



Ballymun Youth Action Project



A Community Response To Drug & Alcohol Misuse

December 2017

The Newsletter



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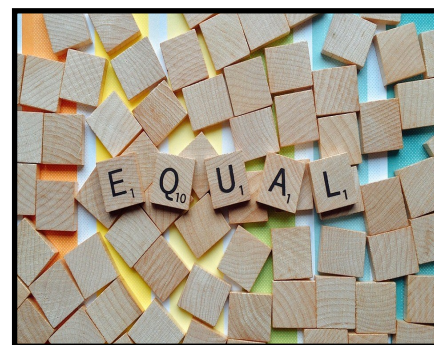
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A word from the Director

As a child I remember standing outside the front door on New Year's Eve, straining my ears to hear the bells ringing in the city centre and the ships horns blaring out their welcome for the new year. There was something hopeful about that sound, no matter how bad the year might have been. There was a chance to begin again. As the Irish poet Brendan Kennelly wrote, "Though we live in a world that dreams of ending, that always seems about to give in, something that will not acknowledge conclusion insists that we forever begin".

During the year I discovered a helpful way of looking at recovery. The approach identified five key processes that are helpful to people when change is happening, and the researchers involved gave the model the name "CHIME". They recognised the importance of being connected, of having hope, of holding an identity, of finding meaning, and finally, of being empowered. The name "CHIME" brought to mind the clamour of the bells ringing out the New Year, and the possibility of change and new beginnings that fill the air on that night.

Thank you to everyone who has been involved in the beginnings that have happened in 2017 here in BYAP, beginnings for individuals, and new initiatives that have been started here. Thank you too to those who have been holding hope, and stirring within us the insistence that we don't give in, but that instead we begin again.



Wishing you the very best for Christmas and for the year ahead, and that the bells ring out for all of us. Dermot



Thanks to everyone who has contributed to the
Newsletter during 2017.

My name is, as I said the first time, not important. In the last newsletter, some months back I said my name is not important but my story is. A lot has happened in the space of maybe five months. If you read the newsletter, some of you might remember my story. For those who didn't read it, I'll make this bit short. You see I'm an addict and have been for the past 25 years. I have been homeless and in prison most of that time. I have two daughters and I am a grand father now. When I last wrote I was five months into recovery. I had only started going to Yap, drug counselling and AA meetings. Back then I thought that this was my last chance cause I had never been this long clean and sober. I also had my kids back, slowly but surely. And I had set goals and those goals were to stay clean and sober, to have my own place to live, to rebuild relationships with my family.

I said it would take hard work, I was willing and ready this time. So it brings us up to today, five months on. I am happy to say with the help of Yap, my drug counsellor Susan and Gary, Brian and all the rest of the staff. Also with the help of PMVT and their great workers. I now have my own two bed apartment, I am still sober and clean, I am still working hard in YAP. I have great help with the Peter McVerry Trust. I love my new apartment. I also have my family back which is great, they drop up all the time. My grandchild who is two, is my rock and angel. I am so proud, so lucky and so happy that I have achieved most of my goals in such a short time. Life is great but I am a recovering addict and it can get hard but I use the people through the network I have around me to help me stay focused on my sobriety.



Now don't think I am recovered, I am far from it. As I said it would take hard work and it has and it is. I am fighting a disease everyday through addiction. That is going to be the rest of my life. I have accepted that but now I just do what keeps my feet on the ground and eye on the ball. As I am typing this, this is the longest I have ever been out of prison in the last 25 years. So basically what I am trying to say and what I said in the last newsletter, if you really want to get out of that vicious circle of drugs, violence, homelessness, gangs, you can. Its not easy, nothing ever is, as I told you in the last newsletter, it took me to die, three different times on the same night. I'm not one of these people that is a big believer in coincidences but that night I took that as a sign from my late baby brother who also died from drugs to start fresh.

Since that day, one year, 2 weeks before new years eve I'll be clean and sober and out of the craziness one whole year, (12 months). Nowadays I just go to my course, see my facilitators and the PMVT help me all the time. So if I can do it, I'm 39 years of age, it took me 25 years to wake up from the madness. I am happy, I have support, I have my family, my grandchild, my girls and my home. So if you are reading this and you are in prison you can do it. All you have to do is be willing to fight for it. It will be hard at first but that's just life but then it will get easier. Think of what you went through and all the things you did just to feed your habit. you can use all that energy on getting clean and there is always help. Thank you for reading this and I thank Yap and the PMVT. I hope this reaches anybody that wants to change their life, I promise you it is a better life. Everyone deserves a second chance. Thank you, give it a go and Happy Christmas



BG

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Santa	Toys	Bells
Tree	Chimney	Walk
Worry	Elves	Stars
Jesus	Food	Alone
Joy	Tidy	Room
Snow	Hat	Merry
Hope	Carrot	Prison
Decorations	Fire	Games
Sleight	December	Lonely
Presents	Love	Music
Scarf	Crib	Compensate
Wrapping Paper	Sad	Reindeers
Never Enough	Songs	Homeless
Family	Worse Off	Lord
Fun	Shopping	Charity

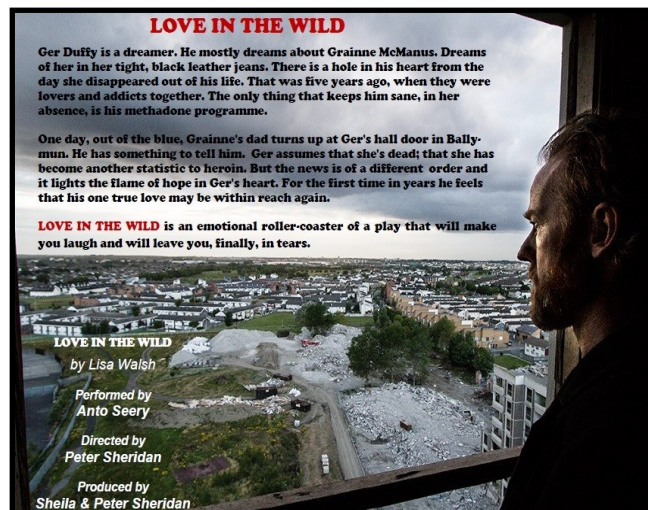


Love in the Wild

I went to see a play in YAP recently called “Love in the Wild”. It was one guy acting out his life as it is now. He was living at home with his Mammy and sister. He would have been in his early 30’s. It started off with him taking his methadone and then he goes on to tell the audience about his hopes of how things are going to change for him. He decides he’s going to the baths. He hasn’t been there in years but he’s going anyway even though you know he’s worried about it because it’s all changed now. He calls to his Mammy to ask her to find his togs for him and 2 minutes later she has them for him. He rolls them up in his towel and off he goes. He does mention the old days of buying a Chester slice in Manning’s on the way home (Unfortunately Manning’s is gone now and all the other shops in the centre). He talks about not knowing how it works in the new swimming pool now and seemed a little bit embarrassed about it. He had to ask a young lad working there about changing and getting your colour band. He ends up not going after getting ready because of how people treat him because of his drug addiction. Although he tells us about it he seems to be able to hide it well or maybe he is used to it and it doesn’t bother him anymore. A lot of the time he gave examples about how other people were judging him because of his addictions but he took it well and was even funny about it in how he described it. When he got back home he told his Mammy he didn’t get in and she already had a surprise for him on the kitchen table. Did you guess what it was like I did? A Chester Slice.

He spent a lot of his time in his bedroom and so he had his laptop there which was still hard for him to use as he explained about being afraid to hit some of the buttons because you never know what might happen. Sure one time he nearly bought a Russian bride accidentally. Which got him thinking about his first girlfriend that he truly loved or truly loved in his own way. Anyway his sister had got him to join a dating site which he didn’t want to do but he joined and she helped him set it up. He explains about getting a wink and calls his sister up to tell her so the long story short is that he goes out on a date with this girl and by the time he’s heading out on the date his Mammy has him married to her already. He’s very nervous so smokes a joint or two on the way. There’s a few more stories that I won’t tell here because I don’t want to ruin it for you. So again he arrives home early and his Mammy and sister are waiting for him as they have some news to tell him. It’s about his ex-girlfriend. I don’t really want to say much more about what happens from here because you can all find out yourselves as it will be on in the Axis on the 7th, 8th and 9th of March.

At the end of the play the audience could make comments and ask questions with the Director Peter Sheridan, the Writer Lisa Walsh and the Actor Anto Seery. A few people said what they thought of it. Overall I think they got a good response and was well received. I really enjoyed it I thought it was funny and also sad at times but the actor was very good at making everything seem ok. It would be worth going to see and I’ll go again and will bring some of my family with me. **PH**



Travellers, Drugs and Drink

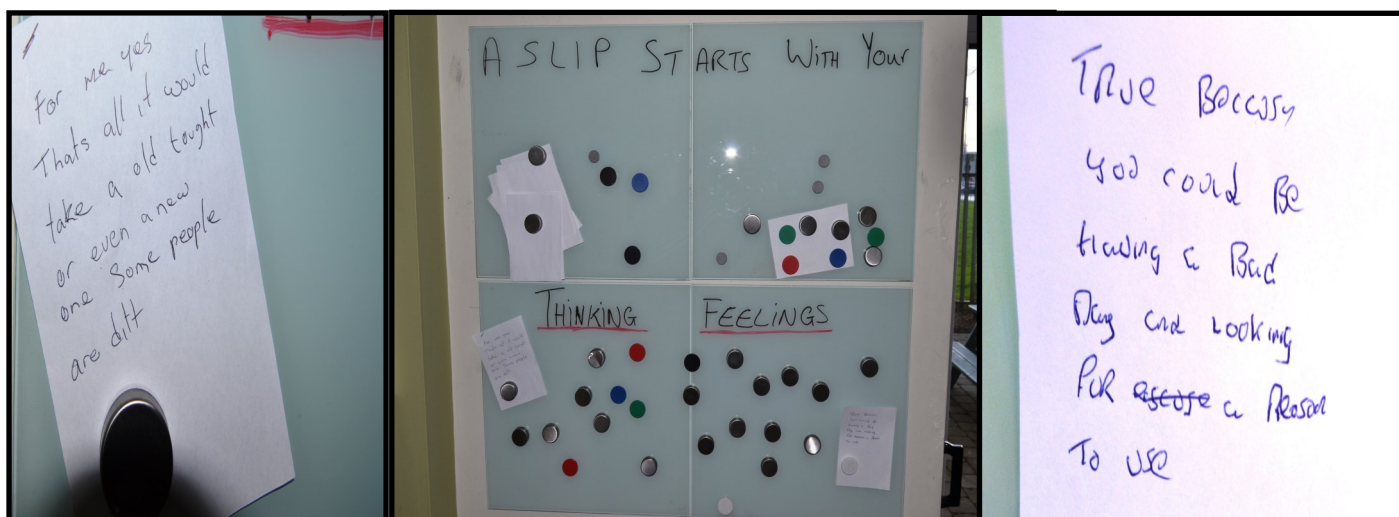
I have been on drugs and drink for 13 years. I started taking drugs after my divorce. I got married when I was 19, I did not know what drugs were until I met another member of my community. He gave me heroin and hash and I enjoyed it at first then I got strung out. My health started to deteriorate and I went to a clinic called Domville House.

I started to get depressed and angry. Some young travelling people take cocaine and are ashamed to admit it. They need to talk to someone about their problem, to counsellors or drug agencies. I hope they get the help they need. Travellers will not talk to other groups in case they discriminate against them, some answer needs to be found as this is getting worse in my community. M.



Talking Wall

The latest survey asked “Does a relapse begin with a thought or a feeling?” and to date there are very mixed opinions on the topic. It appears to be almost fifty : fifty, with two people placing themselves in the middle as they couldn’t pick one over the other and also thought it depends on the circumstances as to which might be more dominant than the other in an incident of relapse. What do you think when it comes to relapse, is it a thought that starts the relapse or is it a feeling?



Lyrica (Pregabalin)



Lyrica can lead to thoughts or actions of suicide in about 1 in 500 people.

Changes in mood or behaviour may include:

worsened depression; anxiety; restlessness; trouble sleeping; panic attacks
anger; irritability; agitation; aggression; dangerous impulses or violence;
extreme increases in activity or talking.

Patients, family members or caregivers should call the doctor right away if they notice behavioural changes, suicidal thoughts or actions, or thoughts or evidence of self harm.

Using Crack

While smoking drugs prevents injection-related risks like vein damage and reduces the chance of getting Hep C, smoking is associated with its own risks.. Smoking drugs can cause respiratory problems, such as shortness of breath, chronic cough, chest pains, asthma, bronchitis and pneumonia. Using brass screens instead of steel wool or Brillo screens and using Pyrex stems instead of pop cans or plastic bottles will help prevent some of this damage.

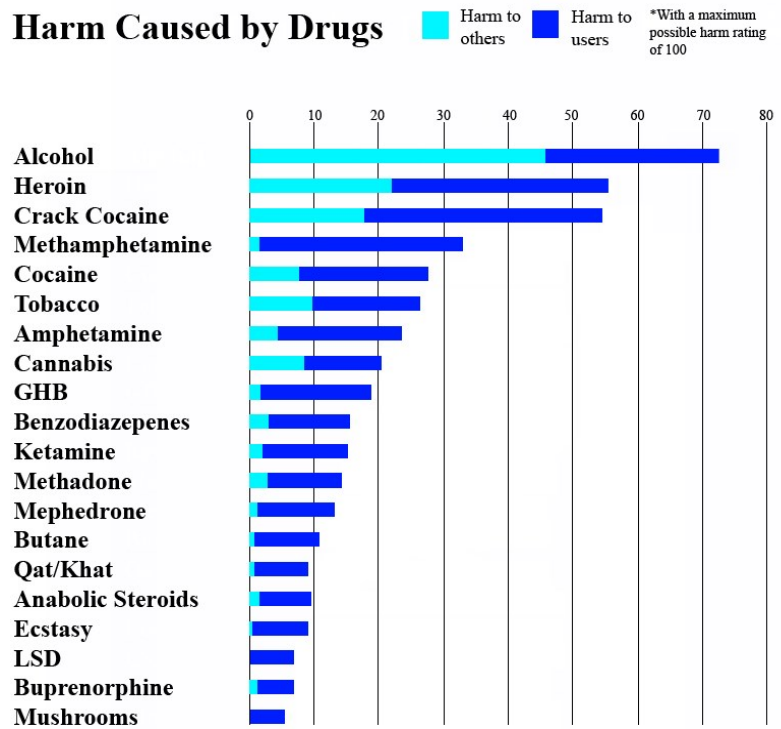
Sharing pipes can also spread HIV, other sexually transmitted infections and tuberculosis.

Prepping Before Using

Planning how much to use and setting limits can prevent some of the dangers associated with using or bingeing.

Paying rent, buying groceries and paying other bills before buying drugs means budgets will not get out of control. After a binge, people are often very hungry and ready to crash, so encouraging people to have food on hand and a safe place to sleep will make the crash easier.

Harm Caused by Drugs



Adapted from "Drug harms in the UK: a multi-criteria decision analysis", by David Nutt, Leslie King and Lawrence Phillips, on behalf of the Independent Scientific Committee on Drugs. The Lancet.



I remember when my kids were young, they loved Christmas. When we went shopping they loved to see all the toys. The kids would pick up all the toys and play with them. They would have a long list of toys that they wanted from Santa. My daughter really wanted a Baby Born Doll and some kids Jewellery and my son was mad into Trains, especially Thomas the Tank Engine. So I got my daughter her Baby Born with nappies and clothes for the doll. She also got some other small toys. My son got the train set with some other small toys which he loved. When I got home I wrapped their presents up in some lovely wrapping paper.

On Christmas Eve when we had our dinner we turned on the telly and snuggled up together with our Christmas lights on it was so cosy. The kids watched their favourite film. We had ice cream and sweets and then I put them to bed. They were so excited they couldn't sleep. Eventually they fell asleep.

The kids loved Christmas morning when they opened their presents and played with them. They were so happy and it makes me so happy to think about that time together.

Christmas Morning I made a nice fry for breakfast. The kids were running around opening their presents. I loved to see the smiles on their faces. My daughter was so happy with her Baby Born Doll she spent all day dressing her doll and putting her in her pram and pushing it up and down the room. My son loved his Thomas The Tank Engine and his Lego. Christmas was the best day of the year. We had our lovely Christmas dinner and desserts. After that we got dressed in our Christmas clothes and the kids looked so cute. We went to my mums and the kids played with their cousins.

It was such a great day and most of all the kids loved their presents so I couldn't wait until next Christmas

RQ

Think Before You Buy Campaign Blanchardstown

DO
YOU ^{USE} ILLEGAL
DRUGS?

9 % of adults polled in Ireland have admitted to using drugs in the past 12 months. That 9% amounts to 369258 people using recreational drugs in Ireland each week. If each person spends just €10 per week, this would generate €3,692,582 per week. That's roughly €192,014,264 per year for gangs. It is this vast amount of money involved in recreational drug use that helps explain why drug gangs are prepared to commit murder to protect an area in which to sell drugs.

What is a drug dealer?

Anyone who buys, sells or shares drugs. The only difference between someone who pays €10 for drugs and someone who pays €10,000 for drugs is the quantity and price. If you use recreational drugs you cannot complain about "the drug dealing scumbag" caught with 10K of drugs, WHY?because they are supplying you with your €10 worth of drugs.

You are the first and most important link in the supply / demand chain

The "**Think Before You Buy Campaign**" is a Safer Blanchardstown initiative and campaign raising awareness about Drug Debt Intimidation and its effects on communities in Dublin 15 and nationwide.

Some Christmas Jokes

What does Santa suffer from if he gets stuck in a chimney? ***Claustrophobia!***

Why did Santa go to the doctor?
Because of his bad "elf"!

Why did Santa's helper see a YAP Counsellor?
Because he had low "elf" esteem!

What kind of motorbike does Santa ride?
A Holly Davidson!

What do you call a cat in the desert?
Sandy Claws!

Who delivers presents to cats? ***Santa Paws!***

What do you call Santa living at the South Pole?
A lost clause.

What says Oh Oh Oh?
Santa walking backwards!

Who is Santa Claus married to?
Mary Christmas!

What do you get if you cross Santa with a duck?
A Christmas Quacker!

What did the sea Say to Santa?
Nothing! It just waved!

What do you call Father Christmas in the beach?
Sandy Clause!

What did Adam say to his wife on Christmas?
It's Christmas, Eve!

What do you call a blind reindeer?
I have no eye deer



**Ballymun Youth Action
Project Limited**



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What Is a Relapse?

The most recent drug relapse prevention research suggests that, rather than being a random event, relapse is a result of an underlying process, and is a part of overall recovery. In a now widely adopted treatment philosophy, relapse is best defined as a series of setbacks along the way to recovery. From this perspective, mistakes or lapses are considered part of the recovery process, not a failure to recover.

Relapse is quite common among people when trying to change within addiction. Repeated drug use can cause changes in the brain that may affect an addicted person's self-control and ability to resist cravings. Drug relapse prevention is an essential part of the recovery process because people remain at increased risk for many years of relapse.

The definition of drug relapse is evolving, thereby complicating efforts to explain it. Researchers debate whether drug relapse is a process or an outcome in and of itself. The origins of the definition of drug relapse come from a medical model that viewed addiction like a disease: a patient returns to a state of sickness after a period of remission. As the definition evolved, it came to encapsulate the process that leads people in recovery to return to their drug abuse.

Why Do People Relapse on Drugs?

Recent drug relapse statistics show that more than 85% of individuals relapse and return to drug use within one year of residential treatment. Researchers estimate that more than 2/3 of individuals in recovery relapse within weeks to months of beginning addiction treatment.

Why are these drug relapse statistics so discouraging? Without a long-term drug relapse prevention plan, most people will be unsuccessful in their attempts to remain sober/ abstinent so having a solid plan in place is essential.

The goal of drug relapse prevention programs is to address the problem of relapse by teaching techniques for preventing or managing its happening. Drug addiction relapse prevention models are based on the idea that high-risk situations can make a person more vulnerable to relapse. A high-risk situation can include people, places, or feelings that lead to drug-seeking behaviour.

Without a long-term drug relapse prevention plan, sadly most people will be unsuccessful in their attempts to remain sober.

The process of relapse is sometimes compared to a circle of dominos. The first domino to fall might be unwittingly placing yourself in a high-risk situation; the second might be thinking you are in control, or denying that you ever had a real problem or that your problem wasn't so bad. While each step may feel insignificant, they are part of a chain of events leading you toward relapse.

Current research suggests that relapse is a gradual process wherein a person in recovery returns to his or her drug abuse. This means relapse can begin weeks or even months before an individual first takes a drug again. A good relapse prevention program helps individuals identify those early signs of relapse and develop tools and techniques for coping, so they can stop relapse early in the process. Researchers believe this significantly reduces a person's risk of returning to drug addiction.

Physical relapse is when an individual finally returns to drug use. Some clinicians divide this phase into lapse (initial drug use) and relapse (returning to uncontrolled using). Either way, this final stage is the hardest to come back from.



MY STORY

I am nearly 35 years old and I have a son who is 10, I have been dependant on heroin or methadone for over 10 years now. I have been to a few detox centres and been to High Park twice. I was always trying to get clean for others I never really wanted it for myself. I thought why stop taking something that makes me feel good and I am able to get up and clean the house and everything without moaning, after the third time my boyfriend of twelve years, the father of my son, caught me having a smoke, that was it, he left me full stop. It was the first thing I lost but in my head I thought he would be back, My son was two when he left and before I knew it he was turning four. I couldn't believe two years had passed but nothing had changed in my life only that my tolerance had doubled, even more I start getting honest with myself and my family.

That's when I started seeing a counsellor and started the ball rolling to go back into detox, this time I was doing it for myself and my son. It was October 2008 I went into treatment for four months, it was so hard being away from my family at Christmas but I had to do it. I learned a lot about myself while I was in there, one of the main things I learned was that I was a people pleaser and wasn't being true to myself or others. I think it was only two weeks before I relapsed and because I had a smoke I felt ashamed and disappointed so the next day I had another. When I look at it now I was only looking for a reason to go back using, its 2017 and I am still on this roundabout, I am stable for a few weeks then I go back using for a few weeks and believe me it's not a pleasant lifestyle roundabout.

I want to stay off drugs, its so confusing, I keep going back using maybe I am lonely, most people I know are in some sort of addiction so I knock into a friend and end up having a smoke, here we go again.

It was my whole life. There are behaviours that I have to change and the main thing for me is stay motivated, and to stop using, using to deal with life is one of my biggest behaviours,**FUCK IT.**

I am on and off drugs now 20 years, I was a heavy drinker before my son was born. When my son was born I stayed in my mother's first, myself and his father got our own place when he was 2 months old. One day I was in town with my son and I met someone I know who sold gear. I turned to it before whenever myself and partner would spilt, but I always worked as well so I was not used to having time on my hands anyway that day in town I got a bag and when I got home, I smoked it, "*I was invincible*" I didn't feel down and got the house scrubbed, baby was fed, bathed and sleeping, everything felt so much easier.

I'd come into a large amount of money just before my son was born a few weeks later my partner said lets book a holiday. I just froze; "*All the money is gone and I am strung out*". He gave me three chances and he doesn't take the lies etc., anymore, I've 12 years and 12 years gone up in smoke.

Anyway to this day I am still struggling and a lot has happened, the support I get from: Yap, Job Centre, Domville House all helps. I don't want the perfect relationship because perfect is impossible, I want trustworthy, honest, loyal and love, I love imperfect. I am worth it.

Today I close the door to the past, Open the door to the future, take a deep breath and start the next chapter in my life, You are responsible for your life, you can't keep blaming someone else for your dysfunction, and life is really about moving on.

HARD TIMES WILL ALWAYS REVEAL TRUE FRIENDS

**Ballymun Youth Action Project
Limited. (BYAP)**





Boxing Clever is a twenty week integrated educational, substance use recovery and fitness programme that aims to support participants to develop more resilient identities, while encouraging educational achievement, physical wellness and reduction in harmful or risky behaviours. Based in Ballymun, the programme offers two QQI (Further Education and Training) awards in Health Related Fitness (Level 4) and Community Addiction Studies (Level 5) coupled with physical training; boxing skills and tailored fitness training. The boxing skills

training and the fitness training is delivered in gym.. The boxing skills element of the programme covers kickboxing and boxing drills.

The fitness training element of the programme was developed with the aims of providing participants with the opportunity to engage in fitness training in a High Performance environment. The Boxing Clever programme runs five mornings a week for 20 weeks, three mornings are assigned to sport, the other two to the QQI Level 5 CASC and the QQI Level 4 Health Related Fitness course. Additional learning support sessions offered at DCU in the Community. Places are available for the next programme, starting January 2018, if you or someone you know would like to apply for a place on this programme, contact Karl in YAP, 01 84208071 email karlob@byap.ie



Many thanks to Tobias for kindly cooking a curry for the Monday Evening Recovery Group. In what is already a busy schedule for Tobias between college and other voluntary commitments, he made the time to cook for the group, we are aware of how you put yourself out to cook for us and want to take this opportunity to acknowledge the efforts you put in and how it made your own plans for Monday evening so much more awkward, yet you still cooked for us. Your willingness to give back is so commendable and we gained from it on Monday. We were all disappointed you couldn't share the food with us and hope an opportunity presents itself soon where we can share some time with you to say thank you Tobias.

Is It Worth It?

How easy it is to get caught up in drugs. I am 40 and I am going to tell you how I got caught up in drugs. When I was 13, my mother used to be on a lot of medication. I was told by a bloke, to have a look at what medication my mother was on. So I told this guy my mother was taking Valium, Normison and Prothiaden and he offered me money for the tablets. So I robbed all my mother's medication. When they took the tablets they all looked very happy. So I started taking some of the tablets and it felt great. I hadn't any clue that I wouldn't be able to go without Valium. If I couldn't get any I would go to the black market and got dependant on them, cos if I couldn't get them I wouldn't be able to talk to anyone. So that's when I started petty robbery.

One day I was asked by a woman to see if there was Napps in my mothers, there was, so I said I will see if they sell. Oh yes they did, they sold at a high price. In old money it was Napps 30's for £5, Napps 60's for £10 and Napps 100's for £20. So one morning I went into this guys flat, I was only interested in Valium and I will never forget this day for the rest of my life. I had my Valium on his table and I was about to take them. He put one Napp 30mg in front of my Valium and said you will get a better buzz out of this tablet. Then I started to think about it. So I said yes I will take it. But he said you had to bang it up. Now you've got to remember I was only 13 at the time. So I let him stick the needle in my arm and it was a lovely feeling. But little did I know I would be strung out for many years, 27 years altogether. I went over to Domville House, I was really pissed off with that life on the black market. I am now on Domville 16 years. I am now 40 years of age; So is it really worth it?

JM



Craft Group

The craft group have been working away in the lead up to Christmas and held a display of some of their creations on the 14th of December. They have worked on creating cards, tree decorations, painting jars and putting tea lights in the jars and Christmas wreaths. Some of the group also attended the Tuesday Drop-in to assist the drop-in participants in creating some Christmassy crafts during the two weeks in December.



Everyone who attended the display was really impressed with the standard of work, the effort put in to create the pieces and the creativity involved. The mince pies and coffee went down a treat and we wish them well on their next venture. If you would like to come along contact Mary.



Christmas and Christmas Past



Christmas and Christmas past,
Lighted candles shadows cast,
My ma in the kitchen doing what she could
My Dad nursing a can like every man should,
My Granda came Christmas Eve
My Aunt with the whiskey doing drinking you wouldn't believe
I used to say where does it go
And after a few more her cheeks would glow
I loved my Granda and loved the presents
But Christmas in his house was great in Greencastle crescent
The family altogether in that house
My Granda had drinks from Sandiman Port & Famous Grouse
Pork steak and Turkey gravy and mustard
And when it was all over apple pie and custard
Now I'm the father and I give the presents
But I'll never forget the Christmas in Greencastle Crescent PM

Friends Remembering Friends Memorial Service

Friends Remembering Friends Memorial Service first began in November 1995. It is seen as an opportunity for us to keep the memories of our loved ones alive in our hearts and to celebrate the life they had.

Family and friends remember the life of those who have passed away on the night through poems, readings and music.

Every year there is a theme to guide us on the night; this year's theme is "*friendship*"... the importance of being and having a friend in times of grief. The service will be held on the **27th February at 7pm** in the Holy Spirit Church. We would welcome, as we do each year, your participation in planning the event with your help with songs, readings etc. and of course being there on the night.



Happy Birthday to Cara

I'm sure you would like to join us in wishing our Cara a very happy birthday. You will all know Cara as she is the first face you tend to meet when you come into YAP or the voice on the end of the phone if you ring. She has a great way of making people feel welcomed and safe in the space.

She has worked for YAP for many, many years and we hope she continues to do so as she is a very important piece of the service we offer to the people of Ballymun.

Best wishes for your birthday Cara.



What I Believe

What we think about ourselves becomes the truth for us! I believe everyone, myself included, is responsible for everything in our lives. We create the situation and then we give our power away by blaming the other person for our frustration. **NO** person, **NO** place and **Nothing** has any power over us for **WE** are the thinkers in our mind. The universe totally supports us in every thought we choose to think and believe. The universal power never judges or criticises us. Most of us have foolish ideas about who we are and many, many rigid rules about how life ought to be lived. When we are very little we learn how to feel about ourselves and about life by the reactions of adults around us. When we grow up we have a tendency to recreate the emotional environment of our early time life. However I would not blame our parents for this. I believe that we choose our parents. The point of power is always in the present moment. The only thing we are ever dealing with is a thought and a thought can be changed.

LJ

Crack Cocaine Harm Reduction Techniques

- Don't share your pipe. Hepatitis C can live in an amount of blood too small to be visible to the naked eye.
- Try to use Pyrex pipes (instead of cans, copper or cheap glass)
- Use a screen in your pipe (a hash pipe style screen). This will protect your lungs from some of the toxins and damage.
- Know that your pipe is going to get hot and protect your lips by wrapping your pipe end in something (paper or cardboard).
- Eat a good meal and drink plenty of fluids before starting to smoke.
- Try to limit your access to finances before you start smoking (Only bring as much money as you need).
- Have condoms on you. You never know what's going to happen once you start smoking crack cocaine.

Christmas Trees

The evergreen fir tree has traditionally been used to celebrate winter festivals for thousands of years. Pagans used branches of it to decorate their homes during the winter solstice, as it made them think of the spring to come. The Romans used Fir Trees to decorate their temples at the festival of Saturnalia. Christians use it as a sign of everlasting life with God.

Nobody is really sure when Fir trees were first used as Christmas trees. It probably began about 1000 years ago in Northern Europe. Many early Christmas Trees seem to have been hung upside down from the ceiling using chains (hung from chandeliers/lighting hooks).



The first documented use of a tree at Christmas and New Year celebrations is argued between the cities of Tallinn in Estonia and Riga in Latvia! Both claim that they had the first trees; Tallinn in 1441 and Riga in 1510. Both trees were put up by the 'Brotherhood of Blackheads' which was an association of local unmarried merchants, ship owners, and foreigners in Livonia (what is now Estonia and Latvia).

Cones on a Fir Tree

The first person to bring a Christmas Tree into a house, in the way we know it today, may have been the 16th century German preacher Martin Luther. A story is told that, one night before Christmas, he was walking through the forest and looked up to see the stars shining through the tree branches. It was so beautiful, that he went home and told his children that it reminded him of Jesus, who left the stars of heaven to come to earth at Christmas. Some people say this is the same tree as the 'Riga' tree, but it isn't! The Riga tree originally took place a few decades earlier.



Another story says that St. Boniface of Crediton (a village in Devon, UK) left England and travelled to Germany to preach to the pagan German tribes and convert them to Christianity. He is said to have come across a group of pagans about to sacrifice a young boy while worshipping an oak tree. In anger, and to stop the sacrifice, St. Boniface is said to have cut down the oak tree and, to his amazement, a young fir tree sprang up from the roots of the oak tree. St. Boniface took this as a sign of the Christian faith and his followers decorated the tree with candles so that St. Boniface could preach to the pagans at night.

There is another legend, from Germany, about how the Christmas Tree came into being, it goes: Once on a cold Christmas Eve night, a forester and his family were in their cottage gathered round the fire to keep warm. Suddenly there was a knock on the door. When the forester opened the door, he found a poor little boy standing on the door step, lost and alone. The forester welcomed him into his house and the family fed and washed him and put him to bed in the youngest sons own bed (he had to share with his brother that night!). The next morning, Christmas Morning, the family were woken up by a choir of angels, and the poor little boy had turned into Jesus, the Christ Child. The Christ Child went into the front garden of the cottage and broke a branch off a Fir tree and gave it to the family as a present to say thank you for looking after him. So ever since then, people have remembered that night by bringing a Christmas Tree into their homes!

The first Christmas Trees came to Britain sometime in the 1830s. They became very popular in 1841, when Prince Albert (Queen Victoria's German husband) had a Christmas Tree set up in Windsor Castle. In 1848, drawing of "The Queen's Christmas tree at Windsor Castle" was published in the Illustrated London News.

Addiction Support Services Ballymun

YAP – Ballymun Youth Action Project

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Rd.

Tel: 01 8428071

Domville House Treatment Centre

Main Street, Ballymun

Tel: 01 8620111

Ballymun Job Centre

Ballymun Shopping Centre

Tel: 01 866 7000

YAP – Aftercare

Support for Recovering Drug and Alcohol Users

Tel: 01 8428071

The Star Project

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Road

Tel: 01 8467930

DePaul Trust Case Management Team

Tel: 01 8832 183

Ballymun Local Drugs Task Force

Axis, Main Street, Ballymun - 01 8832142

Infant Parent Support Service

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Road

Contact Vera / Mary 01 8428071 / 086 666 3770

Ballymun Family Support Service

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Road,

Tel: 01 846 7930

URRUS Training Centre

Horizons Centre, Balcurris Road

Tel: 01 8467980



YAP Christmas Opening Hours

Friday 22nd December 10–5pm

Monday 25th December—Closed

Tuesday 26th December—Closed

Wednesday 27th December—Closed

Thursday 29th December 12–4pm

Friday 30th December 12-4pm

Monday 1st of January—Closed

Tuesday 2nd January 10-5pm

