

40 years of sharing the love of Christ



David Farrow

Director, Thompson House

The founder of Prison Fellowship, Charles Colson, regularly commented that, "The ground is level at the foot of the cross" and at Thompson House, we truly believe this. God does not call us to feel any form of superiority over others because of certain choices they have made in their lives. John 14:7 tell us that Jesus said: "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." This means that anyone, no matter their background or perceived balance sheet of sin, can come to the cross and be saved by the blood of the Lamb.

Thompson House will soon be celebrating its 40th anniversary, first opening its doors on 28 April 1984. It originally accommodated 11 men who were involved in the criminal justice system. Through various developments over the past 40 years and in partnership with Radius Housing, Thompson House now accommodates 19 men. All residents are referred and supervised by a probation officer and over 90% of residents are released prisoners supervised on post-release licences.

Substance misuse continues to have detrimental impacts on the residents and since 2021, four residents have paid the ultimate price and have passed away from drug overdoses within the service. We have also had two deaths by suicide, with the epidemic of suicidal ideation and self-harm affecting the residents significantly.

There are many complex reasons for substance misuse, and the approach of trauma-informed practice would indicate that children who have grown up in homes where they have experienced four adverse childhood experiences are more likely to have difficulty with their coping abilities in adulthood. The

staff team works empathetically with residents, assisting them to identify traumatic events in their lives and signpost them to services that will help them to address any issues that are impacting them.

Each resident is appointed a key worker in the unit to help them resettlement back into the community after a period of imprisonment; the maximum stay is set at 12 months.

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We endeavour to share the love of Christ with the residents. Over the past couple of years, project workers Neil and Jonny and more recently an elder from the North Belfast Presbytery, Gareth, have met together with a group

of residents and ex-residents to host Bible discussion groups. We have run the peace and reconciliation course 'Difference', contemplative prayer workshops and 'The Bible Project', a fantastic free resource with short, animated videos on biblical themes.

A few men have been amazed at the freedom to share, explore and support each other in a relaxed environment. It's been hugely encouraging to see men grow in their understanding of what it means to be known and valued by a loving God, to be shaped by the person of Jesus and begin to see their faith impact their lives.

Please pray:

- For all staff and volunteers in Thompson House – that they would be guided by God in all their work with residents, as they share the love of Christ in practical ways.
- For all residents – that they would come to saving faith in Jesus Christ, and be transformed through the forgiveness and healing that Jesus brings.