

Mission Connect Article for May 2019 Herald

Title: Sharing in the journey of recovery

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When I read the accounts of Jesus' life on earth I am impressed by his love and compassion for people who were rejected by society. People who have alcohol and drug difficulties suffer rejection by society and often their own communities. Some people have lost their homes, are estranged from their families or cannot return to their previous environment after treatment for fear of relapse. For this reason, Gray's Court was opened in the year 2000.

Gray's Court Supported Living is managed by Carlisle House Substance Misuse Treatment Centre under the directorship of David Cuthbert. Situated in North Belfast, it consists of seven tastefully furnished self-contained flats with a communal lounge/conservatory and a private garden area with vegetable troughs. Gray's Court offers temporary supported accommodation for men and women who have completed treatment for alcohol and/or drug misuse, who are homeless, and who want to continue their recovery in a substance free environment. Most people who come to Gray's Court have completed the Carlisle House programme but we also accept referrals from other treatment agencies from across Northern Ireland. Residency is for a maximum of two years.

Since it opened there have been almost 300 referrals with an average turnover of 10 residents per year.

The ethos of Gray's Court is one of acceptance, respect and compassion. It is about coming alongside those who use the service as they seek to rebuild their lives, reintegrate into their communities and secure suitable permanent accommodation.

It has been my privilege to have worked at Gray's Court for the past 12 years and to have shared in the journeys of those who have used the service. My role is to collaboratively design a plan with each person to address how they wish to move forward. Each plan addresses what they want to do to improve their health, mental health, and recovery from substance misuse. It also looks at building relationships with family, culture and religion. It identifies aspirations in relation to education, work or voluntary work and how these may be realised. On a practical level, we begin the process of finding a permanent home, maximising income and managing household responsibilities.

The value of Gray's Court is best expressed by people who have lived here.

"In this drug and alcohol-free environment, I had the time and space to reorder my life with the companionship of others like myself and reassurance and support from staff"

"It gave me a good solid foundation to proceed in my recovery."

"An ideal start for a clean life."

"I feel purpose coming back into my life again."

Please pray:

- What I find most painful about working in the field of homelessness and addiction is that I know something of the scale of substance misuse in Northern Ireland and the effects it has on the lives of so many people and their families. Please pray that solutions may be found to combat this ever-growing problem and that there would be more services to meet the needs of those affected.
- Pray for Christians affected by addiction and those who become Christians that they may find a fellowship of other believers where they feel accepted.