



A Quaker charity serving individuals, families and communities in Northern Ireland

Issue 7

Appeal Newsletter – January 2012

Dear Friends

These past few months have been exceptionally busy for Quaker Service. In this 2012 edition of our newsletter, you can read about some recent developments of our services. For example, our Quaker Connections volunteer programme has just been established at Maghaberry Prison and in Autumn we extended the Quaker Cottage “Our View” teenage project to young people incarcerated at Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre in Belfast.

I am delighted that even our retail outlets provide real opportunity for positive change and we have recorded the thoughts of some of those who benefit in different ways from the Quaker Care resettlement work placement scheme for women currently serving a sentence at Hydebank Wood Prison.

According to a recent BBCNI News broadcast, “New government figures

suggest that the recession in Northern Ireland has been more severe than originally thought”. The impact on local industry and service sectors has been particularly harsh. This has been reflected in our retail outlets where we have seen our net profit plummet by 75% over the last five years leaving us with a drop of £30,000 in our income. It is more important now, than ever, particularly when we are developing services to support more people in our society who desperately need our help, that F/friends consider donating towards our work especially when we face this drop in income.

I wish to thank you for your support of our work in the past. Without the generosity of many F/friends, we would not be able to continue making love visible.

**David Bass
Chairman**

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Storytelling at Hydebank Wood Young Offenders Centre

I would like to start by saying how lucky I feel to have had the opportunity to work with some of the juvenile offenders at Hydebank Wood YOC. It was great getting to know these young people over a 9 week period and it was a learning process for all of us. During the very first session it became evident how little confidence they had and how much they doubted themselves when it became clear that they were nervous even to put pen to paper.

At the second session I had a further surprise. The young people looked much more tired and depressed than the previous week – but then I discovered that they had been up most of the night as another juvenile who shares their landing had attempted to commit suicide. It was a harsh reminder that these teenagers are in prison and are met with daily challenges when they are trying to stay positive. I co-worked these sessions with Annie, the in-house art therapist at Hydebank, and we decided to finish the last

half hour of each session on a positive note by having some tea and biscuits, quizzes and puzzles.

During the first few sessions we covered identity and what makes us who we are. Each person got the opportunity to create a collage of their own personal identity. It was clear that each young person had experienced very personal and different difficulties or traumas in their lives. In some cases I feel society has failed these young people and it is clear that they can only too easily fall through the gaps. By no means am I making excuses for the crimes committed but I do believe that not everyone in life is dealt a fair hand. Some people get the support from family and friends to deal with their issues while others are forced to walk the path alone. Who are we to judge?

One young person talked about how his friend’s death sent him over the edge.

Our vision is to live in a society where people are valued and fulfil their potential.

Our ethos is guided by Quaker beliefs and values. Quakers believe that there is a divine presence in everyone and this fundamental belief leads us to value the equal worth and unique nature of each individual.

“My best friend’s death made me feel very sad and angry. I was angry that he was dead and I couldn’t see him again or couldn’t say goodbye properly. I just wanted to drink and steal cars. It was the only thing that could take my mind of my friend’s death.”

After a few weeks of looking at our identity we began to make a timeline of our life experiences and the key events which they believe have had an influence on their life’s journey. It was clear that each participant had experienced a wide range of issues such

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as bereavement, behavioural problems, drug and alcohol misuse and peer pressure. Once the timelines were completed we encouraged the teenagers to begin to think about their life story. Then, using one-to-one interviews with the juveniles, they began to record their story using the previous work completed. One teenager started their story with:

“My mum died in a car crash when I was only a few months old. My granny has looked after me ever since. I have two sisters and one brother. One of my sisters died last year; it was all over the papers yesterday. She died from taking solvent and drugs. I think it just hit her in the heart. We had a brilliant relationship, we were really close and looked out for



each other. She was 19. I found out when I was in prison. I was shocked... my social worker opened the door and said that my sister had died. The judge gave me 24 hours to go out and mourn; my father was given 12 days.”

One young man was very keen to give a message to other young people who may be thinking about committing a crime:

“Looking back on my story, I feel bad. I regret all the things I’ve done. I would like other young people to read my story and think about what they’re doing with their life. This could be you. Think before you do something and the risks of it. I wish I had done that. I’m impulsive. I don’t think before I do, I think after, it’s like an illness. I’m trying different medication for it and going to the ADHD clinic. Look at me now; I’m banged up and not getting out for at least two and a half years”.

I believe that everyone can make mistakes during their life and we should all have the wisdom not to condemn. I feel it’s important to help support and rehabilitate these young people back into society. To help them get an education, a job or provide them with the emotional support that they need to prevent them from re-offending. I hope the Storytelling project has provided these young people not only with an opportunity to reflect on their own lives and the choices they have made but also on where they want to go in the future. One young person from the project said:

“I don’t want to be involved in crime all the time. It’s not going to be easy; once you have a name for doing crime and all that, people just expect you to keep doing it and doing it. I don’t want to be known as a jail bird. I want to get out, keep my head down, get a tech placement, and get a part-time job”.

The concept for this project was derived from a piece of work that we had recently completed with the ongoing teenage project at Quaker Cottage. ‘Our View’ was a storytelling project that we had used to engage with young people from north and west Belfast who attend the centre. The juveniles at Hydebank all received a copy of the ‘Our View’ book and had the opportunity to read the young people’s stories. It was clearly evident that they were interested in other teenager’s life experiences. Some stated how they could relate to most of the young people in the book and how they shared similar experiences. A few stated that they had lots of stories to tell and wanted the opportunity to share their story and so the idea of helping them to do their own ‘storytelling’ project was hatched.

We plan to continue to work with the young juveniles from Belfast on their release, to help provide them with some support, to get them into education or to help them find a part-time job. Their finished stories as well as some of their art work will be printed in a booklet and presented to the young people at the prison in front of family members.

**Rory Doherty
Quaker Cottage Teenage Project**

Quaker Connections at Maghaberry Prison

“Too often we underestimate the power of a touch, a smile, a kind word, a listening ear, an honest compliment, or the smallest act of caring, all of which have the potential to turn a life around.” Leo F. Buscaglia

Prisoner’s families and children suffer what has been termed a ‘silent sentence’. They are often under pressure to move schools and houses and shunned by their extended families and communities. They often suffer financial hardship and find visiting the prison stressful and shameful.

Quaker Connections volunteers will complement the work of the Prison Family Support team and Quaker Visitors’ Centre staff, by providing emotional and practical support to families and friends visiting the prison. This is particularly important for the first visit which can influence a family member’s future contact with their loved one inside. Volunteers will also be available to visit isolated inmates who receive few or no visitors.

To date fifteen volunteers have been recruit-

ed and are presently receiving training for their roles as Inmate Befrienders and Visitor Support volunteers. Both roles encompass the ethos of befriending, which may be defined as a voluntary, non-judgemental and supportive relationship. The main focus is not on prisons, prisoners or prisoner’s families but on people who are going through a difficult time and who need emotional and practical support.

It is reassuring that there are organisations and individuals concerned enough to determine prison reform by studying and researching relevant issues, and there are professionals who will provide advice, guidance, direction, opinions and doctrine if required.

However, Quaker Connections volunteers fall into a different category. They are not there to give advice, solve problems, counsel, study, interrogate or to expound any political or religious views. Of significant value is that volunteers choose to spend time with their client rather than being obligated by profession or family. The voluntary nature of this befriending relationship is valuable in

itself, demonstrating in a practical way that some people in our society care when some people in our society are suffering, for whatever reason. It is my belief that real human healing is not achieved by regulations, policies, creeds or dogma but by the connections made through meaningful interactions and relationships.

Our Quaker Connections volunteers come with a wealth of skills, experience and some very impressive qualifications, but what impresses me most is their empathy, compassion, their gift of precious time and their understanding of human pain. By actively listening to difficult stories which need to be told, complex emotions which need to be recognised and distressing hurts which need to be acknowledged, they bring some relief and comfort to troubled souls. There is also the possibility that their contribution will have a profound impact.

**Irene Surgenor
Volunteer Manager**



HOW CAN YOU HELP?

1. MAKE A DONATION TODAY

By sending a donation today you can help a family attend Quaker Cottage, ensure we continue with our programmes for teens in need or extend our services to the families and friends of prisoners. Even after all our efforts to be self supporting, we still need:

- £15 per day to enable one entire family to attend our summer programme at Quaker Cottage.
- £40 to pay for a week of children's activities at Quaker Cottage.
- £150 to provide a wide range of additional support services each day for prisoners and their families through our new volunteer project, Quaker Connections.
- £750 to enable a teenager to attend a full year's custom built programme at Quaker Cottage.

2. BECOME A REGULAR DONOR

Regular giving is an excellent way to help us sustain our current services and enable us to plan for the future. Please contact Quaker Service office for a bankers order.

3. DO YOU PAY TAX?

If you are a UK taxpayer, your donation can have its value increased by 25% at no extra cost to you. We can claim back the tax, provided you provide your name and address and tick the box declaring you are a UK taxpayer.

4. REMEMBER QUAKER SERVICE IN YOUR WILL

We have been assisting individuals and families in need since 1969 and hope to do so for many years to come. A small percentage of your residual estate in the future would be of significant benefit in securing the continuation of our work. Please ask us for a copy of the leaflet "Have you the will to give?"

Quaker Service extends services at Maghaberry Prison

The Monica Barritt Visitors' Centre is a busy, dynamic place, providing practical and emotional support to the families and friends of inmates at Maghaberry Prison. Large numbers of visitors come into the Centre on a daily basis. It is impossible to predict the number of visitors (or indeed the number of children) that will use the Centre on any particular day, and staff respond to the needs and demands of visitors proactively. As we move towards the end of another year of providing support to the families and friends of inmates, it is worth taking a quick look back at what has been happening over the last twelve months.

Early in the year, Quaker Service was successful in tendering for the contract to provide services for families at Maghaberry. Furthermore, we were very pleased to include the provision of Childcare within Braid House Visiting Hall. Opened almost two years ago, Braid House provides accommodation for 120 life or long sentenced men, allowing them meaningful opportunities to work towards release. After

campaigning on behalf of these inmates and families to have proper support for their children on visits, we are pleased to say that we now provide a dedicated Childcare team, who are able to focus on the individual needs of life sentenced inmates.

As in the main Visits Hall, children in Braid Visits can take part in various activities, such as art work, craft work, jigsaws, toys and games. Having a parent in prison, and then visiting that prison, can be a difficult experience for a child, and having some time for play allows a child to experience something positive. It provides an opportunity for our trained childcare staff to engage with the children, find out how they are doing, and listen, in confidence, to their life stories. Our staff provide support and encouragement, but we never pry into their young lives.

The successful tender application wasn't all good news, however. Although we are delighted to be providing Childcare at Braid, we received no additional funding

for this new requirement. This means, in effect, that we have taken a funding cut. To compound this, we now provide services to families of the 1,030 men at Maghaberry as of December 2011, in comparison to the families of 780 men two years ago. That's an increase in visiting families of over 30 per cent. This clearly impacts on the families, but also impacts on the staff team. To ensure that we are able to provide a wide range of services across the board, and to avoid having to make redundancies within our close knit team, all staff members were affected by changes to their working hours and a decrease in their take home pay. This was a stressful experience for the team, and it should be acknowledged that they were very understanding, and worked very hard with the management board to come up with a workable plan for the future.

The Prison Service had funded a free flexibus to Maghaberry, from Lisburn station, for a number of years. As a cost saving exercise, funding for this important service was scrapped in October 2011. Thankfully, after careful consideration, Quaker Service is now providing an alternative service, operating twice a day from Moira station. Although not as central as Lisburn, the Moira service is proving to be a welcome compromise.

We have come through a turbulent year and the following twelve months are lining up to be just as harsh, if not harsher. In addition to increasing numbers of inmates and their families, we are expecting the planned reforms to the Prison Service and the stresses of those significant changes to impact most on inmates and their families. Please keep inmates, their families, and Quaker Service staff and volunteers in your thoughts.

Michael Kelly
Monica Barritt Visitors' Centre



Yes, I will help Quaker Service to continue making a lasting impact on people's lives in 2012

Name:

Address:

Post Code:

I enclose a cheque or postal order, payable to Quaker Service for £

GIFT AID

I am a UK taxpayer and would like Quaker Service to treat this gift and others I might make as Gift Aid Donations for tax reclaiming purposes from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise. I have paid the tax that will be reclaimed.

Please send me more information on:

Making a standing order donation

Leaving Quaker Service a gift in my will

Signed: Date:

Notes

1. You can cancel this declaration at any time by notifying Quaker Service.
2. You must pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity reclaims on your donations in the tax year (currently 25p for each £1 you give).
3. If in the future your circumstances change and you no longer pay tax on your income and capital gains equal to the tax that the charity reclaims, you can cancel your declaration (see note 1).
4. If you pay tax at the higher rate you can claim further tax relief in your Self Assessment tax return.
5. If you are unsure whether your donations qualify for Gift Aid tax relief, ask Quaker Service. Or ask your local tax office for leaflet IR65.
6. Please notify Quaker Service if you change your name or address.



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Quaker Care – More than a Charity Shop

Thoughts from the Prison's placement officer...

"Our primary provider of work placements outside Hydebank Centre for the women continues to be the two Quaker Care charity shops in Belfast. The work there includes steaming and sorting clothes, organising shelves & book displays, continually alternating displays and rails to maintain variety and interest and obviously general retail duties. Staff at Quaker Care take their position and responsibilities in this project very seriously. They become involved and tend to nurture the individual and seek to meet their specific needs, providing a safe and a non-judgemental working environment for them.



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"Some of the primary benefits I have observed in participants of this scheme are that their self esteem is significantly raised and their organisational skills are developed. They gain a sense of independence and take on a greater sense of responsibility. The women also gain a sense of loyalty toward the provider and endeavour to work toward obliging additional requests (such as being prepared to forfeit other activities to accommodate volunteer shortages), demonstrating respect. It prepares individuals for their return to the community and provides a more normalised environment, working and mingling with the public.

"The work placements provide the opportunity for women to demonstrate a 'commitment to change' alongside valuable work experience including the opportunity to gain a reference".

Thoughts from our Retail Manager, Eileen Armstrong...

"Behind the front of Quaker Care, many lives have changed. Over the past 4 years, we have provided opportunities for 7 women from Hydebank Wood Women's Prison to work at our charity shops as part of their resettlement plan. At first I was quite apprehensive as I had never worked with offenders before, but the Quaker Care resettlement work programme has changed all that.

"I have had the pleasure of meeting some really hard working, pleasant, kind, honest and fun loving girls. They have enthusiastically undertaken a wide range of tasks from steaming and sorting clothes to serving customers. It was true that some came to me with attitude problems, but I quickly found

Thoughts from a young woman (EM)...

"Before I came to Quaker Care, my life was falling apart. I was in Prison and I felt that there was no hope for me. And then I started to get help. After a while, I was invited to work at Quaker Care. I was very scared of dealing with people, very shy and had very low moods when I first came. I soon started to feel good about myself. The staff made me feel important and never judged me for my offence. Because of the help and support I get here, I feel I can do all I can to give myself a good chance in life".



that this mostly emanated from genuine and serious problems of their own. For example, I realised that all the women who have come to work at Quaker Care were mothers and as a mother myself, I could not start to imagine the hardship of being separated from your children. It seems to me that instead of one sentence, each family has to deal with two sentences – one for the offender and the other for the offender's family.

The shops have proven to be a great outlet for my 'Hydebank ladies' to develop their skills, confidence and work possibilities and they have all made such a great contribution to Quaker Care. This is a partnership that I hope to continue for many years to come."