker'

We aim to promote the toolkit far and wide to get it embedded within various centres. Following the launch, we have made many connections and delivered two outreach sessions with two groups; one with PPR's Build Homes Now group in North Belfast, while the second session was in Derry within the Northwest Regional College and their media students. We are excited with the connection made in Derry and we have plans to link up and get the young people from both centres to share skills with one another. A podcast and video were produced while at the college.

Another new initiative was launched and delivered during January and February: Was called 'Across the Airwaves' seeing a last push to share the stories and voices of our young leaders

Aidan wanted the opportunity to share his story and did an amazing job speaking about his experience of being in A&E for a mental health crisis, and its inappropriateness for those in mental distress.

Aidan had the opportunity to share his story with the BBC. Following a number of calls with the journalist, we met with Aidan twice prior to the interview and chatted with his mum. Aidan wanted the opportunity to share his story and did an amazing job speaking about his experience of being in A&E for a mental health crisis, and its inappropriateness for those in mental distress. He successfully elevated the importance of this issue, speaking as an individual on behalf of a collective experience and a voice for young people in north Belfast. 18th January – BBC Interview – Aidan sharing his story with the BBC, website, TV and radio.

Listen Here: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/news/av/uk-northern-ireland-55676540>

Gerard's Story

Story covered in the Sunday Life 7th February 2021 – with Laura Barr

“I couldn't walk at the start and the head injury has left me with a big scar. I couldn't leave the hospital until the mental health team approved that it was safe to do so, and I was under a suicide prevention team as well as suicide watch”.

Gerard Mullan remembers being woken by a man minutes after he had jumped off Arthur Bridge in Newtownabbey, falling 30 feet onto the hard shoulder last January.

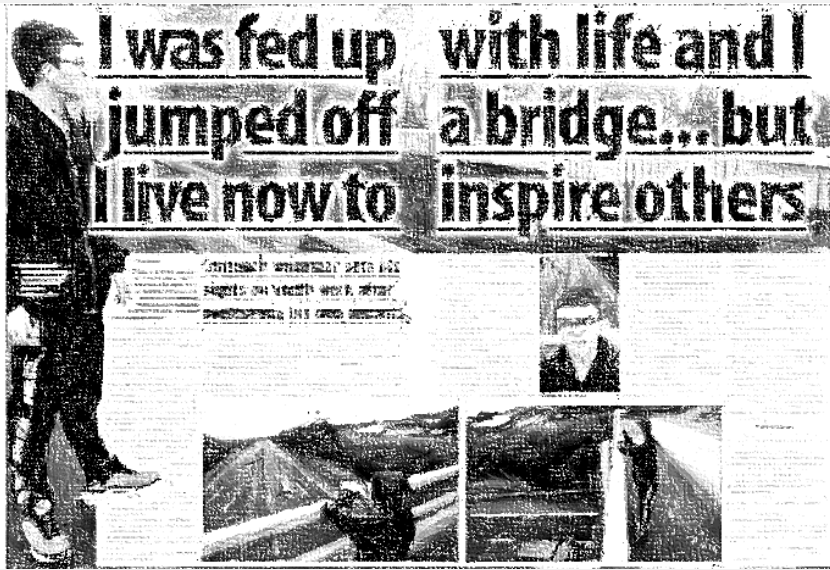
The then 16-year-old from the Whitewell area of north Belfast had been suffering from ongoing depression and mental health issues. He had spent the day drinking and taking drugs to escape from his pain and spiralling descent into hopelessness.

Despite having overcome so much in the last year, Gerard states that it is only recently that he has started to remember the events of that day.

Gerard explained. *Thinking back to that day leading up to it, I remember just feeling so fed up with life. I was drinking a lot and was blinded by so much emotion and I remember thinking I just don't want to do this anymore. I went out drinking with my friends as well as taking drugs and I think that made everything seem 10 times worse.*

Gerard said he recalls fighting with some of his friends and then telling them he was going home. He walked himself to Arthur Bridge, climbed up and jumped over.

When I woke up, I didn't know where I was," he said. "I remember a man leaning over me and I didn't feel any pain even though I had suffered a head injury, fractured my pelvis and badly damaged my kneecaps and heels.



He was transferred to the Royal Victoria Hospital where he spent some time recovering and was allowed to continue his rehabilitation at home once a mental health package was put in place.

I couldn't walk at the start and the head injury has left me with a

big scar," he added. "I couldn't leave the hospital until the mental health team approved that it was safe to do so, and I was under a suicide prevention team as well as suicide watch.

I can remember one of my old counsellors from Beachcroft, where I had been having counselling sessions, came and visited me and they were really upset." Gerard said he has found it especially hard to cope with the aftermath of it knowing the pain he could have caused to his mum, family and friends.

My mummy was devastated; she was obviously relieved that I was alive, but I don't think she'll ever come to terms with what happened. "With my friends too, it's sometimes really hard because when you survive after doing that you have to come home and face everyone.

All the people in your life are so worried about you but it kind of feels a bit intense sometimes; like you can't go anywhere or do anything because people are worried you might try it again.

Obviously, it's because everyone cares about you and to think of the pain I would have caused had I died that night; well, I can't even begin to process that.

I was so close to what could have been the worst thing and now I'm in the best place I could ever be and that's the outlook I have now. I hope to be a youth worker in a school setting or a leader at Quaker Service

Shortly after he returned home from hospital, Gerard joined the Quaker Teen Project who he said he owes his life too. He has been fully involved in this project which gives young people a platform to share their stories and raise awareness of mental health issues with the hope of making a change.

He is now a mental health outreach volunteer supporting the Quaker Teen Project, and delivering talks to young people about good mental health and how to address bad mental health.

It is all about giving people advice and linking into personal experiences. While I am still exploring my own mental health, I can now tell my story of what happened and of how I recovered and how I ended up where I am today. I am very grateful that I can now share my experiences with other people.

Gerard is very passionate about raising awareness on the fact that north Belfast has the highest suicide rates across the whole of the UK and Europe.

We need better mental health services here in Northern Ireland and what we need in our communities is a centre where people can go to if they're feeling down and you need to just sit and have a cup of tea and have a chat. There should be a counsellor on stand-by too for anyone who needs that service. The outreach work

has been hard to deliver with the lockdowns but even before Covid-19 kicked in, youth clubs were closing due to lack of financial support and funding was being stripped away from community initiatives.

Gerard has adapted his outreach work to his social media pages including Facebook and TikTok where he posts daily videos with some informal inspirational talks. He is currently undertaking a mechanic course at his local technical college and understands the problems students are facing with remote learning.

The fact that so many students are doing learning remotely I think will have an impact on their mental health. Some children need that routine, especially if they have additional learning needs and that's why I try and get online as much as I can and upload videos daily because there are young people suffering through this. Being in your house most of the day could bring thoughts on people that they've never had before. Looking forward to a much brighter future, Gerard intends to pursue his passion for helping others and will be commencing a level one and two leadership OCN (Open College Network) in youth work.

He hopes to continue this with studying at university in a youth work and mental healthcare degree.

I hope to be a youth worker in a school setting or a leader at Quaker's Service. I look at where I am now and try to look at the positive side of things. I was so close to what could have been the worst thing and now I'm in the best place I could ever be and that's the outlook I have now. Anything negative that comes into my head I turn it into a positive now and I live to inspire others.

Laura Barr. Sunday Life 7th February 2021

More case studies can be found here:



Taking the first step of sharing their own personal story within the group often leads to the young people developing the confidence to go on and share parts of their story or deliver our positive mental health sessions in front of groups.

This is what some of our young people had to say about their experience in the programme:

“I loved getting my own story out. Before that story I wouldn’t have been able to talk about what was in it. Now I am able to talk about it openly and not feel pressured or under time pressure talking about it, not being able to share enough about it and now I am able to talk more openly about it”.

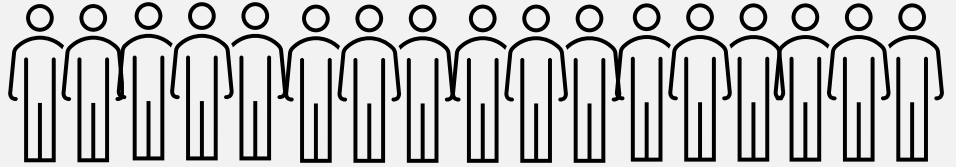
“My confidence has increased a lot being a part of the project, its helped me a lot. When I joined at the start I wouldn’t have had the balls to speak to anyone face-to-face about my story or anything like that there and now I feel like I can do it freely. It has pushed me forward with my confidence to think that I could go do it with youth work or whatever in the future”.

“when I was coming towards MyStoryYourStory I would say, I was sort of shaking a bit my confidence, but then getting to tell my story and getting used to telling it actually made me more comfortable and confident in helping other young people overcome theirs because it was like a sort of therapy for me realising what was going on”.

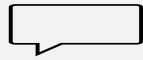
How much have we delivered?

Societal Change

17 young people engaged each month on average



8,318 text messages across the peer group



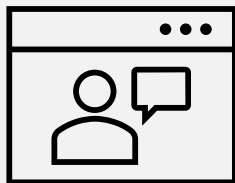
27 Outreach sessions delivered



67 Home visits during Covid 19



215 Support calls to project participants



5 MyStoryYourStory videos were produced and published
11 Vlogs recorded, produced, and published
2 podcasts produced and published

Quaker Connections Programme

E is 82 years old with various physical health challenges. He is due to be released from prison in 2 years' time after serving 10 years of a sentence. Due to the nature of his offences, he has no family support. He is terrified about what the future holds for him.

The Quaker Connections Programme continues to evolve and grow in response to emerging needs and opportunities across prisons in NI. The various streams of work include our Burren House Project, Braid House Hobby Group, Supporting Prisoners at Risk Project (SPAR) and our Befriending programme.

In 2020/21, the Quaker Connections word of the year is *resilience!*

It's been a challenging time for everyone, but for people in prison the challenges have been greater. The Northern Ireland Prison Service responded quickly and effectively to implement a plan to minimise the risk of the virus getting into the prison and to keep the people in their care safe. From the beginning of the pandemic NIPS were adamant that unlike many prisons in the UK they would not implement a full lock down with people locked in their cells for 23 hours a day.

The pandemic impacted on all aspects of prison life, with much of the many day to day activities completely halted for periods of time. The prison ensured that the individual landings isolated together to ensure that they could remain open and the residents could socialise with each other. New committals to the prison had to isolate for 14 days before entering general population, and whilst this is undoubtedly very tough for the individuals involved, it has ensured that there has been no outbreak on the landings. In fact, there have been single number incidents of covid in the prison, all of which came through the committal process and were dealt with and treated before it spread.

Within a couple of weeks of the first lockdown the prison service had introduced zoom visits and as restrictions ease zoom visits will remain part of the prison system. Zoom visits have been a huge success – many of the men get to see inside their family homes for the first time in a long time and see family pets and other family members that they wouldn't be able to see on a face-to-face visit.

Despite the challenges that the pandemic has brought to people in prison, they have remained resilient, positive and grateful to NIPS for how they've managed the pandemic with as little disruption as possible.

For most of 2020/21 external organisations have not been allowed into the prison, however zoom allowed a limit number of education classes to continue and allowed Quaker Service and our voluntary and community sector colleagues to continue our work.

Befriending

As we no longer have a physical presence in any of the prisons, this has impacted the number of referrals we receive for our befriending programme, although we have received a number over the last year. Zoom visits have been extremely positive for all concerned! Our volunteers no longer have to go through the rigorous searches before visits and can log in quickly and conveniently from home, although all are looking forward to combining zoom visits with face to face visits in due course. To facilitate the number of zoom visits across the prison estate visits now last 20 minutes – however this is plenty of time to discuss and analyse the one topic of conversation this year – the pandemic!

739 Befriending visits on Zoom

108 Engagements via *Email a Prisoner*

SPAR project

At the beginning of the pandemic our SPAR team made themselves available 7 days per week in anticipation of increased mental health issues. However there has been a huge reduction in the number of people placed on SPAR in Maghaberry.

For the first time, because of Zoom, we have been able to introduce SPAR at Magilligan. We have developed a great relationship with the Safety and Support Team and the SPAR team have developed a very effective support system. On receipt of a referral, the SPAR team develop a rota to check in with the man for a visit once a day over the course of his SPAR (usually 7-14 days). We look forward to being able to continue this service after the pandemic restrictions are lifted.

36 SPAR interventions

Circles of Support and Accountability

On release from long term sentences, social isolation can be a trigger for reoffending. The Circles of Support and Accountability project is a volunteer-led supportive community to help offenders reintegrate responsibly into the community, address their harmful behaviour, adopt a positive way of living, and ultimately reduce offending.

The Burren House Projects sees a team or circle of 4-5 volunteers meet regularly with the 'core member' or befriender over a year, building a supportive relationship to assist them in developing skills and providing practical assistance to build a positive future where the individual is accountable and takes responsibility for their behaviours.

Participants will be at Phase 2 (or progressing towards Phase 2) this means that they are beginning the process of integrating back into the community as their sentence nears completion. There are many challenges ahead for the individuals,

such as navigating the modern world, learning to live more independently and learning positive responses to learned behaviour.

This year, our Circles member successfully appeared before the Parole Board and was granted parole. The Parole panel, Probation and NIPS agreed that it was his participation in the programme and the support of his team that eventually led to his release.

The world that he has returned to is very different from the one he anticipated and it has been socially isolating living in a hostel. His Circles team have provided constant support, in the toughest stages of lockdown by providing daily phone check-ins and as restrictions have eased by resuming socially distanced face to face meetings. We have learnt that the transition to freedom brings a new range of challenges and his Circle remain as committed to him as before. With their support he has progressed to part time education and getting support for issues around addiction, to ensure that he fully complies with the terms of his parole. However, the best progress has been in his confidence! He is optimistic about his future and continues to make healthy and positive choices.

220 Circles of support interventions were delivered in 2020/21

Building Resilience

Somewhere along the way this year we were very lucky to cross paths with Tony Kiely. Tony works for an organisation in Dublin called Care After Prison and manages a peer led mentor programme. A very compassionate and inspiring man, he reaffirmed our belief that one of the missing components to reducing offending is the element of understanding that comes from peer intervention.

We were delighted that Tony delivered the Building Resilience project for us with Hydebank Wood in December. The project was based on our knowledge that preparing to return to the community after serving a prison sentence is a very stressful time. Anxiety is often exacerbated by isolation and addiction issues and

uncertainty around employment and accommodation. Building Resilience prepared participants to learn coping strategies for life beyond prison and for the changes that were happening as a result of the pandemic.

Tony and Megan Thompson delivered a series of workshops with prisoners prior to release including managing expectations, dealing with stressful situations, mood management, managing anxiety, positive coping skills and practical considerations around safety and hygiene during the pandemic.

Due to the pandemic people were isolating in bubbles, and whilst the workshops were initially intended to be delivered to the full group, the situation necessitated delivering the workshops on a one to one basis. Having served a prison sentence himself, Tony instantly created a rapport and understanding with participants, creating an instant and honest dialogue. This allowed us to tailor the workshops to focus on specific issues concerning the participants.

8 volunteers were trained to provide befriending support in the community, however none of the participants chose to follow up with this element.

We look forward to working with Tony in the future and learning from his successful project on how we can better engage people who have lived experience of prison to utilise their experience and support others.

20 Building Resilience workshops delivered in 2020/21

Residential Project

The pandemic has given us the opportunity to take some time to reflect on the work we deliver and how we can best serve the most vulnerable people in prison. Accommodation is a key concern for many.

The project targets three groups of prisoners who face the most difficulties in rebuilding their lives in the community.

- Prisoners with indeterminate sentences often many years past their tariff, these prisoners often remain in prison because of their complex challenges, mainly with their mental health, mean they would struggle to manage in the community without intensive support.

The number of prisoners with indeterminate sentences is currently unavailable

- Older prisoners, many of whom have public protection orders struggle to reintegrate into the community, and because of lack of family and social support, break the terms of their licence or will deliberately reoffend to be returned to prison for the sense of community, security and care.

- There are currently 232 prisoners across the prison estate aged over 50

- There are currently 88 prisoners across the prison estate aged over 60

When a prisoner reaches 60 years old they are able to 'retire' from the prison education and employment regime, consequently though the men state that they then feel a lack of use and a lack of purpose. Unfortunately this does not bode well for resettlement back into the community.

- Women prisoners – currently there are no single sex hostels available for women returning to the community. The issues that lead women to engage in offending behaviour are often poverty related and exacerbated by a history of domestic and sexual abuse. This makes them extremely vulnerable post release, and the situation regarding their welfare extremely concerning.

We have been talking to NIPS, Probation, the Public Protection Agency and the Housing Executive about how to best develop appropriate accommodation and support for these vulnerable groups and it is widely agreed that the need is huge and immediate.

To develop such an ambitious project requires the buy in of all stakeholders and at the centre are the people we are planning to support. The success of such a project requires us being able to deliver exactly what is required by service users. To date we have had some one to one meetings with potential participants and

drawn some fascinating insights into what the aspirations and future concerns of extremely vulnerable people in prison are.

- Being placed in a hostel: feeling intimidated by younger men in the hostel; the temptation of alcohol and drugs – often which led to the original offending behaviour
- Unable to manage or understand the workings of the modern world. One man reported that when he was released from prison (he has now been returned) he had no bank account and as a result his benefits were paid into his landlords' bank account. He didn't appreciate how vulnerable this makes him.
- Having no friends or family
- Not having any purposeful activities or the means to undertake how to engage in any – boredom, isolation, and increased mental health issues
- No access to medical care or support for mental health issues or trauma

Case Study

C obtained his licence in 2020 after serving 20 years of a life sentence. Prior to this he had engaged in a Quaker project whilst in Burren House – Circles of Support and Accountability, where a team of volunteers supported his socialisation and on building his social and community networks. This support continues.

Since his progress from Burren House to hostel accommodation, he has faced several challenges:

- The influence of drug and alcohol users that he has known from prison who now also reside in the hostel (under the terms of his licence he is not allowed to use drugs or alcohol)

- There is a particular area where C is very familiar with and he has selected it as his preferred area for housing. As this area is popular, it means that he will be on the housing waiting list for some time.
- He has engaged with mental health services to address childhood trauma, however without the support of his Circles team, he acknowledges the reliving of his trauma would have been more negatively impacted by the temptation of drugs and alcohol in the hostel.

Case Study

D is 67 years old and recently breached the terms of his licence and was returned to HMP Maghaberry. He told of how while he was living in the community, he was isolated and lonely and knew no one. He had worked hard to keep away from alcohol, but in a bid to make friends in the community he allowed his home to be used as a 'drink and drugs den' as he described it, thus breaching the terms of his licence, and being returned to prison.

Case Study

E is 82 years old with various physical health challenges. He is due to be released from prison in 2 year's time after serving 10 years of a sentence. Due to the nature of his offences, he has no family support and he is terrified about what the future holds for him.

There are many people housed in the same wing as him who are facing similar issues.

Quaker Service has recently taken on the lease of an allotment in a bid to provide meaningful activity for returning prisoners – to offer a focus and structure to their day.

- In December 2020 we undertook a series of workshops with women in Hydebank Wood College. Working one to one with participants gave us an insight into the extreme vulnerability of the women and the lack of appropriate after care once they are released. Currently we are undertaking further desktop research to see if it is a possibility to extend the broader proposal to include women as they stated they urgently require single sex accommodation upon release.

Case Study

F was released from prison in December 2020 after serving a 10 year sentence. She had no engagement with Probation (her choice). She was unsure of her living arrangements, and she was depending on her friend collecting her from the gate and allowing her to stay on her sofa for a week. As she had no requirement to engage with Probation and she chose not to engage in the Quaker Building Resilience project post release, her current whereabouts is unknown. She was originally referred to us by concerned staff as she has complex mental health and addiction issues. By her own admission she knew that she would very quickly return to using once released.

Lessons Learned

- We were aware that the impact of the pandemic would reduce our access to people in prison. However, given the buy in and agreed emergency need for the service we are proposing we were frustrated at how difficult it has been to undertake this learning project.
- As there is such a need for this service we will continue to explore and work on this proposal. Once restrictions lift the Development Manager has full clearance to access prison and landings and this will make negotiating with Senior Officers to arrange workshops and focus groups much easier. We can then fill the gaps in knowledge that we currently have.

Plans:

We are researching a long-term sustainable project that we know has the potential to meet the requirements of older, vulnerable and indeterminate

sentence prisoners, allowing them to live a purposeful existence outside prison, and at the same time ensuring the safety of the wider community.

As this is the first step in understanding the landscape, we need to ensure the full engagement of the people that we intend to serve to develop a service that reflects their needs and challenges. When we have this information we will be better placed to engage with statutory services to ensure that we can work collaboratively to provide wrap around support for individuals and the group – both in terms of cost and access to broader support services to utilise resources.

Volunteers

A massive thank you to all our volunteers who have enabled us to continue to deliver our work over the last year. We are extremely grateful for their patience in what has been the most trying time – when projects have started, stopped, started again and sometimes not even got off the ground. We are extremely grateful for their commitment to us as an organisation, for coming up with great ideas and ways to develop what we do and to then go ahead and do it!

Mostly we are grateful for their kindness, compassion and dedication to the people they work with. Their constant and unintrusive support has seen people through some dark hours, particularly this year, they fill a very unique position within the prison system as a truly impartial friend and supporter. Their integrity and professionalism has allowed us to maintain our trusted position and positive working relationship within NIPS who continue to allow us to push the boundaries of what we do.

4 Volunteer induction sessions

8 Volunteers trained in befriending support in the community

3 Lunchtime conversations amongst volunteers, staff & criminal justice agencies

Quaker Care Ltd.

2020/2021 Annual Report

Quaker Care is the social enterprise arm of Quaker Service. We exist to raise much needed unrestricted income for the charity as well as providing training and work experience opportunities for a range of individuals, including through our partnership with the Northern Ireland Probation Board.



Launched in 1998 our charity shop has been a fixture on the Lisburn Road for over twenty years. Our shop is run by a dedicated team of volunteers most of whom have been with us for several years and we are lucky to have a community of regular customers, people who I have had the pleasure of helping week on week rain or shine since I joined Quaker Care in 2012.

2020 was a difficult year for Quaker Care as it was for everyone else. Both the shop and our online sales were closed for a large part of the year due to the pandemic. Our online operation was able to operate for only nine months in 2020, while the Quaker shop was open for only five, with brief closures in three of those months.

While the shop was closed online sales took centre stage. The sorting room above the shop was transformed into our stock room where thousands of items are now stored for sale online. Despite only operating for three quarters of the

year our online operation managed to increase its income by fifty percent compared to the previous year.

The Quaker Shop reopened in August. In order to do this safely and to capitalise on the growth of our online project, we completely revamped how the shop worked. The back half of the shop was cut off and turned into our new sort room. This allowed our volunteer and staff team to work together while still social distancing. With the online stock in the same place as the physical shop we encouraged customers to click and collect online purchases while also allowing them to browse and buy from our online stock in store.

Due to further lockdowns the shop closed for parts of October and November, before closing for the rest of the year in December. I would like to thank our volunteer team for continuing to support Quaker Care through all of this.

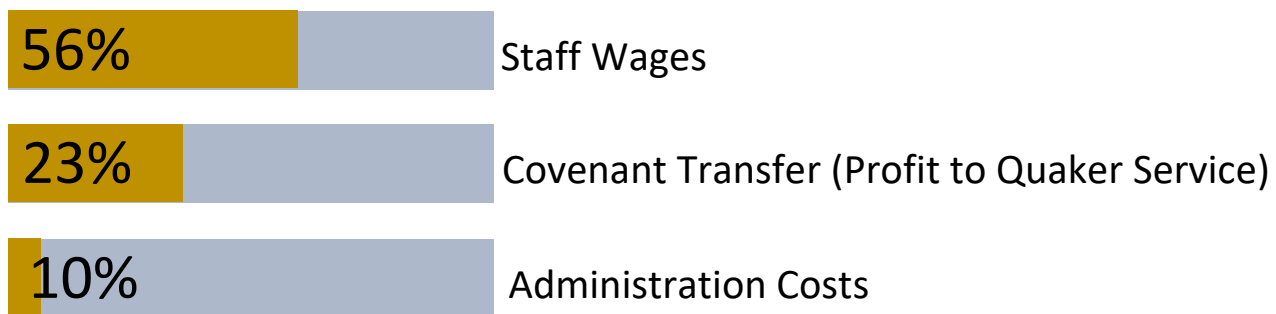
Quaker Care raised £13.8K in unrestricted funds for Quaker Service. This is below what we expect in a normal year but considering the circumstances I think it is a real achievement that we managed to raise so much. However, a large amount of our income came from grants that allowed us to continue to operate. A breakdown of our income is below.

Just over half of Quaker Care's income last year came from grants, the majority of these being furlough grants to cover cost of wages while the shop was closed. We also received a grant for providing placements to people doing community service work orders, and grants for purchasing equipment, and improving the shop's ability to operate under coronavirus restrictions.



Online sales accounted for just over one quarter of our income, while shop sales make up the rest. As expected, this is a huge shift from the previous year when seventy-six percent of our income came from the shop and only nineteen percent came from online sales. This change is not only due to the shop being closed for most of the year, it also reflects the growth of our online store over the course of 2020.

Staff salaries were the biggest outgoing for Quaker Care at fifty-six percent. The covenant transfer of unrestricted funds to Quaker Service was almost a quarter of our outgoings. Ten percent were administration costs such as audit and accountancy, bank fees, and management costs from Quaker Service. The last ten percent is split between online specific costs such as PayPal, eBay, and postage fees, and shop costs like building maintenance and credit card processing fees.



In addition, shop and online retail expenses amounted to only 5% of outgoings respectively.

Measuring the quality of our online store is a bit easier as it comes with customer ratings. As of writing this Quaker Care has received feedback from two thousand three hundred and ninety-five people, of those ninety-nine-point-nine percent are positive. We are also regarded as a top-rated seller by eBay, meaning that they believe we consistently deliver outstanding customer service.

There is an important element of Quaker Care beyond the monetary gain. Quaker Care acts as a place of community for volunteers and



customers, as an opportunity for reuse and recycling of thousands of items that would otherwise go to waste, and as a face for Quaker Service where we can show the general public the values and mission that guides the charity.

Our volunteer team is made up of people from all walks of life who provide an amazing wealth of free labour that they provide to support Quaker Service, as well as a wealth of knowledge and life experience that enriches Quaker Care and the charity as a whole.

We have a long tradition of working with the probation service to provide placements for people doing community service orders. Every community service volunteer is welcomed into the team and while Quaker Care benefits from their hard work we hope that they benefit by gaining friends and work experience with us. Community service work orders were on hold for most of the year, we still managed to provide placements for five people in the short period we were open.

Sustainability is a cornerstone of Quaker Care.



As a charity shop, we provide a place for things that would otherwise be forgotten or dumped to find new homes and new uses. We also allow our customers a place to find things they need and enjoy some retail therapy without contributing to the cycle of consumption that is harming our environment.

www.quakercare.co.uk

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Quaker Service Finance and Treasurer's Report

Aidan Pearson, Treasurer.

At 31st March 2021, I can report a surplus of £227,076. In what was a very difficult year for fundraising and the charity sector generally this is a pleasing outcome, but it is noteworthy to highlight extraordinary bequests of £112k, Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme income of £77k and the significant generosity of individual Friends, Quaker Trusts, and supporters. Our original budgets at April 1st of £665k were revised down in anticipation of interruptions to service to £634k in the following month and revised again to £612k in the budgetary review which took place in November. A further reduction in anticipated expenditure by year end of c£24k reflected a number of moving variables including transportation costs, activities, volunteer expenses and repairs and maintenance costs amongst others.

There were net incoming resources for the year attributable to unrestricted reserves of £222,017 (2020: net outgoing resources £57,204) which now stand at £957,887. In addition, there were net incoming resources for the year of £5,059 (2020: net ongoing resources £2,972) attributable to restricted reserves which now stand at £8,566. Overall income this year increased by some 46% whilst expenditure decreased by 6%. Our portfolio of investments rose in value in year from £162k to £177k and in maintaining a defensive low-risk strategy, the portfolio has seen an average return of 7.9% per annum since inception. The Finance & Personnel Committee have designated reserves to ensure compliance with our reserves policy in terms of liabilities and to prepare for the requirements emerging from our strategic plan from 2021 to 2024.

The Finance & Personnel Committee met 11 times during the year with fundraising, monitoring of cash flow, income, and expenditure, and Covid19 being standing items at its scheduled quarterly meetings. Regular risk assessments were provided to the committee throughout the year as well as staff, volunteer, and beneficiary updates. The general work of the committee included the scrutiny of accounts and projections, monitoring of income, expenditure, investments, and reserves; fundraising plans and progress; capital purchases; staff and salary reviews; minibus driver licensing regulations; committee membership; external evaluation of Quaker Cottage; the Corporate Risk Register annual review as well as undertaking quarterly management checks on the use of the company credit card.

Apart from the handover period between our Director Janette McKnight and our incoming Chief Executive Shane Whelehan, staffing levels remained unchanged from the previous year. The Board agreed at the start of the pandemic to retain all staff who were placed on Furlough on full wages during the crisis and this policy remained in effect until March 1st 2021. From that time Quaker Service no longer topped up furlough payments additional to the percentage provided by the Coronavirus Job Retention Scheme. That decision was taken to ensure that the Charity itself remains resilient, and in fair consideration of our obligations to and relationships with supporters and donors.

The Committee helped frame and endorsed the ambitions and objectives of the new Quakers Service Strategic Plan and are committed to further developing and implementing finance and operational models to ensure stability and sustainability to deliver our services. To do this, we must ensure financial sustainability is understood and benchmarked, and all aspects of income, expenditure and value are examined accordingly. Additionally, we will continue

to support Quaker Care Ltd. so that it is further resourced to grow and develop as an integral income stream to support our services. Our social enterprise Quaker Care Ltd had a very difficult year with shop closures mandatory for the most part of it. Despite the long closures, the shop performed admirably when able to trade and our online retail development was well placed to take advantage of new patterns of public shopping because of shops being closed. I would like to thank the Board and staff of Quaker Care Ltd for their diligence and commitment during the year and for the not inconsequential covenant of some £13.8k at year end.

I believe that the year ahead will be very challenging and anticipate that a squeeze on public spending because of the pandemic may fall quite hard on the charity, community, and voluntary sector. We ask for your continued financial support and also to consider leaving a gift to Quaker Service in your will. This can make a real difference to the lives of those whom we support now and, in the future, and a gift of any size is greatly appreciated. It is a good way to work collectively with others and let your life speak into the future. We will continue to play our part within our means to ease the difficulties for those we serve and continue to deliver practical, social and emotional support services that value and empower people just where they are.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank members of the Finance & Personnel Committee, our staff and volunteers for their hard work and support and we are very grateful to all those who continue to support us in any way.

Organisations who donated £1000 or more to the charity in 2020/2021

Trusts, Corporates and Friends' Meetings

BBC Children in Need	CB & HH Taylor Trust
The Jessie Cairns Bequest	Frederick Street Friends
Hilda & Alice Clark Charitable Settlement	South Belfast Friends
A&E Harvey Charitable Trust	Waterford Meeting
Irish Quaker Faith in Action	Victoria Homes
Lisburn Friends	Garfield Weston
Lurgan Friends	St Annes Sit out Appeal
Lurgan Monthly Meeting	Sir James Reckitt Charity
Oliver Morland Trust	The Joseph Rowntree Charitable Trust
Ulster Garden Villages	The Bewley Foundation
Retreat York Benevolent Fund	The Robert & Kezia Stanley Chapman Trust
Stephen Clark Charitable Settlement 1965	WF Southall Trust

Government

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust	NI Prison Service
Dept. of Education Pathway Fund	Northern Ireland Housing Executive
Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade Reconciliation Fund	Public Health Authority
The Executive Fund	

Quaker Service Directors:

Kathleen B Campbell

Elizabeth G Dickson

Patrick J Henry

Michael H Kelly

Nicholas A J Lane

Christine A McCartney (Stood Down on 01/09/2020)

Siobhan M McElnea

Aidan D Pearson

Roger A Warnock (Stood down on 01/12/2020)

Margrit Grey

Jonathan Lamb

Company secretary:

Shane Whelehan (Appointed 8 June 2020)

Auditors:

Finegan Gibson Ltd.

Causeway Tower

9 James Street South

Belfast, BT2 8DN

Bankers:

Danske Bank

PO Box 183,

Donegall Square West

Belfast

BT1 6JS

Investment Manager:

Quilter Cheviot

Montgomery House

29/33 Montgomery Street

Belfast

BT1 4NX

Solicitors:

Johns Elliot

40 Linenhall Street

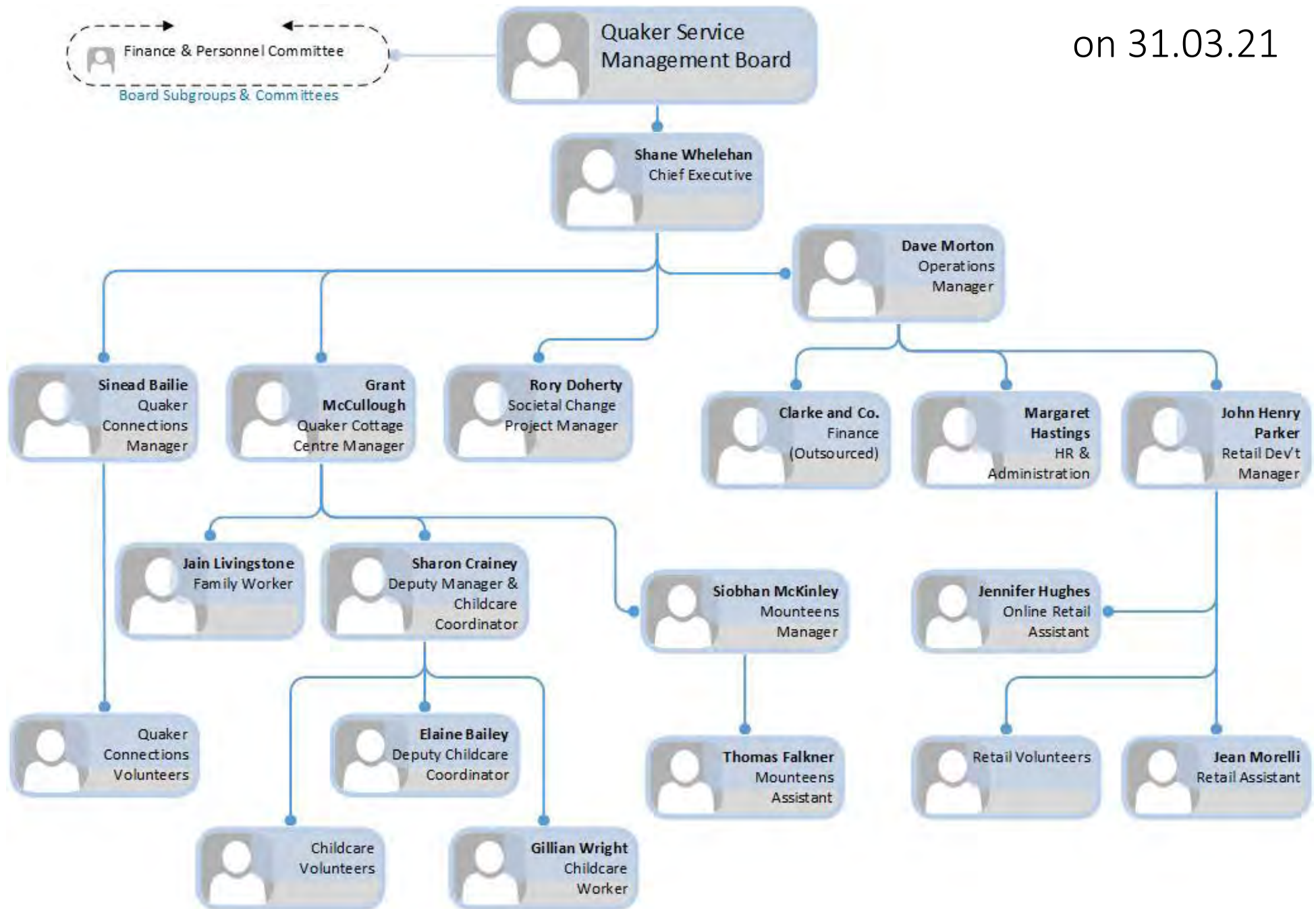
Belfast

BT2 8BA

Registered as a company limited by guarantee. Registration number: NI063929

Registered charity no: NIC102457

Charity Structure on 31.03.21





Charity registration number NIC102457

Company registration number NI063929

Registered Office:

541 Lisburn Road

Belfast

Co Antrim

BT97GQ

www.quakerservice.com

You can support the work of Quaker Service by donating here.



If you would like to consider a legacy gift for Quaker Service in your will, please contact info@quakerservice.com for an information folder.

For advice on running fundraising events, sales or Ebay enterprises in benefit of Quaker Service, contact info@quakerservice.com and we will be very glad to help.

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