

Aisling
centre
Hope Healing Growth

Annual Report

2022 – 2023

*“From you enter inside the Center
you meet welcome”*

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Iain Kennedy BEM

"Try to make a difference in your own way."

Congratulations to Director Iain Kennedy BEM who received this honour in 2023 in recognition of his voluntary contribution to the community. Most notably his work with Enniskillen Royal Boat Club, Erne Integrated Primary School and Aisling Centre.

Thank you, Iain, for all you do for Aisling Centre. Congratulations on your well-deserved recognition.

Chairperson's Foreword

The past year has brought much change to Aisling Centre, both in terms of physical growth and an ever-increasing demand for services. To meet this growing need, we were delighted to end the year having secured a 3-year lease on the adjacent building, No 39 Darling Street which will provide extra counselling rooms.

Strategic development is one of the key responsibilities of a board of directors. The recent review of our strategic plan was timely in the current climate of change and uncertainty. A comprehensive review was undertaken that included robust facilitated workshops with directors and staff focus groups as well as extensive and confidential stakeholder consultations which brought forward some interesting ideas and very encouraging feedback. The updated 3-year strategic plan begins April 23 and reaffirms the core ethos and function of Aisling Centre.

No plan operates without someone to deliver it and at Aisling Centre we are very blessed with a dedicated administrative and clinical team and complementary therapists capably led by our management team, Bridie Sweeney, Service Director, John Bennett, Clinical Lead and Patricia Kelly, Admin/Facilities Manager. I am deeply indebted to all for their commitment and sterling work.

This year we said goodbye to some long serving members of the team Marie Greene, administrator and Brenda Wynne-McKervey, psychotherapist. Both had given more than 20 years of dedicated service. We thank them all most sincerely and wish them well for the future. We were also delighted to welcome some new people to the team in both administrative and counselling roles.

A significant milestone in the history of Aisling Centre occurred this year when, in an enormous act of generosity, the Sisters of Mercy gifted the building at 37 Darling Street to the charity. We were very humbled to be entrusted with this amazing gift which will help secure the future of Aisling Centre for generations to come.

We celebrated this momentous occasion, with a delightful afternoon tea party with the Sisters at the Westend Café. Linen tablecloths, Royal Albert China, delightful cakes and lots of chat, were the order of the day as Aisling Centre played host to friends old and new.

We continue to work towards improved efficiency and accessibility through the upgrading of our IT systems, and the building of a new more accessible website. The installation of solar panels has also greatly added to the efficiency of our service.

I would like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our funders. Also, to the local community and our fundraising sub-committee for their steadfast support. We are totally indebted to them and enriched by their ongoing care and kindness at a time when financial support was never more needed.

I would also like to thank my vice-chair person, Roberta Hamilton, and my fellow directors for their commitment and continued support throughout the year. Huge congratulations to Iain Kennedy who received a BEM from King Charles in the 2023 New Year's Honours' List for his dedicated and selfless service to the community.

It's my pleasure as Chairperson to present this Annual Report for 2022-2023 and a privilege to be associated with it. I look forward to the year ahead where we will look forward to welcoming new directors to the board and the piloting of our counsellor mentoring scheme.

Alison



Reports



Service Director Report

Situated on the quiet of Darling Street, Aisling Centre building is not particularly remarkable. But behind that discrete façade the most remarkable and transformative work happens every day.

The dream of welcome and hospitality that inspired the establishment of Aisling Centre still forms part of its core ethos. A recent, very brief encounter, with the work of two theologians Pete Greig and Henri Nouwen caused me to reflect on the importance of those two simple words 'welcome' and 'hospitality'. Pete Greig describes listening as the "highest form of hospitality" while Henri Nouwen notes that "True listeners no longer have an inner need to make their presence known. They are free to receive, to welcome, to accept". He also said that "The beauty of listening is that those who are listened to start feeling accepted, start taking their (own) words more seriously and discovering their own true selves".

Aisling Centre works hard to create a safe space where people who are dealing with difficult and challenging life experiences can be heard without judgement or expectation. It is within this safe space that our fantastic therapy team supports clients to begin this difficult but often transformative journey of healing and growth.

"I found counselling hard but also so so helpful".



Clinical Lead Report

Every one of us knows what it is like to go through a period of feeling 'not ok', a time of feeling emotionally or mentally distressed, unhappy, empty or insecure. It is often a sign that something is bothering or troubling a person when one part of ourselves, our mind, is not at its strongest or healthiest.

We probably become aware of it through emotions like sadness, anxiety, anger, low mood or sometimes through our behaviours, ways we're acting that are out of character like drinking too much or shutting ourselves off from people around us.

In most cases this can be related to something, maybe personal problems or challenging life circumstances and events. Fortunately, we mostly experience it at the lower end of the scale where we can tolerate the unease or distress, and the good thing is that most of the time we are able to deal with it and get through it drawing on our own resources, our past experiences and what we know has helped us get through similar situations in the past.

Recently sitting in Aisling Centre with a group of people who had all experienced a significant trauma in their lives, one person asked of the others 'What do you do to get through this and to recover?'

At first it seemed that there was no answer to the question, but then one by one, individuals in the room spoke about what they had done that helped them.

Aisling Centre is fortunate to have Alison Annan, Chairperson, Roberta Hamilton, Vice-Chairperson and a steadfast Board of Directors. All of whom are focused on the well-being of the charity, our clients and the team. I thank them sincerely for their on-going guidance and support.

We are also fortunate to have many excellent organisations working out of the Centre. They contribute so much to the local community while supporting the work of Aisling Centre.

As always, I would like to pay tribute to the dedicated team at Aisling Centre staff, sessional and volunteers, all of whom are doing a phenomenal job. We are fortunate to have a low staff turnover at Aisling Centre but this year we were sad to say good-bye to two stalwarts of the team, Brenda Wynne-McKervey and Marie Greene. Thank you for your dedication and commitment. It has been a pleasure to work with you both. You will be missed.

We are ever appreciative of our funders and our many supporters in the local community. We couldn't do this work without you. However, in a time of growing need and the current financial climate, securing funding is a greater challenge than ever. As a charity Aisling Centre is no stranger to challenge and we will continue to work hard in the year ahead to meet the growing need of the many courageous people who come forward to use our services.

Bridie

Before we knew it, there was a list of helpful ideas. Help that is immediately available to everyone as a first step.

And what had been of some help for this group of people? - educating themselves about their issue and their symptoms eg anxiety, depression etc; talking to others who had similar experiences; doing something they enjoy, perhaps walking or exercising; trying to eat well and sleep well; spending time in good and helpful company; having realistic expectations and being accepting of bad days and setbacks.

It was clear there was no one answer and what worked for one might not be what worked for another, but while no one was able to 'fix' things exactly as they would like, everyone was able to take some control and take important steps to look after themselves.

In Aisling Centre we offer a dream of wholeness for everyone through the range of programmes and services available. Fortunately, we are all continuing to get better at recognising when upset and distress is getting too much to manage alone and having the courage to ask for help, and in doing so, helping to prevent the problem from developing into something bigger.

Working here it continues to be our privilege to welcome people from the Fermanagh community and beyond who are reaching out for that professional help to deal with their distress. We understand the trust you place in us and assure you that we will do our best to help you achieve your dream of wholeness.

John

Services

Counselling, Psychotherapy & Play Therapy

"I would like to thank the Aisling Centre for all the help and support shown to me. I feel it truly saved my life. Enniskillen people are so blessed to have this service".

668 people attended counselling with a total of 5497 sessions of counselling offered.

Aisling Centre recognises the uniqueness of each person and holds a dream of wholeness for all who struggle with life's difficulties and dilemmas. No matter what age, each person is filled with potential and the opportunity to make choices that can enhance life. We welcome and value each person because no matter what their current distress, we believe in the capacity for healing and growth of the human person. This section of the report gives a brief snapshot of that work.

ADULT COUNSELLING SERVICE

Self	33%
GP	39%
Other Health Professionals	21%
Misc. other	7%

"This service has been invaluable in guiding me through a very dark time and giving me hope and the tools for a more positive and happier future. Thank you so much".

I wish I had done it years ago

Jaime is a male who is in his late 20's and referred himself to the Aisling Centre due to a long history of panic attacks. Jaime explained that he has been suffering with these since his adolescent years and has a fear of death that can trigger these panic attacks. He is frustrated with them as they can be quite invasive, although he explained he doesn't seem to have them at his workplace, only at home. A trigger could be something like watching a movie with a death scene, and feeling very tired or stressed can also be factors in bringing them on. Since taking a job with rotational night shifts, he has noticed that he is more susceptible around those periods when working nights. Jaime, has high expectations from himself, both at work and at home. He accepts all work challenges, doesn't ask for support when needed and claims to others that he is ok, when he is not.

Explaining the overwhelming physical and mental effects are exhausting, and fearing the attacks themselves, each time they happen they can trigger more. His family can try and comfort him, but it doesn't prevent them from taking place. Jaime has recently moved in with his fiancé, has a healthy relationship with her and his family of origin, and is especially close with his mother.

Building a safe, non-judgmental, confidential space in the counselling room, Jaime was able to explore some of his younger years and reflected on an experience he had around his first significant family bereavement. Making some connections and processing this, was helpful to Jaime: making sense of it, normalising it, and feeling validated. He also did some work managing his anxiety. He learned to identify what his anxiety looked like and what his choices were to manage it and over the weeks of counselling, he could identify some significant benefits to working this way. This in turn, naturally encouraged positive changes in his life and brought hope.

During his work on his panic attacks, Jaime reflected on how his family's normal way to cope was not to talk about family challenges outside the house. Jaime internalised this and made some connections to how it manifested in him, which led him to not communicate with others when he feels challenged. Learning to think about this in an alternative more helpful way, Jaime chooses to begin to share his challenges, ask for support and voice his concerns with others. This helped again to benefit him with small steps to positive changes.

During the latter and final sessions, Jaime shared that his panic attacks have not been happening in many weeks, and the anxiety has been much more manageable. He has been watching movies without panic attacks and even enjoying these with his fiancé. Work has improved due to using the problem-solving and communication skills he has worked on. Family relationships are much more open to discussion around naming and normalising any challenging emotions, and this has brought relationships even closer. When finishing with counselling, Jaime said that he would continue to practice these skills and keep moving forward with his healing. He was very thankful that he took the step to attend counselling at the Aisling Centre, saying that he wished he had of done it years ago.

Feedback

Overall Experience of the Service	
Excellent	85%
Good	7%
Fair	0%
Poor	1%
No Ans	7%

Support/Service Received	
Excellent	95%
Good	5%
Fair	0%
No Ans	0%

"The level of upset/distress varied from week-to-week depending on how I was feeling but always left my sessions feeling better in myself even if I was upset. I felt very supported throughout my journey".

Levels of Distress		
	Before	After
None	0.5%	21%
Mild	3%	57%
Moderate	27%	19%
High	69%	2%
No Ans	0.5%	1%

"I have had reservations about counselling, having had negative experiences previously. On completion of this course of counselling, I have found it positive and beneficial".

Outcomes	
Feeling more positive about the future	97%
Identified improvement	94%

"With her calm demeanour and complete professionalism my counsellor guided me through the traumas that were affecting my life and helped me to start to resolve/come to terms with them".

"I am so appreciative of the help I have been given as I don't think I would have been ever able to recover from abuse without this".

Creating a place of safety

This case study is based on sessions I completed recently with a client, who was referred for issues in relation to anxiety and low mood. This was a middle-aged lady who worked in the caring profession. She was experiencing panic attacks, which were having a very restrictive and negative impact on her quality of life. It was confessed in the first session that it was such a struggle for her to attend and had taken a lot of courage and effort for to be there.

Listening to my client, whom I will call Mary, there had been a lot of traumatic events in her early life. Creating a place of safety was important. The consistency of weekly meetings, where she felt no judgement, helped build trust which provided safety, a place to look at early life experiences. Mary's father had been in the security forces and she told me that fear had played a huge part in her experience as a child. She spoke about the trauma of 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.

She spoke about a bomb in her area, when she was a teenager and constant flashbacks. She had never been able to speak about the horror of this. I was very aware of the defences that Mary had built up, helping her to cope. 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 Mary to express what she couldn't put into words.

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

"The service took me from a bad place and helped me a lot. I'm over the moon to have got the opportunity to avail of the service. I would fully recommend it to anyone".

When the Time is Right

As counsellors when we receive a referral about a client, we have very minimal details. The first session we have together is an assessment session and within that, we work with clients to understand what they hope for in their counselling experience and to work out if counselling is the right thing for this person at this time.

Rowna came to her assessment session because of the domestic abuse she had been suffering for the last 20 years. She had initially attended her GP, suffering from symptoms of anxiety and depression, but had not felt able at that point to disclose the root cause of the symptoms. The GP had prescribed medication and made a referral to the Aisling Centre but whilst on the waiting list, a serious attack on her had resulted in Police Involvement and an emergency move away from home.

In her assessment session, Rowna talked about feeling all over the place. She had been involved with the Police, Women's Aid, Social Services and the Housing Department and had a multiplicity of appointments to attend. Her crisis was now.

Counselling works best when a client has some sort of stability, as in itself counselling can bring up challenging thoughts and memories. Counselling also requires some "headspace" to enable our clients to process some of our conversations in their own time and space.

Evaluation Feedback

What worked well?

When asked what worked well for them clients focused on two main areas: their therapy and the atmosphere in the Centre. They talked about the things that made them feel safe, welcome, respected and supported.

Being able to attend for in-person where they could talk and were listened to without judgement.

"Face to face sessions, after 3 - 4 sessions I really looked forward to the upcoming session. Thanks to your support I now have a confidence on managing my mental health positively going forward".

"Knowing that I could say anything without being judged".

"Being able to open up about things I haven't before".

"Being able to talk freely and being listened to as I worked through past experiences and feelings".

"The non-judgemental environment and being able to take my time and be emotional without being judged".

"Kindness, support and attention".

The Professional Service

"Listening and understanding from a professional".

"Having protected time and space to make sense of what was happening in my mind".

"The fact it was holistic mind body soul and spiritual issues addressed in a non-judgemental way".

As Rowna talked about what was going on for her, she came to the conclusion that this was not the right time for her to attend the Aisling Centre. We did however talk together about what was happening for her and to reflect on how this took up all her available time and energy at present. We talked about how her only peaceful moments were when she was driving and listening to classical music and how important this small moment was to her just now.

As we concluded her session with the decision that counselling was not right for her at present, Rowna stated that actually coming into the building and realising there was a place to go afterwards, was in itself very helpful. She appreciated the opportunity to have a conversation about how counselling might be of use and noticing that our building felt like a safe space to her. She plans to continue her work with Women's Aid and to contact the Aisling Centre when she feels the time is right for her.

"Validation - awareness of abuse. Information about biological responses to situation eg stress and physical illness".

"Able to talk to someone neutral".

"The space given - it was private and comfortable to talk in".

"I have found the whole experience wonderful. Honestly this has changed me".

"Consistent appointments. Face to face interactions rather than phone/zoom".

"Helping me understand myself, values, thought processes".

"Very good and very professional. I was shown great compassion and understanding".

"Experience was very good. Was in a very low place at the start and now feel so much better".

"Sessions were kept the same day/time each week".

"Talking with somebody outside the family. Very very good".

"Structured and tailored to my concerns/worries/feelings".

Flexibility Around Sessions

"Being able to come in face to face to talk. But also having that option to still have your appointment over the phone or Zoom if needed".

"Time of session worked around personal circumstance. Sessions with an amazing therapist totally made me feel at ease, very approachable, easy to open up to. Felt comfortable throughout every session".

"Telephone counselling worked well. At time too anxious to leave the house. It was more comfortable - above all brilliant".

"Doing sessions by Zoom really worked, really helpful as I am a wheelchair user. I felt safe doing my sessions from my own home and so could be more open in what I was disclosing in the sessions. Not stressed or panicked about being on time, access, parking etc".

The Welcome Received

"First impression, front of house, very kind and went the extra mile by checking 'any concerns'".

"Friendly welcoming from entry - place of trust"

"Waiting room very relaxed, and when I was so nervous the first appointment. Makes you know you're not alone. Felt welcome".

"The whole place - everyone was welcoming. There was a lovely atmosphere and it felt comfortable".

"I felt very safe, welcoming and reassured by all at the Aisling Centre".

"Also feeling a sense of security in the Aisling Centre. I always felt good coming

The confidentiality and warm welcome".

"Welcoming atmosphere, clean and quiet environment. Helpful, sympathetic staff".

"Excellent conditions of the rooms and comfortable environment".

"The communication was good".

"I was made feel very welcome and comfortable. I was surprised how at ease I felt".

"Very comfortable waiting area. Calm, Clean. Music and purifier all very relaxing pre session".

"The waiting area was soothing".

"Professionalism, privacy of waiting areas, and calm".

"Atmosphere - calm and polite. I loved the private room - cosy, warm etc. My dealings with everyone was welzcoming and polite".

The Tools and Resources

"All the practical advice, tips on stress management and tips on how to deal with anxiety. All the info I got has been a great help".

"I learnt a lot about myself and coping mechanisms for the future".

"My counsellor had a lot of techniques that worked really well for me".

"Being given resources to look back on like a workbook and handout".

"The breathing techniques, the tapping method".

"Being fit to talk to somebody and helping me to think in different ways".

"Exercises to help me remain calm, focused and grounded".

"Talking learning how manage life better. Finding that I am better person than I thought I was".

"The mindfulness and learning different points of view".

Survival Toolkit

Siobhan is a middle-aged woman, who lived alone and had a history of depression with anxiety. She recognised and was concerned over a recurrence and increase of symptoms such as lower mood and motivation, increased hypervigilance, dissociation and avoidance etc. She was also concerned about the upcoming Christmas period. After seeing her GP and having her anti-depressant medication reviewed, a referral was made to Aisling Centre. Siobhan had previously attended Aisling Centre, twice over the last ten years.

Throughout the assessment process, Siobhan was clearly guarded, suspicious at times of the therapist's need to ask the questions that form part of the process and of signing the contract. The therapist worked to help Siobhan relax and build rapport and trust in the therapeutic relationship. The opening three sessions focussed primarily on safeguarding, identifying triggers and situations that Siobhan was currently finding overwhelming and that led to thoughts of suicide. An agreed safety plan of how to manage these risks, including what to do, and who to involve, if Siobhan felt she wasn't coping, was put in place.

After seeing and feeling the investment in her well-being from her therapist, Siobhan began to open up more. The more trust she gained in herself, the more resilient she became in managing her triggers outside of therapy and, the more she divulged in sessions.

Siobhan had really good awareness of her depression, it's origin, recurrent nature and that it is a lifelong companion for her, something to be managed. She described the therapy she has previously received from Aisling Centre as part of her "survival toolkit".

We used the agreed safety plan to navigate the Christmas period, now normal relations after covid had resumed. Siobhan saw this as the trigger point for her recent depressive episode,

In counselling sessions after the holiday period, Siobhan was glad to say she enjoyed it and felt it allowed her to reconnect with family. The anxiety

and stigma was not as "bad" as she had thought. Siobhan described many adverse childhood experiences and complex childhood trauma which meant that Christmas was always a frightening time for her. As therapy progressed, she talked much more about these traumatic childhood experiences and the effects on her throughout her life.

Like many people living with anxiety and depression, Siobhan shied away from many things that people rightly expect from life: to be in a good job, have a relationship or family, to socialise freely. Despite this, she was generally good at managing her life and her illness, and enjoying simple things in the day to day.

This is what she wanted to get back to, her goal from therapy. The main thing that helped her get there was someone, the therapist, making themselves available to 'bear witness' to Siobhan's suffering, in the past and on to today. This is such an important process for anyone who has been through severe trauma and helped Siobhan achieve her goal from therapy.

Areas for improvement

Overall feedback was overwhelmingly positive, but the challenge of outreach and the issue of waiting times did come up.

Some people felt the waiting time for counselling was too long but they also recognised the high level of demands on the service:

"Nothing with the actual experience it was everything I needed. In ideal world, waiting list would come down".

The feedback also highlights the on-going challenge of finding outreach venues that are confidential and safe as well as welcoming.

"The room in was noisy in background (outside). Lots of activity going on. Hard to concentrate".

"Checking in at reception downstairs each week you tend to see quite a few people which isn't great".

"The room was very cold and a lot of (external) noise".

As always, we are mindful of these issues and working to address them as best, we can.

Healing and Growth

Alex is a 24-year-old client who identifies as non-binary. Alex was diagnosed with ASD as an adolescent. They were referred by their GP with high levels of anxiety, and low mood. Alex had experience previously of counselling and found it helpful. Alex lives with their partner but feels that

their relationship could be better, for many reasons, but mainly due to poor communication. Socially, Alex shared that they do not keep in contact with many friends, and feelings of isolation have crept in as their family of origin has not been a healthy experience either. Both Alex's parents had dependency on alcohol, along with their own mental health issues, while Alex was growing up, which made their childhood challenging and complex.

Alex chooses to begin to work on their anxiety as it, after some exploration, seemed to be the issue that was closely connected to their low moods, and fuelled an unhelpful cycle in Alex's life. Alex explained that the anxiety and unhelpful thinking patterns became so invasive, that Alex would believe that everyone thought "bad of me". This in turn caused Alex to retreat and not communicate with significant people in their life, which only triggered more anxiety of "what will they think of me now". This pattern was not helping and triggered low mood and more isolation from the world.

Growing up, Alex, had a lot of extra responsibilities at home due to lack of stability, while also feeling that "things were never good enough". Constant emotional abuse left Alex feeling a sense of low self-esteem and they didn't put much value on themselves. Currently Alex only has minimal contact with their mother, but even now this has been challenging, with emotional abuse.

Alex used the therapeutic counselling space to work through and make sense of their childhood and the effects it has had on their current life. Making connections, normalising, and feeling validated was helpful for Alex. Also learning about anxiety, especially social anxiety, its connections to low moods and self-esteem, Alex began to put in place some small changes and began to see the anxiety as something to work with instead of against. When this began, the anxiety began to become less intrusive in their life. Small steps, like walking up the town on a nice day, and making connections with other people helped to show and prove to Alex that anxiety can be managed, and hope began to grow. Alex decided to put firm boundaries in with their family of origin, to minimise any emotional abuse and this helped to start the growth of their self-worth. Having open communication at work with their boss and sharing their work challenges, helped Alex to gain support and discard unhelpful thinking styles, and to realise that "not all people think bad of me."

Alex's relationship with their partner began to develop in a more meaningful way, by making use of open communication, and helping their partner to understand the challenges Alex faced with anxiety and low mood. This felt more supportive for Alex and helped their relationship grow, putting in place better styles to work together. At times Alex shared it can become frustrating and bad days still happen, but knowing what to do with the bad days has been so much more helpful.

At the end of therapy, Alex shared that they could see a great improvement in themselves. The anxiety did remain but they felt it more manageable, and low moods have felt less severe along with self-esteem beginning to grow. Feeling the benefits of using more open communication with others, naming, and normalising their own feelings has led Alex to wanting to continue to practice these to continue their own healing and growth.

General Feedback

"The sessions of counselling have been extremely helpful. I was absolutely in a state of panic and distress. Speaking with my counsellor has enabled me to deal with my situation more calmly and use different techniques. I cannot thank this service enough and my counsellor".

"This Centre is an amazing addition to our community; I was so lost and didn't know who to reach out to. From the moment I spoke with my counsellor I felt a sense of relief. I'm looking forward to growing with the tools she has shown me".

"The counsellor I had was amazing, I learned so much about myself and why I feel the way I do. I have learned new techniques to help me deal with the stress in my life".

"A challenging and enlightening journey with non-judgemental patient guide".

"I found this very worthwhile. Friends and family have noticed a marked difference in me".

A huge relief

Claire had been feeling very low and tired for months, possibly longer, and she always brushed it off as just the wear and tear of sleepless nights and demanding days looking after her four young children. Gradually she began to notice that she rarely laughed or smiled anymore and had begun avoiding being around people, cutting down on play dates and baby groups, and saying no to things more often. She had previously enjoyed her time home when the oldest were very small and became aware that this felt different. Her health visitor suggested a referral to the Aisling Centre and an appointment with her GP, reminding Claire that just because she had found things ok with her other children, that didn't mean this time round would be exactly the same. Claire hadn't recognised until then, that she was doing much more this time, with much less sleep, energy and space for herself.

In the counselling, it felt like a huge relief just to be herself for an hour, with another adult, without the interruptions and concentration that a baby and toddler, and two other young children required. She also felt guilt almost immediately for feeling this

relief, which her counsellor helped her recognise didn't cancel out her love for her children or love of being a mother. She had felt really ashamed to acknowledge with herself that she was struggling. She would often swing between feeling guilty at not loving this time that was so precious and blaming herself when she felt desperate to get some space from it. She believed she wasn't allowed to complain as it was her choice and her job to just 'get on with it'. Gradually in the counselling, she began to lean into the space where it was safe to say she was feeling a few different ways at once about things. She began to realise that she was allowed to choose how she parented, and also be allowed to say when something was hard. She slowly began to recognise her own needs alongside her children's, picking up on when she was tired, or hungry, or feeling overwhelmed or bored – things she realised she was an expert in noticing with them.

The counselling gave her space to tune into and listen to herself, and helped her trust that things wouldn't fall apart at home, if she worked around her needs as well as her children's. She started small, and practiced doing little things between sessions, and week by week, she and her counsellor built up some evidence that it was possible and it was ok for everyone else. She felt her mood become more varied, it was still low at times, but it didn't get stuck like that for long periods like it used to. She felt her guilt and self-blame quieten down, as she acknowledged that her children were safe and loved, even on days when the house felt like chaos and like she was achieving nothing.

During the counselling, Claire began to recognise how her own experiences as a child were coming into the foreground more and more. Memories of childhood were showing up more often, as well as emotions which Claire worried that she couldn't explain. Her counsellor helped her understand how becoming a parent often presses on old experiences of being parented and old feelings too, which helped it make some sense. They worked carefully together around what was best for Claire now, and she decided that she would take some time on the work they had been doing around meeting her basic needs and pause the work on her childhood memories for now. They looked at resources and supports she could use in the meantime, after counselling, and how she could refer back in when she needed to, once her youngest was old enough for childcare.

Claire felt relieved that she could go at her own pace and was surprised that it helped a little even just to acknowledge some of those feelings and memories, even if she wasn't speaking about them in detail yet. She was glad that she could come back when she had a bit more space for herself.

Play Therapy Service

"I feel good now".

54 children attended play therapy, 23 girls and 31 boys.

Source of referral

Parent	35.5%
GP	9%
School	50%
Other NHS	5.5%

Main Presentations

Bereavement	22%
Family Separation	44.5%
Illness	1.5%
Multiple Loss	7.5%
Transgenerational Trauma	7.5%
Other	17%

Child Feedback

"I still feel sad that mummy and daddy don't live together but I have been able to talk about it in here and how it makes me feel".

"I feel better in myself because I've been able to talk about my feelings but I was disappointed that daddy wasn't able to come for a review to hear how I feel".

"Think our family is doing better as think we are finding it better to cope with the death".

"I am happy most of the time, but also angry sometimes".

Parent Feedback

"Everyone is so friendly and a relaxing atmosphere, my daughter was very comfortable with the surroundings and really liked her counsellor, which boosted her confidence".

"My son has become less apprehensive and nervous about situations out of his control".

"My child will talk more openly about her feelings and or any worries she may have. Has also learned to take time out when things get a bit too much, over all a very positive improvement".

"Excellent therapist, very caring and understanding of child's issues".

"Better coping ability and thought process. Therapist gave very useful suggestions and these helped greatly along with the listening and support".

Suzie

11 year old Susie attended therapy as a result of the loss she was feeling after her grandad passed away. At the initial session both Suzie and her mum Kathleen spoke about Suzie's difficulty in coping with her loss and the increased anxiety she has experienced since he died. They both explained how Suzie tends to worry about everybody around her and has this constant fear of something bad happening to someone else she loves.

Suzie had 8 sessions. Initially Suzie seemed to present lots of other issues in the sessions, talking about everything except her grandad. But as we explored her anxiety and fears she became more open to talking about her grandad, his passing, her memories and how she had felt since he died. We used the CBT technique on the 5-part model to help Suzie understand her grief and that how she feels is linked to how she thinks which therefore explains the increase in her anxiety. This also helped Suzie to see the link between her anxiety and her behaviours, such as worrying about her granny, not being able to sleep and wanting to mask her feelings.

Shortly after this work, which was about halfway through the process, Suzie arrived one day saying she felt great, her anxiety had lessened and she didn't think she needed any more sessions. I invited Suzie to take time and not rush her healing process, explaining the idiom 'run before you can walk'. Following this and talking with her mum, Suzie decided to continue with sessions.

During the following session, Suzie opened up about her grandad's death and her feelings of loss, revealing aspects that she had never shared with anyone before. Suzie concluded that she was preoccupied with worrying about and protecting other family members and hence was not allowing herself the time or space to process her own grief. As a result, it was becoming increasingly difficult to do so and the 'holding it in' and masking her feelings was creating even more anxiety and fear. It also became clear that the way she was dealing with her loss was a family pattern and therefore making it more difficult for her to confide in others. After this session, Suzie stated she was ready to share her feelings with her mother and they both agreed that they would communicate more openly going forward.

As Suzie reflected on her therapy process, she stated that when she first arrived for therapy, she did not believe that she would ever be able to talk about the loss of her grandad in the way that she did and that she felt so much lighter for doing so, as it helped to lessen her fear and anxiety. Sometime after her therapy sessions, Suzie sent me a card and an image she had drawn, illustrating her 'vision' when she reflects on her experience of the Aisling Centre. This consisted of a waterfall, mountains and trees.

Well-Being & Life Learning Services

Aisling Centre are working on increasing the range of well-being and life learning programmes they are offering. We are fortunate to have some excellent facilitators on the team who can offer a range of supports. 170 people availed of the well-being programmes.

Participants heard about the activities from a variety of different sources eg newspaper, social media or friends while some were recommended through their Counsellor or a health professional.

Complementary Therapy

"I could recommend them to anybody, they have helped my mental well-being, plus my physical well-being. Perfect peace for one hour per week"

375 sessions of complementary therapy were offered by Sheila with 93% of people who attended for identifying as victims/survivors of the troubles.

Participants presented with a range of issues including grief, depression, stress, fatigue, mobility issues, PTSD etc. However, the main presenting issues were anxiety and pain, particularly back pain.

"I felt so good after them mentally and physically"

"Felt at peace, good overall well-being"

"I feel lighter when walking"

"Really do feel less anxious and stressed"

"I feel it has made me more confident and my mobility has improved"

Mindfulness Meditation

"I'm very grateful for this opportunity, for its affordability, location, Aisling centre is an amazing resource, and for the knowledge, kindness and patience of our teacher, Siobhan. Thank you"

As we moved out of C-19 restrictions Siobhan continued to deliver in-person Mindfulness Meditation programmes including drop-in sessions and an 8-week Mindfulness Stress Reduction Programme.

Having completed the 8-week programme participant feedback indicated that they felt better able to cope with:

Stress/Anxiety	100%
Physical illness or pain	80%
Mental ill health	80%
Current difficulties or problems	100%

"Loved the practice mindfulness sessions on the actual evenings. A great group of people who worked well together, felt better able to refocus. Reminded to be kind and gentle with myself. Challenged with thoughts. Better able to relax"

"Very happy and sad that its all over but I'm planning on keeping it all going with monthly drop ins"

"Putting the work into practice and actually seeing it help and benefit me. I loved the new learning, enjoyed every week. Fantastic – I will and have gone away with so much"

Self-Care Sessions

"I came in not knowing what to expect. I was very stressed. It helped me to learn to relax more and how to use these techniques appropriately. I think it brought my stress levels down"

Therapist Holly ran her very popular 5-week programme, three times over the year. The Self-Care Sessions, which focused on managing anxiety were well received by participants:

"Holly is a natural facilitator. I really feel the sessions have helped me through a difficult time"

"It was very educational"

"I found out I was very in touch with my body and feelings"

"This has been great for me as I've PTSD so this helped me slow down and pay attention to how I can help myself"

"Lovely calm and relaxed environment. Holly has a lovely gentle and warm personality"

"The sessions were excellent and the delivery by Holly was so kind and useful. Her voice is so soothing"

Reattach and MET (Modern Energy Tapping)

"I like this. I have anxiety. I will use this daily."

Therapist Rosa ran monthly Re-attach sessions which were attended on a drop-in basis. Participants came along for a variety of reasons from to find tools to aid their own well-being, to helping others, or to developing skills to add to their own practice.

Feedback was positive. Most participants said that they liked it with some experiencing a positive reaction during the session. Most of those who attended felt it would be a useful technique for managing emotions.

"This is nice and good and quick change"

"It is very gentle way to change emotion"

"I think you just need to be open and trust yourself for this technique to work on you"

In the autumn Rosa developed the drop-ins using Modern Energy Tapping. Participants found the technique simple and easy to follow describing it as "very deep", "comforting" and "relaxing".

The Hub

Martina secured funding through the FODC warm spaces programme and ran a 10-week hub drop-in. Each week featured a different topic focused on well-being and information sharing with various members of the Aisling Centre team as well as a very informative visit by Deirdre O'Connor, FODC and a excellent talk with local historian Frankie Roofe. Participants enjoyed the varied programme and the lunch but what they enjoyed most was the informal atmosphere and good company which the group provided.

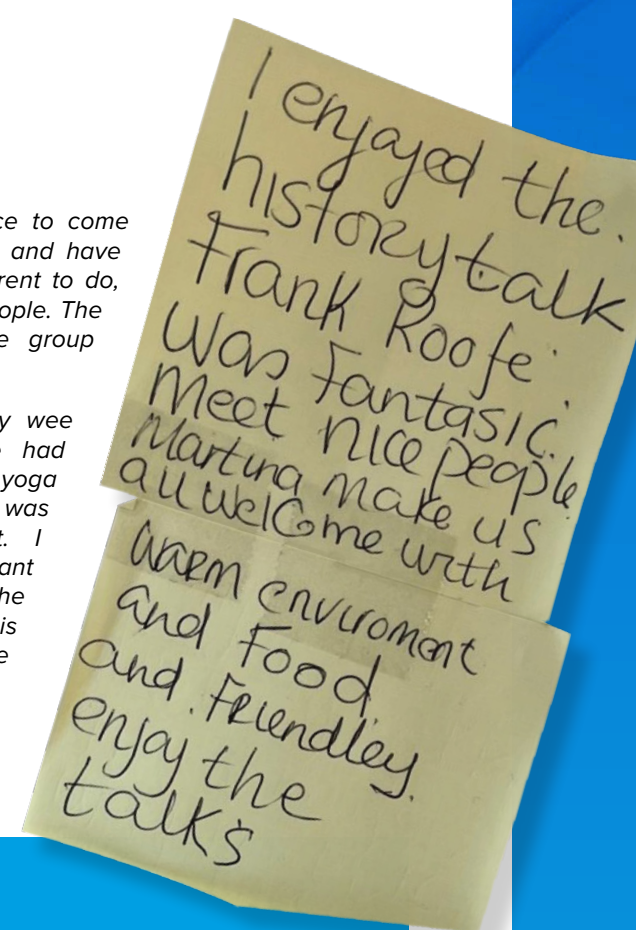
"Today's session was very interesting, enjoyed the talk about Old Enniskillen. It's nice to come in and meet the people as always"

"So well looked after. Martina is a wonderful caring person. It is lovely to have this to get up in the morning to come to"

"Really caring group, it is helping me. I am grateful for all the support I am getting. It's beneficial"

"A fantastic place to come to have a chat and have something different to do, to meet new people. The girls taking the group are wonderful"

"This is a lovely wee group and we had Shauna doing yoga today, which was a lovely treat. I often don't want to get up in the morning but this group gives me something to get up for"



Hope for the Future

Hope, Healing, Growth 2023

"I was thoroughly impressed, inspired and got encouragement from the fantastic workshop"

The 2023 event was another milestone event and for the first time it ran as a very successful hybrid event (room and zoom).

The overall theme of the presentations as always was linked by HOPE. There was a strong thread stressing the importance of connection and self-compassion. No one is alone – at some level all of us are vulnerable. We are all emotional beings who feel things, who get hurt, who feel pain, who are tested. But we all have an inner capacity to cope better than we think we can. If we look back, we can all see that there is something in our past that we have come through, something that we might once have thought we would never be able to get through.

Really simple things lie at the heart of better mental health, talking, listening, saying hello to someone, getting fresh air, spending a little time in the company of others.

In his opening comments Adrian Dunbar encouraged us to find something positive from the day. While psychologist Shane Martin focused on the importance of being present in our lives. For many life can go by so quickly because we are not aware of the present for so much of the time.

In sharing her story Emma Spence encouraged self-compassion. She acknowledged that some people do set up charities and 'do big things', as a way of coping with tragedy. However most people, when faced with adversity and bad things in life happen, go through a time when success is simply about

getting through the day and putting one foot in front of the other. "You don't need to compare yourself to anyone else."

As part of the group discussion facilitated by Noelle McAlinden, Conor McBarron's underpinning message was the importance of learning to live, not just exist. While Una Leonard stressed that at some point along the way, everyone must look after themselves and 'do something for me'. Recognising your own importance and caring for yourself, looking after yourself is a most unselfish act.

Climate activist Dr Lorna Gold talked about the very real connection between emotional well-being and nature and asked the question, "How can we have healthy people if the planet is sick?"

The FIND Centre shared a video they had made in support of young people's mental health. Nathalie Truelove and Amy Bogue emphasised the importance of connection and any connection even with a pet can be the thing that gives life meaning and hope.

Richard Moore reminded us that you don't need to stay stuck in the bad event, you have to find a way to accommodate it, to let it become part of your history and begin to live a new present and create a new future.

Singer Janet Devlin who closed a fantastic day with her song of hope also spoke of her life challenges and reassured that "There will come a day when you are excited to see the sunrise".

What a wonderful day!!!! I feel so privileged to have had the opportunity to participate in such a fabulous event."



SAVE THE DATE

HOPE, HEALING, GROWTH

Day of Inspiration | Ripples of Hope

Saturday 6th January 2024, 10:00am - 3.30pm

GUEST SPEAKERS

Adrian Dunbar - Aisling Centre Patron

Catherine Murnin - The Wisdom of Well-being

Shannon Hollywood - The four secrets of being a happier parent

Ciara and Billy Nicholl - Living Legacies – Ellie's Retreat

Niamh Brownlee - Struggling to Breathe

James Martin - Living your Dream

Victoria and Margaret Geelan - The Ripple Effect

Frank Liddy - Ripples of Hope

Registration information and further details www.theaislingcentre.com

Governance

Treasurer's Report 2022-2023

This will be my sixth and final Treasurer's Report and I am delighted to see steady growth and good financial practice for the past year.

This, once again has been a most challenging and difficult time for everyone. The general cost of living crisis and its impact on society is real and worrying. Families squeezed by increasing interest rates and rampant inflation has resulted in a new uncertainty that assaults our health and well-being. Our work in Aisling has never been more needed as the general vista of financial support from government at all levels continues to diminish. Increasingly, external fund-raising taking place all over the community is our life-line and for that support we are most grateful.

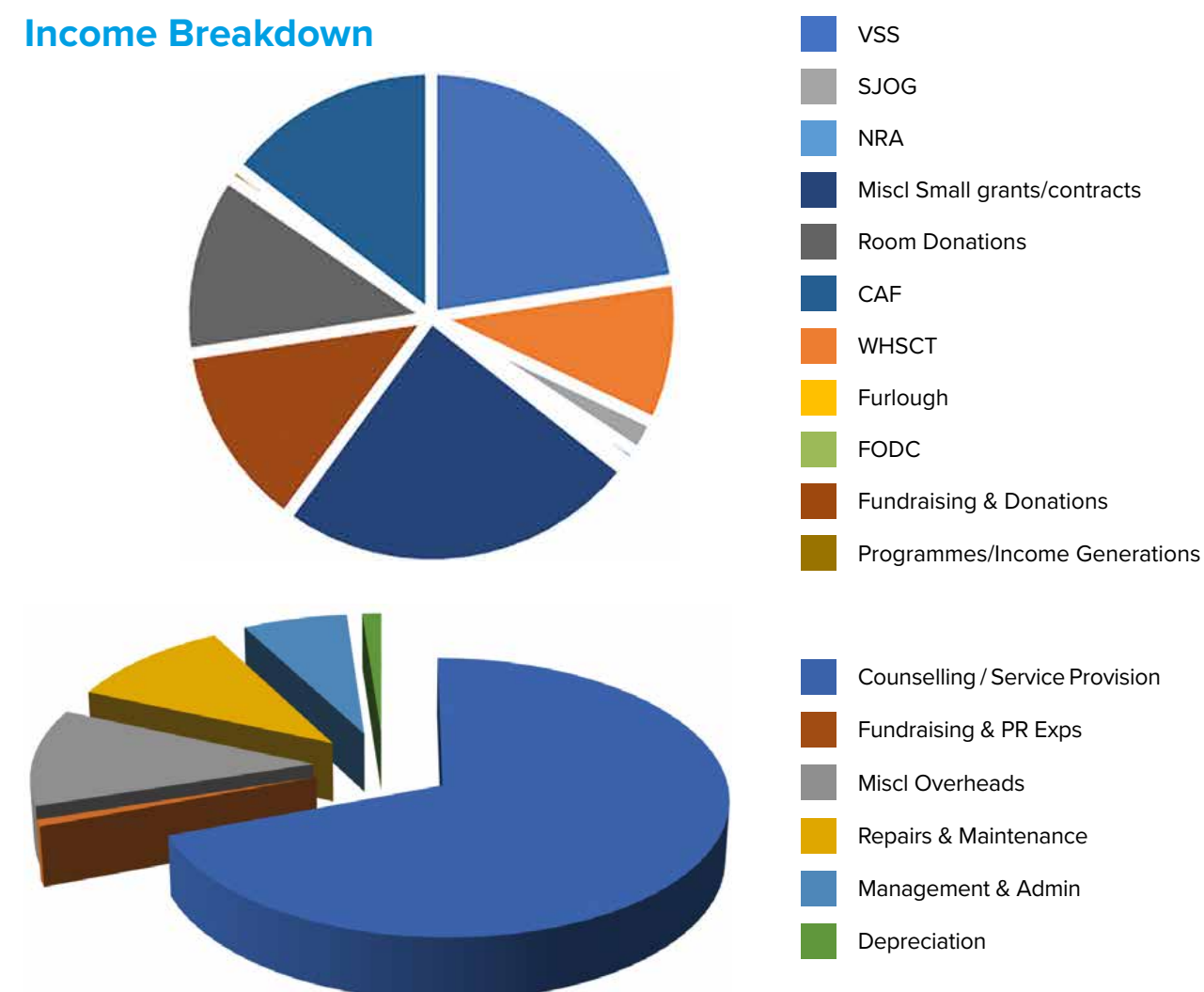
It is also encouraging to see how room hire has increased significantly. There is nothing better than to see the centre buzzing from wide and varied usage. Additionally, we also give thanks to the Victims Survivor Service for their continued support, as well as to Children in Need who have steadfastly stood by us over these past years. We are also indebted to the Charities Aid Foundation for their generous donation as well as to St. John of God who continue to provide financial support. Finally, we thank Fermanagh and Omagh District through their grant schemes and through Neighbourhood Renewal.

I would also like to pay tribute to McNeary Rasdale, our accountants. Their professionalism and steady guidance have been much appreciated over these past years.

In conclusion, it has been my great honour to be Treasurer and to see at first hand the excellent work of our management team under the steady hand of Bridie. New additions to our Director team will add significantly to working practice as well as bring new ideas to the table. One thing that has brought me much satisfaction is to see how the work of the Aisling Centre is held in such esteem throughout the wider community. This reputation has been won hard is worth preserving. It is also worth noting the amazing generosity of The Sisters of Mercy whose faith in Aisling continues to inspire and challenge our work on a daily basis.

Neville Armstrong
Treasurer

Income Breakdown



Preparing for the Future

Strategic Plan - March 2023 – April 2026

Strategic Review

In May 2002 the Board of Directors undertook a robust review of Aisling Centre Strategic Plan. Over a period of 6- months they engaged in on-going strategic review workshops and planning days.

Stakeholder feedback across all sectors and including clients was central to the development of the plan. This feedback forms the foundation on which this strategic plan is based.

Mission

To provide opportunities for hope, healing and growth in a welcoming and supportive environment

Vision / Dream

Positive Mental Health and Emotional Well-Being for All

Values

Providing a safe, Welcoming and Confidential Space
Non-judgemental, Inclusive and Respectful

Strategic Aims 2023 - 2026

To promote positive mental health and emotional well-being in County Fermanagh and the surrounding area by:

1. Providing an accessible and professional counselling, psychotherapy and play therapy service.
2. Providing a wellbeing support service and community hub.
3. Ensuring that Aisling Centre continues to be an effective, transparent and ethical organisation.

Context

Aisling Centre's core service is the provision of counselling, psychotherapy and play therapy and the promotion of wellbeing.

Aisling Centre is acutely aware of the challenges faced by people across society. The Board appointed external facilitator Thomas Martin, Martin Consultancy to work with them to undertake a comprehensive review of the work of the Centre to ensure the long-term resilience of the Centre and its team as it continues to provide an essential mental health service in the community.

As a charity Aisling Centre works in a challenging environment dependent on short-term funding sources including contracts, grants and income generation through room rental and programme delivery, fundraising and donations.

The Centre works within a constantly changing and evolving external environment with the new NI Mental Health Strategy, the work of Pathfinders and the development of GP Hubs and the Regional Trauma Hub. It is also an environment that has been severely impacted by funding, Covid 19, the changes to Universal Credit and Benefits and, the pressure that families and individuals are currently feeling with the increased cost of living and spiralling cost of energy. There is also growing acknowledgement of the increased need for mental health services particularly in the aftermath of the Covid 19 pandemic.

Within this fluid environment it seemed most prudent to limit the new strategic plan to a 3-year period:

- ▶ It will be regularly reviewed to take account of this current climate of uncertainty and change within the sector.
- ▶ It may need to be adjusted to take account of financial and other resources available or opportunities which present.
- ▶ All actions taken will be consistent with our ethos.
- ▶ All decisions will be made in the best interests of our clients within the limits of resources available.

Brief Summary Of Key Findings

Clients

- ▶ Clients feel comfortable using Aisling Centre, people are friendly and understanding, there is a sense of calm.
- ▶ Clients said the referral turnaround time was quick and waiting lists are much shorter than some health service provision.
- ▶ Clients feel welcome, they feel they have been given the 'tools' to help themselves.
- ▶ Clients feel actively involved in the evolution and delivery of services.
- ▶ Clients commented very positively on the way their consultations were managed and progressed.
- ▶ For some clients the online counselling service (during C-19) worked for them, but most people would prefer face to face counselling.
- ▶ Clients would like more outreach and evening sessions.
- ▶ People value the short referral form and process.

Other Stakeholders

- ▶ People are very pleasant and upbeat, staff/sessional team feel the organisation is a good place to work.
- ▶ There is a strong sense of purpose within the team and good teamwork.
- ▶ Aisling Centre's 'people' are its most valuable resources.
- ▶ External stakeholders hold the organisation in high regard.
- ▶ Aisling Centre is seen as being very neutral and safe.
- ▶ Health professionals have security and confidence in the organisation.
- ▶ Good relationships with other organisations in the statutory and voluntary sectors
- ▶ Service is seen as professional and is described as excellent (both counsellors and support staff)
- ▶ Coffee shop is seen as a real asset.
- ▶ People value the accessible referral form and process.

Financial

- ▶ Aisling Centre is seen by funding stakeholders as delivering value for money and having good financial governance.
- ▶ The Centre meets funder expectations.
- ▶ Financial model includes essential fundraising and donations.
- ▶ Short-term nature of funding is an on-going challenge.
- ▶ Variety of funding sources both an asset and a challenge.
- ▶ The organisation has to continually work hard to attract new funds.
- ▶ Good financial governance with financial reporting a standing item on the agenda for Board meetings and annual external audits as well as funder audits.
- ▶ Current financial crisis will impact on Aisling Centre and on its clients.

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





Reflections

"I would like to express how grateful I am to Brenda and the opportunity to talk openly about my feelings. When the sessions began, I was at a very low point. Talking to Brenda has allowed me to make sense of my emotions and I feel much stronger to face whatever difficulties arise in my personal life."

The time has finally come for me to move on

As I sit to write, I am recalling all the years spent in the Aisling centre. I started more than twenty years ago when there were only three to four therapists on the team. I have watched Aisling Centre move through many changes with the management, the board of directors and the therapeutic team over the years and witnessed it grow from strength to strength.

Aisling Centre has a great team spirit and a positive working atmosphere. The work involves very complex issues and demands a lot of energy from the practitioners. Aisling Centre has become more and more aware of this and provided many emotional and psychological supports for wellbeing, not just for the clients that come to Aisling Centre to avail of the services but to the team, and never more so during the pandemic when extra services were provided such as yoga and mindfulness, these continued long after covid. When life presented health challenges, Aisling Centre was there for me for which I am very grateful.

However, the time has finally come for me to move on. Having completed a master's dissertation on the emotional and spiritual impact of cancer, my interest now is moving towards health and illness, along with private practice and working as a supervisor. I wish to send a big thank you to all at Aisling Centre, for the wonderful send off and the beautiful gifts I received. There is no doubt no matter where I wander Aisling Centre will be hard to beat.

Brenda

I will be very sad to leave

After 23 years of dedicated service Finance Administrator Marie Greene retired at the end of March 2023. Marie commenced work in Aisling Centre on 28th August 2000 as a Receptionist/Secretary, working alongside her good friend Joan and she has been an integral part of the functioning of Aisling Centre ever since. We are all very sorry to see her leave.

Speaking on her retirement Maire said "I am looking forward to spending more time with myself. When you are working five days a week you don't have much time to yourself." She continued "I would love to take up some kind of hobby maybe two days a week. I'm not sure what that will be yet, but I know I will need to do something. I just hope that something will come up that suits me."

Marie's retirement plans are focused on her family and friends. "To be honest I don't know if it is the right time for me to retire. I just thought to myself I need more time to do other things. I took it upon myself to do it anyway. I want to spend more time with my husband, family and friends so retiring means I can do more of that." Reminiscing on her time in Aisling Centre Marie acknowledged she has seen a lot of changes to the organisation most of them for the better. "When I first came here there was only a few of us compared to the larger staff base we have now. It was Joan and I on Reception. We might have only had about 4 or 5 referrals a week, that is a lot different to nowadays, we would have that each day now." She went on to talk about the growing demand for the service. "People are more in need nowadays. People are more aware of Aisling Centre and the work we do now. I believe

that is thanks to our Service Director Bridie for raising awareness in the community." Marie found her job very fulfilling saying, "I loved meeting people especially when I was on Reception. I have seen people coming into the Centre with tears in their eyes and leaving with a smile. That makes you feel good, that you have helped them in some way." Marie was very dedicated to her work at Aisling Centre. "I loved coming to do my work. I'd say I was only ever off one or two days sick in all my time here."

"I have enjoyed all my years here and I will be very sad to leave and hate the thought of it, but I have enjoyed it all and I am very grateful for Aisling Centre." Marie is not one to be idle and she is looking forward to the interesting things that may come her way in retirement.



Gifting of Building

Afternoon Tea at Aisling Centre

On 25th April 2023, Aisling Centre hosted afternoon tea for the Sisters of Mercy in the Westend Coffee Shop where the story of Aisling began. This was a day of celebration held to acknowledge the contribution of the Sisters of Mercy to the Centre and in particular the gifting of the building to the charity.

Chairperson Alison Annan gave this address on behalf of the team at Aisling Centre: It is particularly lovely that we have two of our founding members in attendance,

Sr Mary and Sr Edel, and of course we remember the late Sr Helena, the third member of the team. Also, it is so nice to have Sr Rose Marie and Sr Aine from the Provincial team here and indeed they are no strangers to Aisling Centre.

With more than 20 years' service on the Board of Directors of Aisling Centre I have come to know and be inspired by so many of you. I witnessed how you live out your faith and vocation through your commitment to community, service and social justice.

Aisling is a beautiful word meaning dream, and that dream which started with Sr Mary (Daly) has flourished. We are delighted to be able to say that 32 years later, that founding ethos still holds strong; Aisling Centre remains a place of welcome and hospitality where people can find hope, healing and growth. It is both an honour and a pleasure to serve as a Trustee for the charity.

On a personal level I am forever grateful that the founding members reached out to the community and truly made Aisling Centre a place where people from all traditions could feel welcomed and safe. This cannot have been easy to do back in the early 1990's. On that note, it is wonderful to have Daphne Clarke with us today. Daphne joined the management board in 1992 and is still an active supporter of the Centre 30 years later. That says it all.

Over the years the management Board has had 2 representatives of the Sisters of Mercy, most recently Sr Mary (Delacy) and Sr Edel, and I witnessed how they stepped back and watched with joy as they saw the management and staff teams develop and grow strong, taking the Aisling dream forward, as they quietly supported from the sidelines. What wisdom and vision they showed.

Despite being involved in many local community groups and charities, the local Sisters of Mercy have always fully committed to the work of Aisling Centre. In addition to the founding members, Sr Phil, Sr Mary Delacy and Sr Mary Conway were all members of the first management committee (as was the late Sr Helena) and over the next number of years the late Sr Maureen and the late Sr Joan, Sr Rose Marie Conlon (now provincial leader) and of course our lifetime honorary member Sr Edel also served on the Board for many years. But of course, the support did not stop there. Over the years Sr Rose Marie (Keenan), Sr Rita, and the late Sr Kathleen O'Donnell delivered their

much-loved Poetry, Enneagram and Art Workshops. Our fundraising stalwarts Sr Anne Marie, Sr Mary Patricia and the late Sr Catherine made sure no-one got past them! And we can't forget Theresa Monaghan, Sr Mary Carroll and Sr Mary Conway who contributed so much through their work as therapists. And indeed, as Director, Mary Conway oversaw a huge building expansion which was officially opened in February 1999.

For our 25th anniversary in 2015, three of the counselling rooms in that extension area were named in honour of our three founding sisters Mary, Edel and Helena.

We were always encouraged by the local community of Sisters and those who couldn't help in person sent generous donations and supported our events. This we always appreciated. We were also supported at Provincial level and indeed there were times when the annual grant was the only thing keeping the wolf from the door.

When Sr Edel and Sr Mary told us that the Provincial Team had decided to gift the building to the charity, we were stunned by their generosity and absolutely humbled by the trust that is being placed in us.

Of course, we did not earn this trust alone, it has been built through 32 years of hard work, so it is wonderful that we have John Sheridan with us today. John was the first Chairperson of Aisling Centre. We are also pleased to have former chairs Pat Cassidy and Ann McDermott here today.

We have long had a lovely piece from a local paper depicting our three founding members and the opening of Aisling Centre hanging in the front hallway. It has now been joined by a plaque which reads:

"Aisling Centre Trustees are pleased to acknowledge the work of the Congregation of the Sisters of Mercy who founded, nurtured and developed Aisling Centre, gifting this building to the Charity in November 2022"

We would also like to give you a small gift of a rose to plant in the Convent Garden. We chose this rose because it is named 'Sweet Dream'. It will be accompanied by a plaque which reads:

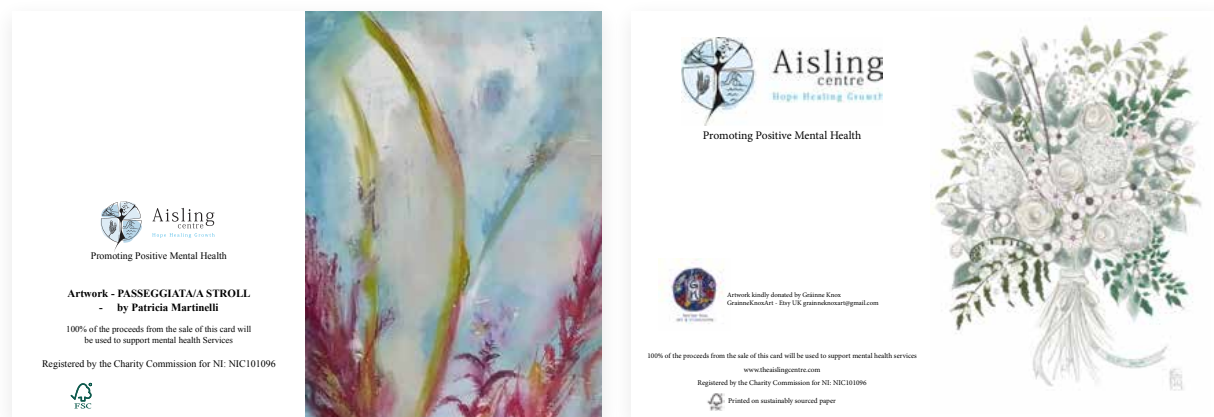
Aisling Centre would like to thank the Sisters of Mercy, Enniskillen, founders of Aisling Centre, for the incredible support they have given to the local community and the contribution they have made to promoting positive mental health.

This rose 'Sweet Dream' was planted by Aisling Centre in 2022. The healing that takes place at Aisling Centre day and daily is almost miraculous and none of us will ever know how many lives have been transformed and indeed saved. All of us in this community truly owe you a huge debt of gratitude.

Thank you.



Charity Greeting Cards



£4.50 for a pack of 10

With the growth in social media and virtual communications people do not send as many cards as they used to and when they do, they search for a nice meaningful card and what better way to do so than with a charity card which has been created with much love and supports a vital local mental health service.

Unlike generic charity cards, Aisling Centre greeting cards all feature beautiful artwork based on original designs created by local artists: Sheila Gilroy-Collins, Grainne Knox and Patricia Martinelli. The cards are blank inside and suitable for any occasion. They have been printed on sustainably resourced paper. 100% of the proceeds from the cards will be used to support the delivery of counselling and well-being services at Aisling Centre.

Cards are available to buy from the Centre (in person or over the Phone) or from our website www.theaislingcentre.com

Herstory

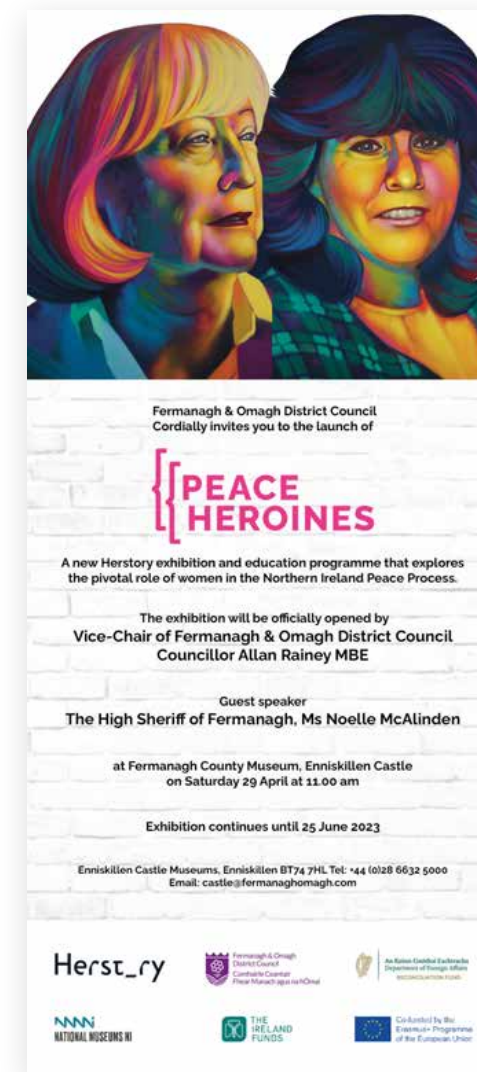
Aisling Centre was absolutely delighted when founding member Sr Edel Bannon was selected as one of the local women to be celebrated as part of the Heroines for Peace Exhibition when it came to Enniskillen.

The exhibition was part of a new herstory and educational exhibition programme that explored the pivotal role of women in the NI Peace Process. Since the 19th century, women's roles have changed, women's movements have emerged with suffragettes, trade unionism and eventually the peace movement of the 1960s on. The Peace Heroines of Northern Ireland exhibition highlights the role of women in the Northern Ireland peace process, marking the 25th Anniversary of the Good Friday Agreement. Women from all walks of life played a pivotal role in the Northern Ireland peace process and continue cross-community dialogue and reconciliation projects today. From grassroots to government levels, the exhibition captured a diversity of voices and perspectives.

The exhibition was hosted by Fermanagh and Omagh District Council at Enniskillen Castle Museum. It celebrated the work of some of the most inspirational and formidable women who during the most challenging of times worked for peace and a better life for our communities. These women were celebrated through a series of stunning portraits created by visual artist Marian Noone aka FRIZ. It also celebrated the work of local women.

In their compassion, wisdom and foresight Sr Edel and her fellow founding members Sr Mary and the late Sr Helena created in Aisling Centre a safe space where people from all traditions could come and find support at difficult times in their lives. This was not an easy task when the Centre opened in 1990 but, they focused on how best they could meet the mental health and emotional well-being needs of the whole community. 33 years later we owe them a great debt of gratitude for the wonderful service Aisling Centre is today. A service which has helped people from all traditions deal with traumas born out of the 'troubles' as well as many other traumas and challenges that we have experienced both as individuals and as a community.

A big thank you to Sinead Reilly, Development Officer: Collections & Exhibitions, Museum Services FODC, who curated the excellent Enniskillen exhibition.

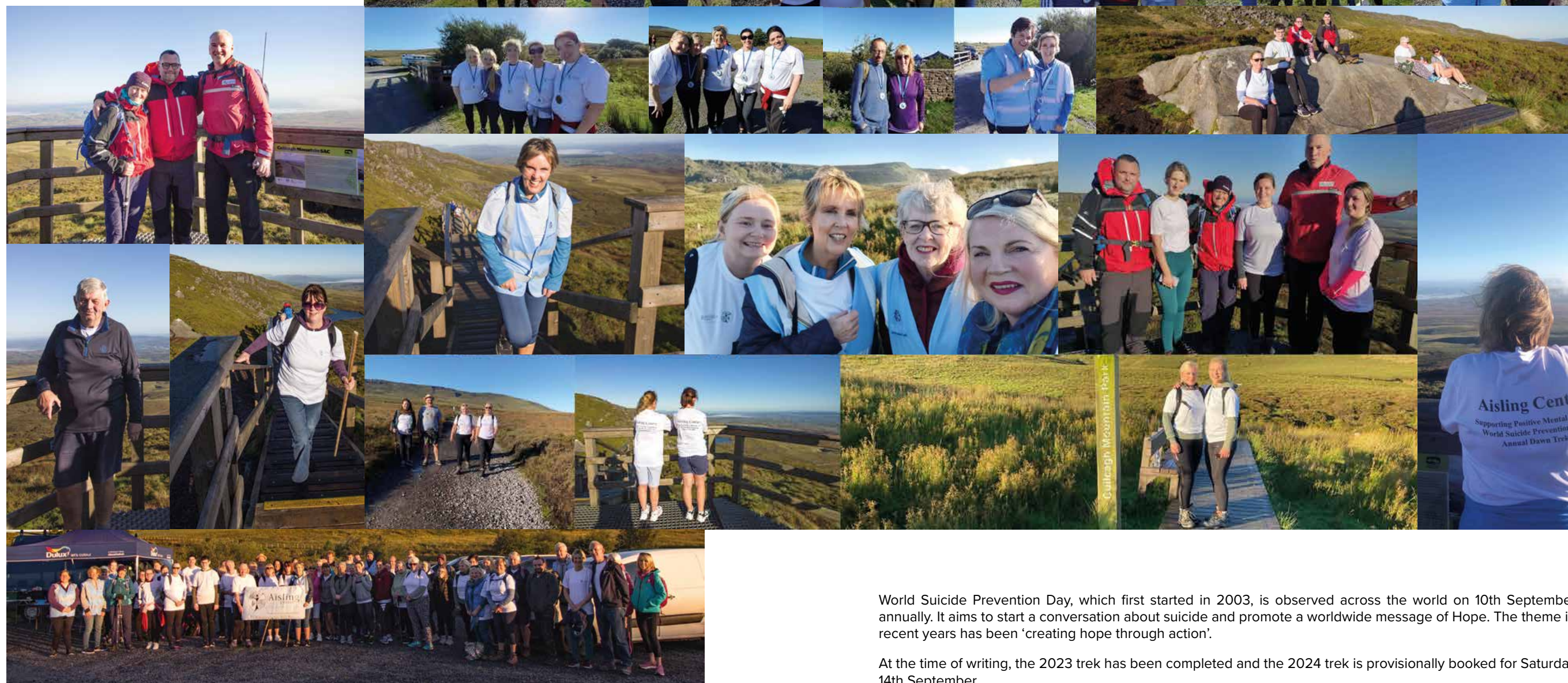


World Suicide Prevention Day 2022

Following the success of our 2021 Cuilcagh Trek to mark World Suicide Prevention Day, we have decided to make it an annual event.

In holding the trek, Aisling Centre wanted to organise an event which would raise awareness of mental health and to encourage people who may be considering ending their lives to talk to someone, and to remind them that there is help available. Suicide is preventable. Another important element of the day is providing a space where people bereaved by suicide can come together in solidarity with others to remember and find support.

For us at Aisling Centre it was an honour to share the morning with you and hear a little of your journey, thank you.



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. The theme in recent years has been 'creating hope through action'.

At the time of writing, the 2023 trek has been completed and the 2024 trek is provisionally booked for Saturday 14th September.

Mental Health Benefits Of Reading

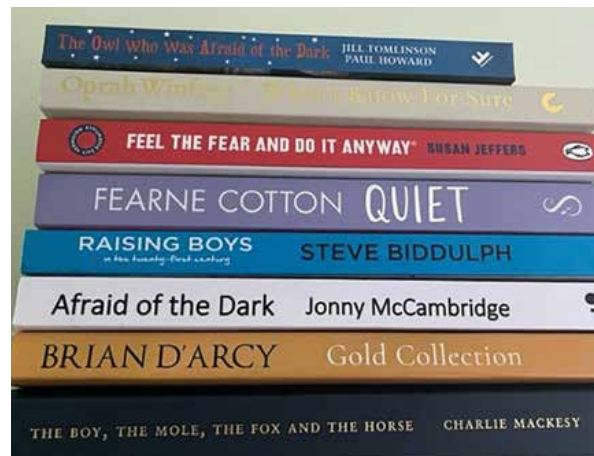
Studies have shown that reading can benefit your mental health and emotional well-being. Getting lost in a good book can provide a break and a distraction from the stresses of life. A study in 2009 by the University of Sussex found that reading for 30 minutes can lower blood pressure, heart rate and psychological distress and, that it can work better and faster than some other relaxation methods such as listening to music.

If you are new to reading start by finding a book or magazine on a topic that interests you. It can be anything: gardening, music, cooking, a romantic novel, a thriller (avoid choosing something that you might find upsetting or unsettling). Then find a quiet space and enjoy your escape to another world for a short while.

A study completed by the BACP (British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy) in 2021 showed that reading was one of the most popular ways in which people managed their stress levels during the C-19 pandemic. According to a World Book Day article on their website <https://www.bacp.co.uk/news/news-from-bacp/2022/3-march-world-book-day-the-mental-health-benefits-of-reading/> reading can reduce stress, improve mental health, ease symptoms of depression, improve memory and focus, and help with sleep.

A physical book is better than a e-reader especially if reading as part of a night-time routine. Books can be picked up quite cheaply from charity shops or borrowed for free from the local library.

Recommended Books



Quiet - Fearne Cotton

From Sunday Times bestselling author Fearne Cotton, this is the handbook for modern life we all need. Including expert advice, ideas to put into practice, and activities to complete. 'Quiet' identifies ways to help you tune out the negative backchat holding you back.

The owl who was afraid of the dark – Jill Tomlinson

Filled with gentle humour and heart-warming illustrations, this uplifting story about finding the courage to face your fears, has been beloved of parents and children for decades – and its message of resilience is as timely as ever.

Feel the fear and do it anyway – Susan Jeffers

Filled with concrete techniques to turn passivity into assertiveness. Dr. Susan Jeffers teaches you how to stop negative thinking patterns and re-educate your mind to think more positively.

What I know for sure – Oprah Winfrey

Oprah shares her experiences and insights on overcoming hardship and how she used that strength to forge a path toward reaching her full potential.

Gold Collection – Brian D'Arcy

From the popular Sunday World columnist, this book will help whether you need advice, consolation, guidance in prayer, or just a good laugh.

Afraid of the dark – Jonny McCambridge

This is a heartfelt story from Jonny McCambridge, a Northern Irish journalist and a former HHG Guest Speaker. An honest account of his attempt to overcome the mental health demons which tormented him for decades and brought him dangerously close to the conclusion that life simply wasn't worth living anymore.

Raising Boys – Stephen Biddulph

A practical guide to the issues parents face in raising sons—including sex, violence, homework, sports, the Internet, and more—and how to best aid boys' development from birth to manhood.

Manhood – Stephen Biddulph

Written by world renowned family therapist Stephen Biddulph, this very accessible book addresses the problems and possibilities confronting men in their daily lives.

The boy, the mole, the fox, and the horse – Charlie Mackesy

Four unusual friends share truths about life as they search for a home. The deceptively simple and beautifully illustrated book and reminds us that kindness and that love can be found in unexpected places.

Visit our website www.theaislingcentre.com to find out more about the recommendations.

Community Hub

FORGET ME NOT Bereaved By Suicide Support Group

Meets first Monday of each month 7.30pm – 9.00pm
Venue - Aisling Centre

Farewell Fidelis

In March 23 Fidelis Simpson stepped down from her role as facilitator of the Forget Me Not Support Group. Fidelis has been working with the group since 2012 apart from a short period between 2016-2020. Fidelis has supported the group and its members through many difficult days with both tears and laughter along the way. She will be much missed. Members thank her for all her support in the group and wish her a happy retirement.



TREE OF LIGHTS

Sunday 25th November 2023
Aisling Centre

Remember me in every special way,
keep me close to your heart, we'll
meet again one day

Tree of Lights is a moving event organised annually by the Forget Me Not Support Group. This very special ceremony creates a quiet space to remember a loved one who has died by suicide before the advent of the Christmas Season.

Simple wooden symbols are made available where you can write the name and/or a message in remembrance of your loved one. These are placed on a twig type tree which will remain lit (during opening hours at the Centre) until the 6th of January.



Aisling Centre Gift Cards

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

Give the Gift of Hope this Christmas

Aisling Centre are delighted to announce their new 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

You can purchase your gift card online from our Facebook page and website www.theaislingcentre.com or directly from the Centre by telephone (028 66 325811) or in person.

Donations received by Aisling Centre are used to support our free, professional and confidential counselling and well-being service.



SUPPORT GROUPS & NETWORKS

Aware NI



Support group for adults affected by depression
Meets fortnightly – Tuesday's 7:30pm – 9:00pm
For further information contact Sarah Tel 07867 028489
I 028 9035 7820 Ext. 243 or Email sarah@aware-ni.org



Escapists

Support group for carers
Wednesday, 10:30am – 1:00pm.
For further information contact Aisling Centre



Forget Me Not – Support Group for people bereaved by suicide

First Monday of the month, 7:30pm - 9:00pm
For further information contact Aisling Centre

WORKSHOPS AND CLASSES

Island Artists



Wednesday, 1:00pm – 3:00pm.
For further information contact Maura
T: 079 6822 5704



Yoga with: Genny Brown (Yoga Ocean)

Thursday, 12 noon – 1:30pm.
For further information contact Genny
T: 028 8954 1994



Shauna McMorow (Aurora Yoga)

Wednesday, 6:30pm – 7:30pm.
For further information contact Shauna
T: 075 2646 5004 / shauna@aurorayogastudio.co.uk

Teresa Cleary (TLC Yoga)

Thursday evenings, 7:00pm – 8:00pm.
For further information contact Teresa
T: 079 2369 4523

OTHER SERVICES

Cherish Sure Start

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



ERANO

Fermanagh Omagh Refuge Support
For further information contact Mary mary. lafferty@eran.org.uk



ZEST

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



In AA, everyone is equal and it's anonymous, members are known by their first name only. There is a little slogan "Who you see here, what you hear here, let it stay here".

AA meets in the Aisling Centre three evenings per week; Monday, Tuesday and Thursday. Meetings are open to anyone struggling with addiction.

For information contact the Centre on 028 66 325811.



Westend Coffee Shop

Café & Outside Catering

Monday - Saturday 8:00am - 3:00pm

For information contact Barry
028 6634 0475 / 079 79975000



Meet The Team



Adrian Dunbar
Patron



Sr Edel Bannon
Honorary Life Member

Board of Directors

Alison Annan - Chairperson
Roberta Hamilton - Vice-Chairperson
Marshall Coalter - Secretary
Neville Armstrong - Treasurer

Directors

Ann McDermott
Aideen McGinley
Iain Kennedy
Deirdre Kane
Grainne Scott
Richard Smith

New Directors Joining 2023/24

Maeve Corrigan
Monica Corrigan

Staff

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

Clinical Team

Clare Love
Edel McGuinness
Sharon Fitzpatrick

Sessional Psychotherapists

Ann Farrell
Aine Murphy
Anja Rosler
Brenda Wynne-McKervey – left September 22
Helen Murphy
Holly Reid
Karen Whaley
Michelle Halpin
Seana McKeaney
Nicholas May
Nuala McGovern
Fiona McCaughey
Cahir Maguire
Rosa Furey
Rosemary Cupples
Patricia McGovern
Zahada McElmurray

Administration Team

Fiona Beatty
Jimmy Britton
Fionnuala Curran
Joan Thompson
Marie Greene - Retired March 23
Aoife McManus
Meabh Morris – left February 2023
Martina Mitchell – Left November 22

Sessional CT & Well-Being

Sheila Johnston
Siobhan Conlon
Shauna McMorrow

Cleaning Service

Kinga Amtomzak (Prestige Cleaning)

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

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.



“From dreading each day I now look forward to the future”

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”

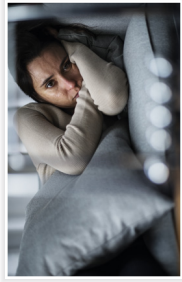


£10 will provide art supplies for a child to use in play therapy

£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?

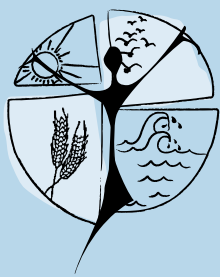
Other ways to help us offer this much needed local service

- 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.



“I would like to thank the Aisling Centre and in particular my counsellor for all the help and support shown to me. I feel it truly saved my life. Enniskillen people are so blessed to have this service.”



Aisling
centre
Hope Healing Growth

Aisling Centre

37, Darling Street, Enniskillen
Co Fermanagh, BT74 7DP

Telephone: 028 66 325811

Email: info@theaislingcentre.com

www.theaislingcentre.com

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