

Aisling
centre

Hope Healing Growth

Annual Report

2023 – 2024

“ *Excellent service. Welcoming. Amazing!
You do an excellent job. Thank you.* ”

www.theaislingcentre.com

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“ Talking about everything not just what I initially came in for. Feeling like someone was listening and hearing me. Trying different techniques to deal with anxiety ”



“ The openness, unjudgmental and caring environment provided has been amazing ”



Chairperson's Foreword

An annual report is a time to stop and reflect on the past year and this year 2023/24 has seen an ever-increasing demand on our services. We were delighted to secure a lease on the building next door which provided much needed extra counselling space. All against the background of a very challenging economic climate.

We could not provide our services without the continued support of our many funders, and we thank them most sincerely. The generosity of the community, their unwavering support and fund-raising endeavours has been fantastic; marathons, tractor runs, bag-packs, carol services, personal donations, business and school events and other activities large and small, also our fantastic volunteers.

Collectively all this support keeps us working at our current level. I would like to pay tribute to our own energetic fund-raising sub-committee and the many volunteers who support them, your pro-activity has been excellent in helping meet financial demands.

It has also been a busy year in terms of staff changes and the implementation of our pilot counsellor mentoring programme. A new financial administrator has also been appointed. Conversely, we were very sorry to see the departure of experienced counsellors Helen, Nicholas, Rosemary and Zahada, who all made a valuable contribution to the team at Aisling Centre. We wish them well. In the coming year we will say a fond farewell to Joan, the longest serving member of the team as she and her fellow receptionist Fionnuala both look forward to retirement.

Strategic development is constantly under review by our board of directors, and I am pleased to report that we have fulfilled all our core aims on target for this year. I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow board members for their support, hard work and commitment throughout the year and especially my vice-chairperson Roberta Hamilton who has now stood down from post in October 2023 but remains a valued director and to welcome my new vice-chair, Deirdre Kane.

We were delighted to welcome to the board two new directors, Monica Corrigan and Maeve Devlin. Both bring with them great skills and have already settled in well and are active in their roles, Maeve on the Fundraising

Sub-Group and Monica Corrigan on the Finance Sub-Group. Monca is now the company treasurer having replaced Neville Armstrong who along with Dr Ann McDermott (former chairperson) stepped down from the board at our AGM in October 23. Both stalwarts gave long and sterling service in various roles to the work and ethos of Aisling.

The calm face of Aisling Centre belies the enormous amount of activity within. We are very blessed with a very dedicated administrative and clinical team with complementary therapists under the direction of the management team, Bridie Sweeney, Service Director, John Bennett, Clinical Lead and Patricia Kelly, Admin Facilities Manager. Collectively it is thanks to all their hard work that Aisling Centre is held in such high esteem in the community.

It is a privilege to serve on the Board of Directors of Aisling Centre and be part of an organisation where the ethos has remained intact since its inception and the common thread is for hope, healing and growth for everyone who uses the services.

Alison



Reports

Service Director's Report



The vital and precious work of Aisling Centre takes place in an environment that continues to be extremely challenging, both for clients and Aisling Centre itself, with ever-growing demands on the charity's limited resources.

2023-24 has been a particularly challenging year as we worked tirelessly to stretch our limited resources to meet the need coming through our door.

When you read the content of this annual report there is no doubt that we have grown as an organisation, but it is vital that in order to stay safe within this growth we keep a keen eye on the business side of our charity and in the year ahead senior staff and charity trustees will be taking time to review and consolidate the work of Aisling Centre into the next decade.

This dream of Aisling Centre is well and truly alive and vibrant thanks to an incredibly dedicated team of people with a commitment to excellence in everything they do. I am fortunate to work with a fantastic team of people who regularly go above and beyond; also an outstanding Board of Trustees who bring a range of expertise and skills to the Board and who are committed to the ethos of Aisling Centre and to ensuring the highest standards of governance. My sincere thanks to you all.

We are all honoured to have the trust and support of the local community; also, our many funders and other organisations that we work with. We could not do the work we do without your support, thank you.

Mostly I am humbled by the courage of the people who in the midst of some of their darkest times find the strength to step over our threshold and I look forward to continuing the work of Aisling Centre into the year ahead.

Bridie

Clinical Lead's Report



Within this Annual Report, you will find a summary of the anonymous feedback provided by clients about their experiences at Aisling Centre. Collected at the end of therapy, this feedback reflects the deep gratitude of those who embarked on a personal journey of self-exploration and growth - often discovering that

their experience was quite different from what they had imagined at the outset. With hindsight, clients can appreciate the contrast between how they felt before counselling and the positive changes they experienced because of it. They reveal just how worthwhile it was to embrace the challenges of the process; of opening up, of confronting painful emotions, of revisiting difficult life events or making difficult changes in behaviour, relationships and thought patterns. Much like the athletes we watched during the Olympics, progress for our clients is often gradual, requiring patience, persistence, and commitment to the process, in the hope of life-changing rewards.

We understand that the counselling process begins long before a client arrives here, shaped by their lived experiences and often supported by

the encouragement of family, friends, or medical professionals. Their feedback highlights the importance of the welcoming atmosphere first experienced at our reception and the sense of arriving in a safe and peaceful environment. In this space where confidentiality is paramount, clients can and do express their true selves without fear of ridicule or rejection - a place where they feel accepted, heard, understood, and free from judgment. It is here that we strive to offer hope, healing, and growth to every person who comes to Aisling Centre.

The dedication and hard work of our staff, along with the generous giving of themselves by our volunteers, make what we do possible. When I read our feedback, I hope each one knows they have played an important part in affirming the value of our work. I also want to thank our independent Clinical Supervisors, who assist in overseeing the clinical work of our therapists, enhancing the quality of care and ensuring ethical integrity and professional competence.

Finally, this year, some of our own colleagues have faced significant personal challenges with quiet strength and resilience, serving as an inspiration to us all. We continue to extend our heartfelt support and gratitude to them.

John

“ *The space to talk and share my innermost turmoil. The kindness, compassion and understanding of my counsellor.* ”

“ *I think most people in life need a helping hand and I really got so much from Aisling Centre.* ”



Services

Counselling, Psychotherapy & Play Therapy

"The service is invaluable. You actually don't realise how much you really need it until you do it and such amazing staff so caring and helpful that you leave a much better version of yourself than when you arrived (albeit a little emotionally exhausted) but overall could not advocate more for the service going forward."

753 people attended counselling with a total of 6040 sessions of counselling offered.

"There are many diverse clients within Aisling Centre, with many different presenting issues. The therapeutic relationship is fundamental with each and every client regardless of their presenting issue. It is the foundation for the counselling process. It provides a safe and trusting environment where clients can talk openly and freely in a safe and confidential space and develop autonomy as they actively participate in their own healing process." - Therapist

ADULT COUNSELLING SERVICE

"It is a good service. Men can sit down and talk about their feelings which they wouldn't normally do"

SOURCE OF REFERRALS	
Self	33%
GP	42%
Other Health Professionals	14%
Other Statutory Services	04%
Misc. other	07%

"Aisling Centre is a wonderful service/ life-line for the many levels of distress/trauma people are experiencing"

"A Time of Great Confusion"

"I am very grateful for the service provided for me by the Aisling Centre. Without their help my condition would have been extremely difficult to manage. For the first time in my life, I had the opportunity to discuss and try to make sense of my condition."

When I first came for my counselling session, I felt fearful and full of anxiety, but this soon eased after my first meeting with my Counsellor. I felt that she had a great understanding and was able to help me to better understand myself during a time of great confusion in my life."

Without the service provided by the Aisling Centre I would have had to face my condition alone. These services, without any doubt in my mind, save lives, especially in a region that is desperately neglected and underfunded in terms of Mental Health Services.

I would like to thank the Aisling Centre and especially my Counsellor for the help I was provided".

Male, aged 30. Attended 12 Sessions.

Feedback

OVERALL EXPERIENCE OF THE SERVICE	
Excellent	92%
Good	5%
No Ans	3%

SUPPORT/SERVICE RECEIVED	
Excellent	92%
Good	8%

LEVELS OF DISTRESS		
	Before	After
None	0.5%	18.5%
Mild	4%	58.5%
Moderate	21%	22%
High	74.5%	1%

OUTCOMES	
Feeling more positive about the future	98%
Identified improvement	96%

The Legacy of The Troubles

This case study is based on the experience of a lady, who was referred by her GP for issues in relation to anxiety and low mood. Middle aged, she worked in the caring profession. She also supported her husband, who due to a work injury was confined to home and suffered with depression. She was experiencing low mood and panic attacks, which were having a very restrictive and negative impact on her quality of life. She admitted that it was such a struggle for her to attend and had taken a lot of courage and effort for her to come and see me.

Listening to this lady whom I will call Carrie, I understood that she had lived with trauma in her early years. Creating a place of safety in the sessions was vital. The consistency of weekly meetings, where she felt no judgement, helped build trust which provided a safety also. Carrie's father had been in the security forces, she told me that fear had played a huge part in her experience as a child. She spoke about the trauma of having constant vigilance and an attempted attack on her father. She told me she had never spoken before about this experience. She started to see the impact which this had on herself and her family. She realised the trauma of her childhood had greatly influenced her and that of her own children. She started to understand how she had lived a life which was greatly restricted due to fear.

The demands of a caring role in work and at home, was beginning to wear her down. She realised that she never stepped out of this role and was surprised at the anger and resentment she felt. Carrie saw that she had lost a lot of who she was and had neglected her own needs in the process. She recognised also that she wasn't good at reaching out for help, just was "getting on with it all". She began to look at getting help from others to give her the time and space she needed.

She spoke more of the night her dad was attacked, telling me she experienced constant flash backs. She had buried a lot. She told me she was easily triggered, especially by sound. Use of more creative techniques, sand tray and art as a part of sessions, helped Carrie to express what she couldn't put into words.

Slowly Carrie began to trust herself further as our sessions progressed. Reflecting on this, gave her confidence, most especially on the more difficult days. She admitted she found it difficult to deal with flash backs and we used grounding techniques to take her back to the here and now. Relaxation techniques also helped gain a sense of control of her anxiety. As we came to the end of our time together, we looked at support from other organisations as Carrie now felt able to address further the impact of her early life experiences.

Evaluation Feedback

What worked well?

Client feedback was overwhelmingly positive about the service they received. They focused on the welcome and feeling of being safe, heard and supported.

"This is the first time ever doing this, thinking of a service like this before I wouldn't have been in favour of it but I'm so glad I did. This has helped me to become myself again and think of my future as it becoming a bright happy place"

The Welcome Received

"Lovely and calming environment, friendly and welcoming staff. Kind, empathetic, and empowering counsellor"

"Friendliness of staff, made it very easy to come back, welcoming"

"Staff are helpful, friendly and supportive"

"Excellent local service, easy to access and friendly/ confidential staff"

"I would like to thank each one and all of the staff of the Aisling Centre for their hard work and being there for me. I will never forget"

"Yet again I would like to thank everyone involved in providing the services in The Aisling Centre it has been the only proper support that I received throughout my journey of navigating my way through the health system to receive the help I needed"

"Aisling Centre offers an amazing service to our community. It is a beautiful, calming, peaceful environment. We are so blessed to have it. Staff are helpful, friendly and supportive"

The Safe Space

"Very calm atmosphere, nice waiting areas, a feeling of tranquillity"

"Very relaxing environment, use of essential oils brilliant"

"Aisling Centre offers an amazing service to our community. It is a beautiful, calming, peaceful environment. We are so blessed to have it"

"Peaceful, friendly surroundings along with professional counsellor"

"The actual counselling and the building atmosphere were very relaxing"

"I really enjoyed my sessions. The whole place is very relaxing and welcoming"

Not “Feeling Himself”

37-year-old Will referred himself for counselling. Nervous and uncertain, this was the first time he had sought help with his emotional wellbeing, unsure whether he had ‘done the right thing’. During assessment, Will conveyed that his usual struggles with low mood and lack of motivation had recently gotten worse and he had not been ‘feeling himself’ lately, reaching out for help in an effort to prevent this situation from getting worse. He was stuck in a ‘dead-end’ job he didn’t enjoy but lacked confidence to apply for other positions. His anxiety was palpable in the room and he initially struggled to talk about himself, diverting into small talk about the town, other people etc. We spent several sessions building up trust and laying down a solid foundation and eventually were able to start peeling back the layers of Will’s life, connecting past events with current difficulties.

As a young child, he had experienced the death by suspected suicide of a parent – something that was never talked about or processed in the family; there was no outlet for grief, confusion or anger. The remaining parent withdrew emotionally from Will and his siblings, meaning that he effectively lost both. From then on and into the present, he became a people pleaser, always looking out for everybody else’s needs and neglecting his own. He learned to dismiss and detach from his emotions, a process that was never reversed. Alarmingly, Will had initially described his childhood as ‘normal’ and the parent’s death as ‘no big deal’. Throughout his formative years, he had felt ‘other’ and different – not wearing the right clothes, not being picked for football teams, labelled stupid for his dyslexia. He had internalised all and now, as an adult, had extremely low self-esteem, which I could sense when I was in his presence. Body posture, tone of voice, the struggle to keep eye contact all conveyed a sense of ‘I’m sorry to take up space’. Will complained about the lack of respect from colleagues.

Initially appearing like a case of anxiety and depression, this case revealed itself to be complex, with significant childhood trauma, which the client himself had never acknowledged. Of the different approaches I used, Psychoeducation was key. Validating the traumatic experiences of his child self and connecting them to current difficulties created important insights. This understanding seemed to bring some relief. We worked with the Inner Child, creating a felt sense that the adult Will is now in a position to meet the needs of the child Will. Through role play, we also practised how to act with greater confidence in daily life. A large sheet of paper served as a Vision Board, capturing the various ‘ingredients’ of a good life for Will.

There is much work that still needs doing at another time. The 16 sessions we had are only the beginning. Will’s work in the sessions gave him the confidence

to apply and interview for a different job and in our second last session he reported that he had been successful!

The Professional Service

“I love coming here each week to have a quiet safe space to offload. It has changed my life”

“Keep up the fantastic work you’re all doing. This service has truly helped me in ways I couldn’t have imagined”

“I was very grateful for the counselling I received and it certainly helped me at the time. The counsellor was very easy to talk to and she provided me with strategies which I still use”

“Discreet, professional and no fuss”

“Peaceful, friendly surroundings along with professional counsellor”

Being listened to without judgement

“Being able to talk to someone who listened and didn’t judge”

“Worked well for me, I feel my voice got heard. I feel the pain is getting out of me”

“The space to talk and share my innermost turmoil. The kindness, compassion and understanding of my counsellor”

“Everything about my experience has been great and would have been lost without the service provided here”

“Helpful conversation, Compassion shown. Had a laugh!”

“Heard and Held”

Suicidal ideation has become much more prevalent in recent years, with Northern Ireland continuing to have to have one of the highest male suicide rates in the UK. Suicide rates have risen significantly here since the late 90s; with men appearing to be most at risk. Professor of Social Policy at Queen’s University, Michael Tomlinson explains that, “Those born into the conflict or who were children during the worst years of violence are the cohort which now has the highest suicide rates of all age groups.” However, suicidal thoughts and feelings are not limited to a certain age group, in my own experience as a counsellor; nor are they limited to men. Many women, of all ages, are presenting with suicidal ideation.

When I first meet a client in the Aisling Centre and while discussing confidentiality as part of our contract, I always explain what ‘harm to self or

others’ actually means in reality. If the client has had previous, or current, thoughts of suicide, that this is a safe place of non-judgement to explore these thoughts and feelings. Naming suicide in the first session, is often the opening they need to share what they were afraid to share with anyone else previously. Suicidal thoughts can carry so much shame, stigma and despair for clients, creating severe distress. Sharing these thoughts with close family or friends is just too difficult for most. In therapy, these feelings can be explored in an honest and transparent way from early on in therapy.

Clients may not always disclose suicidal thoughts or feelings at the beginning of therapy; often waiting until they feel safe and in the therapeutic relationship. Occasionally, a client’s distress may intensify during therapy, for example, some who have experienced trauma and loss may struggle when facing difficult life circumstances arise.

One such client, who had experienced a traumatic loss at a young age and had a history of substance misuse, found herself overwhelmed by emotional pain. While she expressed distressing thoughts about suicide, she did not formulate a concrete plan. It was crucial to address both her immediate distress and the underlying pain in a compassionate, supportive, and structured way, ensuring she felt heard and safe while reinforcing protective factors.

In therapy, we explored her thoughts about suicide with care and compassion, helping her process the emotions and underlying pain she was experiencing. We also reflected on how her struggles affected both her and those around her. She went through a dark time for several weeks, but never missed an appointment, working through her distress while we focussed on keeping her safe. Together we identified protective factors in her life - her family, her dog, the things that she enjoyed, the people who she could pick up the phone to when feeling low. Listening with compassion and understanding in this safe place, her feelings were ‘held and heard’ and she felt understood. In this space she began to find more reasons to live than to die. After all, the antidote to wanting to die is wanting to live. Over time, her level of risk decreased. This client eventually returned to low risk, finding more purpose and meaning in life.

Through therapy she discovered that she didn’t really want her life to end, she just wanted the pain of the past to stop. She also discovered that all emotions, no matter how overwhelming, are temporary and with support, healing is possible.

The benefits of having attending counselling

“Feel my mood has improved. Relationships within my family have got better. Things are easier now. Understand myself better”

“I was really low at the start. My health has been brought back together”

“Thank you for this experience. I can now understand the things that I need to work on/develop and I feel a lot more confident in myself to do so”

“The service at Aisling Centre is excellent. I don’t know where I would be today without this help”

“Thank you very much, I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience here and all of the wisdom I have gained. Thank you for being a valuable part of my journey”

“I can, I realise now, express emotions much better than I thought I could. I feel I’ve achieved something in being able to get my own identity back. Empowered/complete sessions”

“Made a big difference to me. My family have noticed that I’m “glowing” again”

“It is very relaxing and supportive; it helps to clear your mind and getting things off your mind”

“I am very happy to have availed of this service, I feel so much better”

“It helped me to look at my issues in a more positive way”

“I feel so grateful for having this opportunity. It is my hope that everyone should be able to access this service”

Aisling

Aisling has endured a challenging early life though her bright smile, colourful clothing and cheerful demeanour suggest otherwise. Raised in the countryside with financial difficulties, Aisling’s father alternated between working and drinking while her mother was perpetually angry and bitter. Aisling received more attention from her father which exacerbated her mother’s harshness towards her. She describes herself as a lonely child.

From a young age Aisling experienced sexual abuse from a neighbour. When she tried to tell her mother, she was disbelieved allowing the abuse to continue. At 16 she was pregnant leading to a rejection from her family. She moved in with a seemingly supportive boyfriend. The initial support he had shown her soon faded and by the time Aisling was 18 she was being regularly physically abused whilst also caring for two small children.

A back injury sustained by an assault brought her in contact with the GP but she was too afraid to disclose the abuse and the prescription for anti-depressants and pain relief allowed her some sense of ease.

Aisling’s main aim throughout was always to protect

and care for her children and without any support network she couldn't see a way out. To escape the misery, she began to take more and more pain relief as she felt that was the only way she could get through. Eventually this came to a head and after 12 years a referral was made to social services from the school.

When social services initially got involved, Aisling was convinced that his threats would come true and she would lose her children. She was shocked to discover at this point that Social Services did have an awareness of the bigger picture and relieved when their support enabled her to leave this abusive relationship.

Since leaving Aisling had been involved and supported by the addiction services and Women's Aid and had made many positive changes. She felt that she wanted to address and reflect upon the many events that had brought her to this point and her support worker had suggested the Aisling Centre.

Many clients approach counselling with a fear that they will be made to talk about something that they do not wish to discuss and that counselling involves a necessity to open up completely and tell everything. Our assessment interview allows us to gather some information about both a client's background and their hopes and aims for their counselling sessions. Aisling had talked briefly around the experience of abuse at a young age but decided that this was not the time or place to talk about this. She was more focussed on the recent traumatic events around the separation and the rebuilding of her life. Aisling had completed a controlled reduction of her medication with the help of the GP and was ready to talk.

Most of our sessions were focussed on Aisling gaining an appreciation of her survival and parenting skills and looking at what hopes she had for herself and her children in the future.

When she finished her sessions, she reflected that being able to choose what she talked about in sessions had been really helpful and that she was now thinking that when she was more settled in her new accommodation it might be time for her to return and address her early childhood experiences.

Areas for Improvement

Overall, the feedback related to accessibility in terms of physical access to the building (lots of stairs) and outreach venues.

"Accessibility - managed the stairs but would have preferred not to"

"Perhaps accessibility but otherwise excellent"

"Accessibility initially but alternative room worked well"

We have tried to make the building as accessible as possible including the use of a stair lift but we understand the challenges and where people have brought access issues to our attention, we have worked to change appointments to more accessible rooms.

The challenge of finding suitable outreach venues continues and for some client's external noise was very distracting.

Another very practical suggestion was made to have "Toys in waiting area" this we have put in place and it is well received.



General Feedback

"Aisling Centre go above and beyond to help people. My sessions have been very educational and I now have a better understanding of trauma and its lasting impacts. I see things differently now. I am grateful to have been signposted to the Regional Trauma Network"

"It has helped me realise a lot about myself and has helped me to go and seek out medical intervention which I'd never have did without it"

"I think the service provided has helped me sort out how I was feeling as before I felt totally overwhelmed. I feel a lot better able to cope and prioritise life"

"The service is invaluable. You actually don't realise how much you really need it until you do it and such amazing staff so caring and helpful that you leave a much better version of yourself than when you arrived (albeit a little emotionally exhausted) but overall could not advocate more for the service going forward"

"The therapist has made my first counselling experience easy for me to open up to and embrace and have found it extremely helpful"

Well-Being & Life Learning Services

This was a busy year with everything from structured programmes to on-line videos and outdoor sessions with almost 1000 people benefiting from the range of well-being programmes on offer from Aisling Centre.

Complementary Therapy

71 people (mostly victims/survivors of the NI Troubles) benefited from 396 CT sessions with our therapist Sheila.

"I found the treatments helped me be able to cope with ongoing anxiety and stress better. Very relaxing, I am much calmer and more like how I used to be"

"I loved my sessions, very therapeutic and relaxing. Therapist understanding and light-hearted, such a treat for me to receive treatments. Thank you!"

"Absolutely loved my sessions. So therapeutic, felt them so comforting as I'm still grieving for my husband. Getting out has given me a little more confidence and helped me socially"

"The treatments have literally got me back on my feet. My left foot is much less painful so can go for walks which has helped my mental and emotional health. They have also given me confidence to join a wee group for men like me"

"I loved my sessions, something to look forward to. I'm less anxious and sleeping much better"

"Very relaxing, find it hard to relax and this helped me and got me out as well. Helped me through my grief"

"Sessions were so relaxing. I didn't know what to expect, they really helped me calm down and realise I need to take time out for myself"

Mindfulness Meditation

Siobhan continued the monthly mindfulness drop-in sessions. These are open to everyone aged 17+ and can be a taster session for people new to mindfulness or an opportunity to come together with others and develop your mindfulness meditation practice.

"Great inner peace and a genuine introduction to mindfulness. Everything was enhanced by a wonderful leader and a lovely venue"

"I really enjoyed the mindfulness today, it was easy going, very calming. Siobhan's guidance really worked with calming the mind"

Self Care Sessions

By now a regular feature in the Aisling Centre calendar this is Holly's second year to offer her spring and autumn self-care sessions with a focus on

managing anxiety. The programme designed by Holly offers care for tired bodies and busy minds, with practical techniques, and guided relaxation sessions.

"Nervous at the start but really enjoyed the company of others"

"Thank you for this course. Would recommend it to others"

"Loved it, learned techniques I hope to remember when I am in greatest need. Breathing technique kept me sane"

"Excellent programme it has reminded me what to do when my anxiety is high"

Modern Energy Tapping (MET)

Rosa ran a series of informal monthly drop-in sessions where participants joined her for a cuppa and a chat to learn about this simple and effective tool that you can use to help yourself and others manage stress and anxiety.

"Great course, thank you"

"Learnt new techniques to use to energise myself and can share with others"

"I loved learning the tapping points, enjoyed trying it out"

"I really felt calm and energised afterwards, lovely uplifting experience"

Well-Being Wednesdays

The health benefits of time spent in nature are well documented and this year Aisling Centre piloted an outdoor summer well-being programme. We were delighted to work with National Trust Fermanagh and a weekly programme of Mindfulness Meditation, Yoga and Mindful Nature Walks took place at Crom Castle, Castle Coole and Florencecourt House. Participants really embraced the outdoors and feedback was wholly positive.



"Really loved the rain drops making the gentle noise on the trees and the wind moving the branches"

"Very relaxing experience. I had never embraced nature that much. I enjoyed it. Thank you"

"Brilliant morning. It was lovely to connect with nature"

"The opportunity to get out into God's studio was very special. To touch, see and smell nature"

"Lovely day most enjoyable love being out in the fresh air, birds chirping, lake view"

Mindfulness Meditation

"I really enjoyed the mindfulness today, it was easy going, very calming. Siobhan's guidance really worked with calming the mind. It was a lovely experience"

"Today was wonderful. I really slowed down and felt great ease and release of emotions. I would be very encouraged to continue to practise mindfulness. The location was beautiful and all was well organised"

"I'm glad I took up the offer of coming along today to do this mindful meditation. It was what the body needed! I got the whole package, relaxation, exercise, fresh air. Thank you!"

Mindful Nature Walks

"Anja was a tremendous guide, extremely friendly and knowledgeable about plants and wildlife. Also the mindfulness exercise was so relaxing and insightful I learnt a lot and will go home relaxed and stress free"

"Found it so relaxing learning about the plants"

"Educational, relaxed, very enjoyable – please continue to organise these!"

"Learnt so much about plants and their uses. Anja was warm friendly and confident and led a wonderful meditation that helped me be present"



Yoga

"Another absolutely wonderful session. Glorious peaceful beautiful surroundings of Florencecourt. Shauna's teaching style is so lovely"

"I'm so grateful for the wellness Wednesdays. First time doing yoga at Florencecourt and I will keep it up. Lovely group of people and I hope the word will spread and the healing and growth continues"

"Such a wonderful yoga session in beautiful surroundings. So relaxing! I loved it."

"We loved every second, thanks for the relaxing morning after night shift!"

"Beautiful practice in nature. Serene, peaceful, centring, calming"



FORGET ME NOT - Bereaved by Suicide Support Group

Aisling Centre was honoured to take on the work of facilitating the Forget Me Not Support Group for People Bereaved by Suicide.

The Support Group meets 8 times per year on the first Monday of each month and new members and drop-ins are always welcome. If you would like further information or to speak to someone before attending the support group, please contact Aisling Centre 028 6632 5811 or email info@theaislingcentre.com.

Clare's Journey

Clare self-referred to the Aisling Centre stating grief as her main reason for counselling. She had a long-term partner with whom she had young children. Life was good with no issues to remark upon, and no money worries. Without any warning Clare returned home one day to find her partner had taken his own life.

This brought a huge range of emotions to her therapy sessions. Initially her grief was foremost, and she was upset in numerous sessions. This was therapeutic for her as she felt that family and close friends were weary of her grief and her sessions were a safe space to cry if she wished to.

As sessions progressed, Clare and her therapist worked through the big issues she now faced in life. Anger with her partner for leaving her like this, with her children was very apparent. This anger was

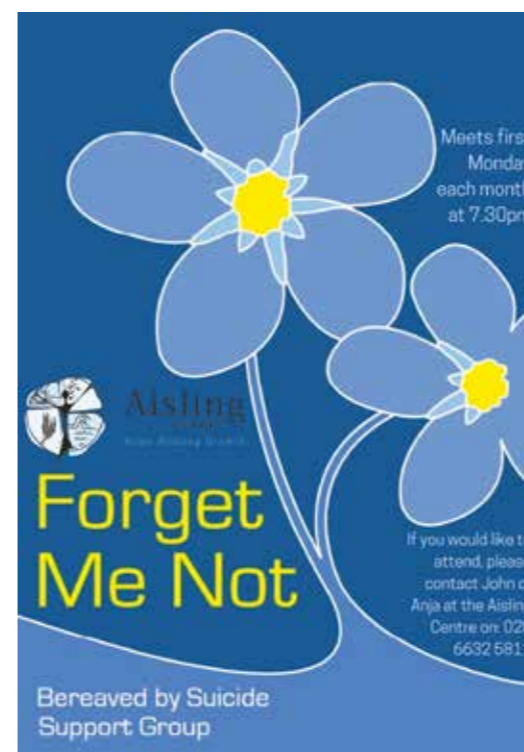
explored and rationalised. Clare realised this was all part of the grieving process.

Clare also felt that her family circle was not supporting her. With exploration Clare realised that she was shutting herself off from those who wanted to help her and that it is not a sign of failure to ask for help. Those around her were there waiting but didn't want to intrude. Clare found her voice to ask for help. She always felt she was the giver in all relationships either monetary or time. Now Clare learned to step back and become the receiver. She also learned that she may not have her partner, but she has many willing hands waiting to help if she allows herself to let them in.

Clare was greatly encouraged by the counselling she received and also by her attendance at Aisling Centre's Forget Me Not Support Group for People Bereaved by Suicide.

Forget me Not Support Group Meeting Dates for 2025

- | Monday 3rd February
- | Monday 3rd March
- | Monday 7th April
- | Monday 12th May
- | Monday 2nd June
- | Monday 1st September
- | Monday 6th October
- | Monday 3rd November



Tree of Lights

Sunday 30th November 2025
3.00pm

A quiet space to remember a loved one lost to suicide.

A place to support others and be supported.

Held annually on the last Sunday in November



HOPE IS VITAL

Hope Healing Growth 2024

"The recurring theme throughout the day from every speaker was the fact of us all inherently being a social people and the importance of connection", explained Aideen McGinley as she thanked the wonderful guest speakers for sharing their experiences and giving of their time so generously.

In his opening message, Adrian Dunbar, Aisling Centre Patron stressed the importance of coming together, "to remind people that through hope healing even the most intractable problems are possible".

Catherine Murrin, author of the "Wisdom of Well-Being", set the tone for the day and reminded us that as a social species we need interaction, we need other people. In her down to earth and practical presentation, she reminded that sharing what resilience we have, has a ripple effect and benefits those around us.

Behavioural consultant, Shannon Hollywood built on the theme of resilience with some fantastic insights into how children and young people communicate. She reminded that there is no such thing as a perfect parent and no one way to parent. She also emphasised the importance of reaching out, "connecting with others and sharing honestly will help lessen any sense of misplaced self-blame when it isn't going perfectly". She also reminded of the importance of finding time to have fun.



Well-known local couple Ciara and Billy touched everyone's hearts as they spoke of the loss of their beloved 8-year-old daughter Ellie and how they developed Ellie's Retreat in her memory. During tragedy, they discovered the healing power of using

your own experience to support others and the importance of receiving support, love and care from those around you. (At the time of this report going to print Billy Nicholl has unexpectedly passed away. We extend our heartfelt sympathies to Ciara, Arran and the wider family circle on their great loss).

Out of her own lived experience of depression, Niamh Brownlee offered advice or suggestions that help her every day. "Plan 3 things; something to achieve, something to enjoy and a time for connection with another". And continuing the theme of resilience and connection she emphasised the importance of always telling someone what is going on inside your head, "don't keep it to yourself". Niamh has recently published her diary, "Struggling to Breathe" the proceeds of which are being donated to charity.



In a very witty interview James Martin talked about his achievements as an actor and showed us that it is ok to be proud of your achievements and success. "Find your voice and be proud of who you are".

Maeve Monaghan of the Now Group spoke about the success of the group in changing mindsets and generating hope in individuals, allowing everyone's potential to be realised and celebrated. Sharing some amusing anecdotes from her childhood she spoke with genuine passion about her work reminding that with the support of the people around you, you find your place among others.

Dynamic mother and daughter duo Margaret and Victoria Geelan talked about their experiences as a family and highlighted how important the arts, creativity and compassion are in a time of conflict and in finding your own voice despite the circumstances.

The final speaker of the day Frank Liddy drew our attention back to ourselves helping us to find silence and calm reminding us that "if you don't go within, you go without".

The day ended with some gentle mindfulness and a spine tingling performance of the Nina Simone classic 'Feeling Good' by Victoria Geelan.



This event could not happen without the support of many people, the inspiring Guest Speaker; e team at the Crest Centre, Belmore Court Motel who provided accommodation for the visiting speakers and Enniskinn Soap House and Belleek Living who donated Raffle prizes and Aisling Centre volunteers who as always went above and beyond. With AV Solutions working on tech and Mahon's Hotel on refreshments everything was in place for a lovely day. Sincere thanks to all.



• SAVE the DATE •

Saturday 11th January 2025

NEVER LOSE HOPE

- > **Geoff Hill** - How to be Happy - A self-help guide for baffled gentle folk
- > **Sara McCracken** - Angel Eyes
- > **Allan Currans** - The Great Escape
- > **Geraldine Mullan** - Never Lose Hope

- > **Shelly Cowan** - Inclusive Futures
- > **Danny Quigley** - Celebration of Life
- > **Niamh McCann** - Never Stop Living
- > **Aidan Dunphy** - Wellness in Rhythm





World Suicide Prevention Day 2023

Despite the dull morning the 2023 dawn Cuilcagh Trek was very well attended and enjoyed by everyone who took part despite the misty summit.

People choose to do the trek for many different reasons. Some to remember a loved one, others as part of their own journey, some for the challenge, while yet others attend to show solidarity and support for people who are struggling with their mental health. For everyone it will be an act of self-care, an opportunity to connect and ground themselves while enjoying the many benefits of being out in nature.

World Suicide Prevention Day, which first started in 2003, is observed across the world on 10th September annually. It aims to start a conversation



about suicide and promote a worldwide message of Hope. This year's theme is 'creating hope through action' and Aisling Centre hopes that organising this event will encourage people who may be considering ending their lives to talk to someone and to remind them that there is help available.

Photographs courtesy of Tim Flaherty.

Helplines Lifeline (0808 808 8000) and Samaritans (116 123) are available 24/7. You can also talk to your GP and Aisling Centre (028 66 325811) is open Monday to Friday 9am - 5pm.

2024 CUILCAGH DAWN TREK will take place on 7th September.



Governance

Treasurer's Report 2023-2024



By way of introduction, this is my first report as Treasurer of Aisling Centre.

I joined the Aisling Centre Board of Directors in July 2023, and I was delighted to be appointed as the new Treasurer in October 2023.

Since joining the Board I have seen how beneficial Aisling Centre is to Fermanagh and its surrounds and how supportive of these services the people of Fermanagh and the wider community are.

As you can see from the chart, we have continued to receive financial income from a range of funders, fundraising and personal and public donations and we thank everyone for their continued support. It is vital in enabling us to do the work we do. This year

the fundraising committee has raised significant funds with the help of volunteers through a number of very successful events. The volunteers are essential to our success as they provide support to fundraising but also promote awareness of the Aisling Centre.

Unfortunately, due to the increasingly difficult economic climate, these efforts are more important than ever. Due to the challenges of financial sustainability faced by Aisling Centre, the Board have maintained a pro-active and focused approach on finances through the implementation of a successful fundraising review, continuous review of overheads and the introduction of cost saving measures throughout the year. Through these steps I am confident Aisling Centre can continue to thrive and operate as a facility to serve multiple needs within the community.

Monica

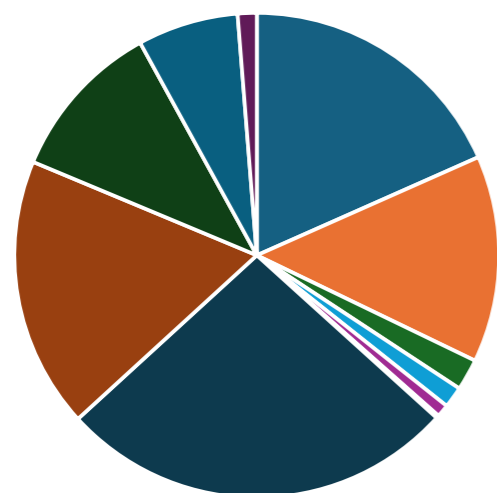
Thank you to all our funders. Your on-going commitment to the work of Aisling Centre is vital in enabling us to do the work we do.



Community Support



Income / Expenditure Breakdown



- VSS
- WHSCT
- SJOG
- Mercy Fund
- NRA
- FODC
- Misl Small grants/contracts
- Fundraising & Donations
- Room Donations
- Programmes/income generations
- BBC CIN



- Counselling / Service Provision
- Fundraising & PR Exps
- Misl Overheads
- Repairs & Maintenance & Cleaning
- Management & Admin

A Gift of Hope

has gifted

to Aisling Centre on behalf of

This gift will be used to support a local person, who may be in distress or despair, through our free, confidential and professional counselling service

Charity Gift Cards



When you purchase an Aisling Centre Gift Card you are Giving the Gift of Hope. Your gift will be used to provide counselling to a local person who is dealing with difficult times in their life and may be in great distress or despair.

In purchasing an Aisling Centre Gift Card, you are buying an ethical and sustainable gift.

You can select from our range of greeting cards, all of which are printed on sustainably sourced paper and depict a beautiful original piece of artwork by a local artist, and if framed, would make a lovely print for any wall.

Some of the ways your gift can help: £10 will provide art supplies for a child coping with loss to use in Play Therapy, £30 will provide crisis support for one person, £100 will help one person receive much needed counselling.

The beauty of this gift is that any amount, no matter how small or large your gift, combined with other donations, will contribute to helping someone in need of support.

Aisling Centre Gift of Hope Cards make a wonderful alternative and sustainable gift idea which will be received with delight while also helping local people find hope and healing. Aisling Centre gift cards are suitable for any occasion and are available to buy all year round.

To purchase your gift card email info@theaislingcentre.com or contact the Centre by telephone (028 66 325811) or in person.

100% of your donations is used to support our free, professional and confidential counselling and well-being service.

Mentoring Programme

Aisling Centre was delighted (with the support of The Mercy Fund) to launch their long-discussed Pilot counselling mentoring programme this year. The programme offered four sessional mentoring places to newly/recently qualified therapist and we were delighted to welcome Monica McFarland, Joy Graham, Rachel Cashel and Jane Labib to the team.

Each counsellor was mentored by a more experienced member of Aisling Centre's therapy team. Regular support meetings were held and it was lovely to see all four mentees grow and develop as therapists while at Aisling Centre.

At the end of the programme three of the therapists had moved on to find work with other employees locally and one joined the sessional team at Aisling Centre.

Due to an unfortunate misunderstanding at the time of leaving one person choose not to participate in the review process. The others expressed their gratitude for the opportunity to work here and for the learning and experience they had gained. Also, the support they received from their mentors and other therapists on the team.

They highlighted aspects of the programme that surpassed their expectations in particular:

- › the support and training,
- › the helpfulness of the admin staff,

- › the welcoming environment, and the lovely rooms,
- › the friendship and support from colleagues,
- › Aisling Centre's consistent structure and professionalism (compared with some previous placements)
- › the hard work of staff and volunteers,
- › the value of the Sisters' donation of the building,
- › the strong sense of support and connectedness, (compared with some previous placements).

This programme has brought many benefits, not least to the clients who have been supported through the additional counselling hours available.

The programme is also contributing to the sustainability of Aisling Centre and mental health services locally. By supporting the development of the skills and experience of new/recently qualified therapists it is helping to ensure a pool of qualified and experienced therapists locally. It has also helped develop the skills of therapists already working in the Centre by adding a new dimension of mentoring to their work which not only recognises their qualifications and experience and their work in the Centre but also gives them increased confidence in their work and an opportunity to develop their supervisory skills.

All in all, it has been a very successful first year for the pilot and we look forward to taking this work forward over the next two years.

Aisling Centre Annual Christmas Cards

Aisling Centre has proudly launched their beautiful new cards just in time for Christmas. This year's unique collection features local photographs kindly donated by Richard Pierce. By purchasing this gorgeous exclusive card your gift will go towards supporting local mental health services.

The cards sit alongside a beautiful set of limited-edition photographic prints also by Richard Pierce who described himself as 'honoured' when approached to provide images for the 2024 Christmas Cards. Explaining that the work of Aisling Centre is very "close to his heart" and that his firm belief is that, "we must all learn to talk about mental illness and the stresses which life brings and support each other as a community."

All the cards produced by Aisling Centre are printed on sustainably sourced paper and depict a beautiful original piece of artwork by a local artist which if framed, would make a lovely print for any wall.

Previous cards featured artwork by Patricia Martinelli, Grainne Knox and Sheila Gilroy-Collins.

The cards can provide delight to family and friends while also helping local people find hope and healing. Aisling Centre cards are suitable for any occasion and are available to buy all year round, but their message of hope is particularly resonant at Christmas.

With three designs, the cards are reasonably priced at £4.50 for a pack of 9. The cards are blank inside which make them suitable for whatever message you wish to share with a loved one. And, with 100% of the proceeds going direct to Aisling Centre you are also helping a local person who may be going through a difficult time.

Cards are available to purchase from Aisling Centre and Westend Coffee shop. For further information contact the Centre 028 66 325811 info@theaislingcentre.com or call in person.



Westend Coffee Shop

Westend Coffee Shop opened on 9th November 1998. Opening the café was a leap of faith but despite the inevitable challenges along the way, 25 years later it is still going strong.

Declan and Barry Muldoon had worked for their good friends Imelda and Peter Byrne in The Railway Hotel since they were both 14; a total of 43 years' service between the two of them! The Byrnes were selling the Hotel, and it seems like the right time to move on. About a year later the café at Aisling Centre was put out for tender and it was just the challenge that they had been waiting for, an opportunity to run their own business and build something for themselves. They were delighted when some of their old colleagues and friends from their 'Railway' days came to work with them.

Facilities were very basic in those early days. The Aisling Centre extension, which today extends down to Head Street, had not been built and the then Coffee Shop was basically one room without any industrial equipment. They started out with basic household equipment, a sink, a boiler and 2-four ringed cookers. They were given their first display unit by Martin Rooney, an example of the goodwill and 'give and take' that they were to experience time and again over the 25-years.

Initially it was quite a challenge. Prior to taking over the Coffee Shop it had not been run as a commercial venture and some people had got used to seeing it as a place to congregate and chat over a free cuppa. It took some time to change that mindset.

There was also the challenge of the stigma around mental health which existed at the time, and for some who viewed Aisling Centre as a religious establishment. The Westend Coffee Shop played their part in helping to dispel those stereotypes.

The groups in Aisling Centre in those early days, particularly the Rainbow Club, AA and the Creche were a great support in helping the coffee shop get established. The neighbourhood businesses and community in the vicinity of Darling Street and local churches also gave their support to the Coffee Shop



“ We have met people we would never have met had we not been here and the friendships we have made over the years. ”

popping in and out regularly and over the years building up strong and supportive friendship. Mary Conway, the then Director at Aisling Centre, also went out of her way to support this new business start-up. And of course, that stalwart of community work, the late Maureen Muldoon, Declan's mum, helped spread the word of the family business among the many groups she was involved in.

Sadly, many of those folk from the early days have now passed on, but Westend Coffee Shop is proud to be still serving their children and grandchildren. "Over the years we have catered for christenings to funerals with everything in between, first communions, confirmations, birthdays, anniversaries, and even a small wedding party."

Community was always at the heart of the Westend Coffee Shop. It became a hub particularly for people in the surrounding rural towns and villages. Messages to be passed on were left at the Coffee Shop; a 'cub' who missed the bus could be sure of access to a phone and a safe place to wait until collected. Everyone was welcome and for some families it was a place where they could be sure a vulnerable family member would get a meal. To this day people will still say to them "thank you for being so good to....." and Barry's reply is "you couldn't be bad to them". The Muldoons make it their business to get to know their customers, their names, their



likes and dislikes. They appreciate their patrons and always have a welcome.

They enjoyed the many 'characters' who frequented the coffee shop with many a yarn shared over the years. Sonny Haren from Derrygonnelly, was a special favourite. A regular in the coffee shop, he had a favourite table which he always sat at. If it was occupied when he came in, he would patiently wait until it came free. Even the other customers knew where Sonny liked to sit. So much so, that when Sonny passed away Declan and Barry had a little plaque made, which to this day marks 'Sonny's Place'. So important was the Westend Coffee shop in Sonny's life that Declan and Barry were given the privilege of carrying the coffin at his funeral.

As the business became established it grew from a coffee shop to a café; from their first offering of a turkey and ham dinner at Christmas, to daily dinners which to this day are served with fresh vegetables. They branched out into outside catering, including nine happy years at "The Pit Stop" in Donnelly's Cars in Enniskillen and a 'meals on wheels' service where they always took the time for a wee chat.

When asked about their worst experience in running the coffee shop Declan and Barry looked at each and laughing said, "The day the function room roof collapsed!" Unknown to anyone, a radiator was leaking under the floor in newly refurbished upstairs counselling rooms. This was causing untold damage to the room below. They recalled that the fire alarm was tripping but despite many visits from the technician the source of the problem could not be found until, without any warning, the ceiling in the function room collapsed, spewing dirty water and large chunks of masonry on top of the unsuspecting people below and smashing all the tableware. Fortunately, no one was seriously hurt, just badly bruised and shocked. The 'boys' laugh about it now, but it was no laughing matter at the time.

One of the highlights of their 25 years was meeting Mary McAleese and her husband Martin when they visited Aisling Centre, and of course they played host to local talent as well, with actors Adrian Dunbar and Ciaran McMenamin popping in for Niall's very fine coffee when they are home in Enniskillen.

But what means the most to them is the community of the Coffee Shop, their regulars, the people who call in once or twice a year, a place where people feel safe to wait before, or relax after, their counselling appointments. The lovely working relationship they



have with the Island Artists whose paintings adorn the walls and who enjoy their weekly cuppa and chat after their class. The fantastic people they have met over the years, "We have met people we would never have met had we not been here and the friendships we have made over the years" the community of the coffee shop is special.

This well-run family business is an essential cog in the community that makes up Aisling Centre. Declan, Barry and Niall (the 'boys') are loyal friends, always willing to lend a helping hand or join in a bit of craic. Thanks for 25 great years and many more to come.

25 Years of Service

WESTEND COFFEE SHOP
Café & Outside Catering

Monday - Saturday 8.00am - 3.00pm

FOR INFORMATION CONTACT
Barry - 028 6634 0475 / 0797997 5000

"Very friendly and welcoming. Had a lovely family feel in café, felt like a safe and welcoming space. Always had the coffee and scone waiting - lovely to feel valued as a customer"

Community Hub

Support Groups & Networks



AA - Alcoholics Anonymous
Three meetings per week
For further information contact
Aisling Centre



Aware NI
Support group for adults affected
by depression
Meets weekly - Tuesdays 7-9pm
For further information email
sarah@aware-ni.org



Escapists
Support group for carers
Wednesdays 10.30am-1pm
For further information contact
Aisling Centre



Carer's Support Hub
Support for Fermanagh & Omagh
carers, run by WHSCT
Last Thursday each month 11am-
1pm
For further information contact
Judith on 028 6863 1234



Fermanagh Pride
Open group aiming to provide
a safe space for the LGBTQIA+
community.
Meets fortnightly on Thursdays at
7pm.
For further information
contact 0736 8503 661 or
fermanaghpride@gmail.com

Workshops & Classes



Island Artists
Wednesdays 2-4pm
For further information contact
Maura
T: 079 6822 5704



Little Mess Fermanagh
Messy play & learning for children
6 months to 5 years
Meets Fridays at 10.30am
For further information contact
Colette on fermanagh@
thelittlesensory.co

Yoga Classes



Yoga With Christine (Cornyn)
Mondays at 5.30-6.30pm
For further information contact
077 2255 0040

Elena (Kelly)
Tuesdays at 7-8pm
For further information contact
0789 4037 450

Leila (Williams)
Tuesdays at 7-8pm
For further information contact
075 9402 6531

Yoga with Alasdair (McKay)
Wednesdays at 6.30-7.30pm
For further information contact
0777 6290 903



Genny Brown (Yoga Ocean)
Thursdays 12-1.30pm
For further information contact
028 8954 1994

Teresa Cleary (TLC Yoga)
Thursdays 6-9pm (3 classes,
6-7pm men only)
For further information contact
079 2369 4523

Other Services



Cherish Sure Start
Crèche & Family Support
Workshops
For further information contact
Maeve Linton
T: 028 6862 1970
E: cherish@archlc.com



Westend Coffee Shop
Mondays-Saturdays 8am-3pm
For further information contact
Barry T: 028 6634 0475 /
M: 079 7997 5000



ZEST
Healing the Hurt of Self Harm &
Suicide Counselling Service
For further information contact
ZEST. T: 028 7126 6999
www.zestni.org

Reflections from the Team

A Last Word

After many years of dedicated service, two long serving Directors of Aisling Centre step down from their roles on the Board. **Dr Ann McDermott, (2001-2023)** and **Mr Neville Armstrong (2002-2023)**. They will be greatly missed. We thank them for their hard work and commitment to Aisling Centre and leave a last word to them.



"It is time for new blood and the fresh thinking and energy that new members will bring. I enjoyed my time on the Board, and I will miss it but, I will always be a friend to Aisling Centre. Thanks to everyone I worked with over the years, you were all an inspiration".

Ann



"As a Director I have served loyally and faithfully through good times and bad times, and I am delighted to leave with the organisation I love so much in such good health. Wishing the staff and the brilliant board all the best for the years ahead".

Neville

Aisling Centre Welcomes New Trustees

Aisling Centre is delighted to welcome two new charity trustees, **Maeve Devlin** and **Monica Corrigan** to their Board of Directors. The new appointees bring with them a wealth of skills and experience in good governance and financial management. Equally important is the interest both Maeve and Monica have in their local community and the promotion of good mental health and emotional well-being.



Solicitor Maeve is a partner in her family firm, Maguire and Corrigan Solicitors based in Enniskillen, while Monica is a Chartered Accountant and currently working as an Internal Audit Manager in the Banking Industry. Both women have long enjoyed volunteering. Maeve is also a Director for Community Advice Fermanagh and has volunteered with Fermanagh Friends of the Cancer Centre. She also volunteered with the Law Centre NI when she lived in Belfast and of course many people will know Maeve from the St Michael's Church Choir.

Speaking about her appointment Maeve spoke of her experiences as a volunteer with the Law Centre and the challenges people faced. She said, *"I am pleased to become involved in the work of Aisling Centre, it is a very worthwhile charity which does great work in our community offering invaluable support to many people"*. She went on to talk about how this need for support for good mental health services has been

highlighted by the covid pandemic.

Monica has a strong interest in both mental and physical wellbeing and is aware of the mental health benefits of physical exercise. She enjoys running and yoga as part of her own self-care. She also actively participates in well-being opportunities available through her work. Monica has a keen interest in community development and has volunteered with Barretstown, ChildVision and the Irish Cancer Society when she worked in Dublin. Since moving back home she has joined Enniskillen Running Club and helped raised funds for local charities.

Monica is looking forward to serving on the Board of Aisling Centre, *"I am aware the Aisling Centre offers excellent services in Fermanagh and its surrounds and I would like to be able to support this work as a member of the Board. I look forward to increasing my awareness and understanding of mental health needs and contributing to the support of this"*.

Chairperson Alison Annan expressed her delight with the new appointments. *"It is wonderful to have two such able and enthusiastic young women join our team. Brilliant to see young people moving back to Fermanagh and getting involved in the local community. Both Monica and Maeve will be a great asset to Aisling Centre, and we are all looking forward to working with them"*.

Farewell Reflections

Aisling Centre is very fortunate in that we tend to have a very low turnover of personnel. However, in the last few years we have had some people from our admin and therapy teams who have moved on for various reasons.

Receptionist **Joan Thompson** has retired after almost a quarter of a century of dedicated service. Joan and her colleague and friend **Marie Greene** who retired last year after 23 years of service were two wonderful and dedicated members of the Aisling team. They have seen many come and go through the doors of Aisling Centre, all met with a warm welcome, kindness and absolute confidentiality and professionalism. Totally committed to the ethos of Aisling Centre and a pleasure to work with.

Fionnuala Curran also retired this year. She joined our admin team in the midst of the Covid-19 pandemic and fitted right in, a joy to work with.

"Of all the many different jobs I have had over the years, my time at Aisling Centre ranks as one of the



best. It was hugely rewarding and fulfilling to be part of such a fantastic team doing such worthwhile and wonderful work. I have many great memories and cherish my time there." (Fionnuala)

Joan's Reflects

"I started work in Aisling Centre on 4th December 1999 as Receptionist/Secretary and have worked there for almost 25 years, retiring at the end of June 2024. I am very sorry to be leaving but felt it was time to let new, younger people take over and bring the reception desk into the 21st Century.

I am looking forward to not having to, get up so early 3 days a week to make it to work on time, arriving at 8.30am to open the doors and bring the place to life.

Aisling Centre has changed a lot over the years, always changing for the better and improving the outcome for the many people who attend the Centre for much needed help and support. One thing that has definitely changed for the better is so many men now feel they can come for support.

There was a small staff back then in 1999, in the pre-email and internet era. The number of staff has grown over the years. I have enjoyed meeting new staff and was privileged to meet many of them as they came for interview and then to welcome them on their first day of work. Staff have come and gone and it has been lovely to get to know so many wonderful people over the years.

My very good friend Marie retired last year, she started work about 9 months after me as the full-time receptionist/secretary and it was good to have someone there for so long who also had the long-term knowledge of the Centre. It has been strange not having her there for the last year. It was also lovely to have the staff in the Westend

Coffee Shop on hand for all that time, a constant over the last 25 years.

It was wonderful to see the Centre rent and extend into the next-door building to provide more counselling rooms in 2023. This has been championed by a wonderful Board of Directors and a very forward-thinking management team. I wish the team good luck with this venture and that it helps improve and expand the excellent work provided by the Centre.

I am looking forward to retirement. I hope to catch up on all the hobbies that I have neglected over the years, my cardmaking, crocheting and cross stitch, it will be lovely to find more time to work on them. I really do need to sort a drawer full of photographs into scrapbooks, that has needed sorting for a long time. I will also find more time to keep up with the voluntary work I do with two older people's groups now that I am giving in to being one myself!

One of the most wonderful things I am looking forward to is finding more time to spend with my family, especially my daughter and my 2-year-old grandson. It has been difficult to do this up till now as our work schedules clashed and getting a time when we could meet up was difficult to arrange.

I have enjoyed my time working for Aisling Centre. I have learned so much and gained so much over the years. Who knows, you can never tell when I might just pop in again on a day or two in the future".

Congratulations to **Aoife McManus** who has moved on from Aisling Centre to a journalism position with Derry Now. Aoife worked closely with the fundraising sub-committee and enjoyed her work with Aisling Centre, particularly organising the fundraising events and getting out and about and meeting the public and Aisling Centre volunteers. We wish her every success in her new job.

Therapists **Helen Murphy, Nicholas May, Rosemary Cupples** and **Zahada Murray** also moved on from their work at Aisling Centre. Helen to reduce her hours, and the others to find work closer to their homes.

"I can happily describe my experience of working in the Aisling Centre as welcoming, warm, safe and supportive for clients and counsellors alike" (Helen)

"My time at The Aisling has been one of great depth and richness, whilst not without its challenges and disappointments, as will always be the case in this work, overall, I feel the work deepened my experience immensely and strengthened my capacity to hold whilst it also offered me a safe community and energetic holding in which to process my own losses and trauma.

I will miss the friendly acknowledgments and warm exchanges in passing within that rather strange labyrinthine space, which in this very metaphor mirrors both the inner world of the person, the 'individual', and the complexity of the interconnected web of the world we share.



You have all touched me in ways and I will take that felt sense of community and connection and treasure it." (Nicholas)

"Working in the Aisling Centre was such a joy for me. I really missed it. I very much enjoyed being part of the team and felt very well supported by John and Fiona in my work with the clients. Aisling Centre is something that is unique to Enniskillen; Fermanagh folk are privileged to be served by such a wonderful service. I wish you all many successful years ahead". (Rosemary)

"I enjoyed my time at the Aisling Centre, it was a real privilege to have been part of a team where all the clinical and support staff were welcoming and supportive. I felt I gain invaluable experience during my time at the Aisling Centre. Thank you" (Zahada).

These wonderful warm people genuinely cared about the people who used Aisling Centre. Thank you all for the great work you did at Aisling Centre each of you in your different roles forming part of the jigsaw that makes Aisling Centre a special place to work and a safe space for the people who use our services.

A huge thank you and all our warmest wishes for a bright future. You are missed.



Meet the Team



Adrian Dunbar
Patron



Sr Edel Bannon
Honorary Life
Member

Board of Directors

- Alison Annan - Chairperson
- Deirdre Kane - Vice-Chairperson
- Marshall Coalter - Secretary
- Monica Corrigan (Appointed May 23) - Treasurer

Ann McDermott (Resigned October 23)

Aideen McGinley

Grainne Scott

Iain Kennedy

Maeve Devlin (Appointed May 23)

Neville Armstrong (Resigned October 23)

Richard Smith

Roberta Hamilton

Staff

- Bridie Sweeney - Service Director
- John Bennett - Clinical Lead
- Patricia Kelly - Admin/Facilitates Manager

Clinical Team

- Clare Love
- Edel McGuinness
- Sharon Fitzpatrick

Administration Team

- Aoife McManus (Left June 24)
- Fiona Beatty
- Fionnuala Curran (Retired June 24)
- Indre Burns (Joined July 23)
- Jimmy Britton
- Joan Thompson (Retired June 24)

Sessional CT & Well-Being

- Sheila Johnston
- Siobhan Conlon

Sessional Psychotherapists

- Ann Farrell
- Aine Martin
- Aine McCaffrey
- Anja Rosler
- Cahir Maguire
- Edith Mathews
- Fiona McCaughey
- Helen Murphy (Left June 23)
- Holly Reid
- Jane Labib
- Joy Graham
- Karen Whaley
- Michelle Halpin
- Monica McFarland
- Nicholas May (Left Aug 23)
- Nuala McGovern
- Patricia McGovern
- Rachel Cashel
- Rosa Furey
- Rosemary Cupples (Left June 23)
- Seana McKeaney
- Zahada McElmurray (Left Aug 23)

We would also like to acknowledge the role of our friends and volunteers, too many to mention individually, who play an invaluable role in supporting Aisling Centre through a range of activities fund raising and awareness raising.



Supporting positive mental health in the community for over 30 years

100+ sessions of counselling every week

"This is an excellent service, I have availed of it a number of years ago, it was excellent then too"



£10 will provide art supplies for a child to use in play therapy



£30 will provide crisis support for a suicidal person



£100 will help one person receive counselling

"I have no doubt I'd be dead if I hadn't had this service"

Consider a regular gift

no matter how small

By choosing to give a regular donation to Aisling Centre, you can make a huge difference in the life of a person in distress or despair.

We will make your gift count

Help us Give Hope. Every penny you donate will be used to support service provision. Over the year as little as £5 per month could provide counselling to help save a life.

Can't make a regular gift?

Other ways to help us offer this much needed local service

- a one off donation
- donate in celebration e.g. in lieu of birthday gifts, wedding favours etc...
- a bequest in your will
- nominate us as your work place charity
- undertake a personal challenge like a sponsored walk
- organise an event

Donating through Gift Aid means Aisling Centre can claim an extra 25p for every £1 you give. It will not cost you any extra.

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INSTRUCTIONS TO YOUR BANK/BUILDING SOCIETY TO PAY BY STANDING ORDER

To the Manager: _____
Bank/Building Society _____
Address: _____

Post Code: _____

We/I hereby authorise and request you to DEBIT our/my account as follows:-

Account Name: _____
Account No: _____
Branch Sort Code: _____
Sender Reference (to show on sender statement) _____

With the sum of £ _____ per month commencing on _____ and every month thereafter until further notice from us/me in writing.

And CREDIT to _____
Aisling Centre Company Ltd No 4 Account – Account No 01043-538 - Sort Code: 93-80-76
AIB Bank Ltd, Enniskillen Branch

Authorised Signature/s _____

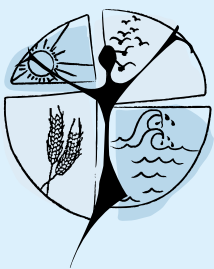
Date:/...../.....

NOTIFICATION TO AISLING CENTRE - PLEASE DETACH AND RETURN TO ADDRESS OVERLEAF

Name: _____
Address: _____
Post Code: _____
Email: _____

Gift Aid it Please tick
I am a UK taxpayer and understand that if I pay less Income Tax and/or Capital Gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all of my donations annually, it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

“ My experience has been life changing. I am leaving today feeling so much stronger and with so many more tools to help me through day to day. I cannot express my thanks enough. ”



Aisling
centre

Hope Healing Growth

Aisling Centre

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Co Fermanagh BT74 7DP

Telephone: 0044 28 66 325811

Email: info@theaislingcentre.com

www.theaislingcentre.com

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Registered Company NO NI027011



The Queen's Award
for Voluntary Service