



Reach for the

STARS

ANNUAL REPORT 20-21



YOUNG LEADERS STATEMENT

Over the last year we as Young Leaders have opened our arms to new members and continued working together to create a community of Young People that have come together to make an impact and help others. Those of us who have been Young leaders for a number of years look back fondly of sitting around a table with cups of tea and coffee in 303 Ormeau Road but it is a testament to Led By You's resilience how we have not only adapted to the new ways of working but thrived.

This year has brought some unprecedented obstacles but we have found ways to overcome these – changing our approach to continue with existing pieces of work such as consultations and the Annual Report. We have also pursued new ventures such as Peer Mentor Training, Isom8 Program and our Anti-Racism Group. Having these activities was great – it felt like due to COVID things were stuck, not moving on and Young Leaders gave us something to do and to look forward to each week.

Becoming a Young Leader in a world in lockdown was at first quite intimidating. However, we were warmly welcomed by existing Young Leaders and quickly got to work on ongoing projects. We soon began developing our own projects despite the limitations of lockdown, managing to thrive and grow as individuals and as a group. Throughout the last year we have been able to welcome more Young People into Led By You and take part and create more projects that impact ourselves and the wider community.

Over the last year in particular we have recognised the importance of connecting with others and finding new ways to connect with each other. As Young Leaders we stayed connected through zoom meetings, Isom8, group activities online etc. It is important to keeping and pushing through when things get tough – our commitment to our role as Young Leaders and willingness to move online is a testament to how we as Young People can overcome challenges.

As Young Leaders we draw on our sense of independence and stand on our own two feet, creating opportunities to stave off boredom. Regular meetings and activities in Led By You have helped us keep a stable routine which was really important.

This year helped us realise the importance of hope and bringing this with us into our personal and professional lives. Also, we realised as restrictions lift we are feeling more hopeful and will continue with the work we've been doing around supporting other Young People, challenging societal issues such as racism as these are things that are important to us as Young Leaders.

As the astronaut John Glenn once said "We are more fulfilled when we are involved in things that are bigger than ourselves"



YOUNG LEADERS QUOTES

"I joined the Young Leaders to be a voice for other Young People in MACS, I love being able to make a positive change" - Robyn

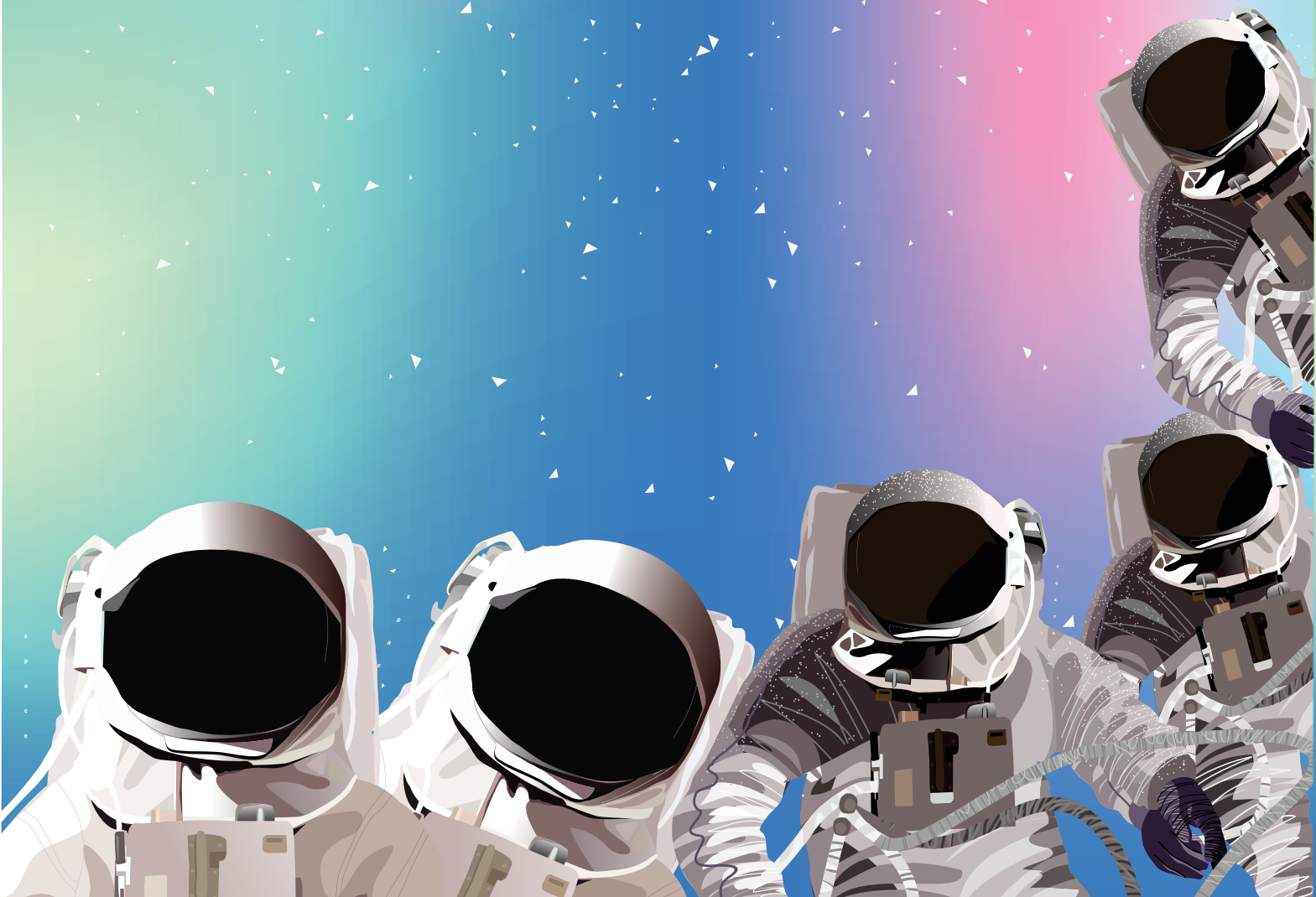
"I wanted to be a part of Led by You because it is empowering Young People to change something and help other people. It gives me opportunity to learn how to work with people and be the best version of myself." - Olga

"Joining Young Leaders during lockdown really helped give me a purpose in a time when not a lot was happening. I have loved meeting (over zoom) with like-minded people and seeing the positive impact MACS continues to have on the community, that I now get to play a part in." - Aimee

"Being a Young Leader gives me a platform to stand up to the problems that I see facing Young People such as mental health issues, racism, unemployment, and homelessness. I think that Led By You shows that, no matter your background or your experiences, that your voice can be heard and you can make a difference. For me knowing that others were just a WhatsApp message or a Zoom call away was a great relief. I was able to use zoom to facilitate Isom8 sessions which I found very rewarding." - Eve

"MACS has done a lot for me and I really enjoy being able to give back, being a Young Leader is very rewarding and has helped me gain more confidence in myself" - Dean

"I wanted to become a Young Leader because I wanted to give after receiving some fantastic support from MACS. I really enjoyed meeting other like minded Young People and helping others have their voices heard in MACS". - David



CEO STATEMENT



Can you tell us what it has been like for you as a CEO leading MACS through a pandemic?

It's been horrendous at times - leading an organisation from your sitting room is not easy. It has been tough not being able to share ideas with your team members since you aren't in the same building and that innovative thinking and problem solving together has been lost. You have to ring them or set up a Zoom meeting so that natural flow that you have when you're working in the office with people is all gone. There is also the worry that Young People are safe and supported and you're also hoping that staff are okay and that their mental health is okay because being "locked down" for so long has affected us all. It has been very worrying for me as the leader of the organisation. That being said, there are massive upsides to working through the pandemic. I think that the use of technology has been absolutely phenomenal. We've used WhatsApp, Zoom and other mechanisms to communicate so that we haven't lost contact with our Young People. We have loads of meetings in MACS and, prior to the pandemic, it took forever for people to travel to them because people are coming from all over the country but now we can have meetings so quickly over Zoom, particularly bigger team leaders meetings, and I've been able to get to nearly all of them because they're now on Zoom. I have been able to do more meetings in different areas than before. It's been fantastic but it doesn't beat face-to-face contact - nothing ever will. It's pretty good being able to save time traveling, but it would be nicer to sit with a coffee and have human interaction. Saving time isn't always good. Maybe we need to relish time more and not rush. I know that all the staff have worked really hard over the last year - we have definitely doubled our efforts, but I think when it's over maybe the lesson learned will just slow things down and be more reflective.

Has there been any specific challenges the pandemic has thrown up for MACS?

I think the biggest challenge is not seeing people face to face. I think that has been a huge challenge for staff that a lot of the work has been all over Zoom and WhatsApp now. We have met Young People face to face when there has been a crisis or emergency but even then it's with social distancing.

We've definitely seen an increase in Young People with mental health problems and an increase in Young People who have suffered homelessness. There are vulnerable Young People with very complex needs and we've seen a huge increase in them in the Floating Support service over this last year so that has been a real challenge to keep on top of those referrals. We always want to say yes to Young People but we can't say yes to everyone so that's been a huge challenge in managing referrals and making sure that the Young People who are really in crisis are getting a service immediately. Putting Young People on a waiting list doesn't always sit comfortably with MACS so I think having these big waiting lists has been a big challenge for us as an organisation. The Board has been doing a lot of work on governance over the last year, so I'd like to commend the Board for their hard work.

What has gone well for MACS in the last year?

Shared Tenancy has been a really brilliant innovation that opened up during the pandemic and we were able to exceed our targets by getting the right matches and finding the housing for Young People and that has been an unbelievable success over the last year and I'm so proud of that. The prison work that we've done has also been a tremendous success and indeed both those projects won awards. Shared Tenancy won the Housing Innovation award and the Prisons Service was highly commended at the CIH Housing Awards.

Led By You has also gone really well. Despite the pandemic, the numbers in Led By You have grown and we're seeing more commitment to the group which seems to be really getting its own identity. I think Zoom has really helped Led By You over the last year to get people together, form relationships and build a real solid identity so I think Led By You has really thrived, funnily enough, over the pandemic. I was so proud of how the Young Leaders produced last year's Annual Report and how they produced the graphics for our Strategic Plan. I just thought it was great the amount of work that people had put in both on the Annual Report and on the Strategic Plan. Led By You are a phenomenal force in the organisation.



What is in store for MACS over the next year?

I think really exciting things are in store over the next year, we may be in a recovery phase over the next year, but in the next two years I definitely see amazing things for MACS, firstly in relation to sticking to our core work which will always be essential. I see developments in shared housing with Housing First for Youth, the prisons work, and in working more fluidly with the 18 to 25 year old population of Young People who are struggling. I do see lots of opportunities and indeed that is in the draft Supporting People strategy which is really heartening, you know, it's really promising that one of our biggest funders has all that in their strategy moving forward - Shared Tenancy, Housing First for Youth, working more fluidly with the 18-25 population, the prisons work - I think that's fantastic. Obviously I hope to see the continued growth of Led By You and let's not forget Muddy Paws - it has done brilliantly even with the pandemic. The feedback from when it was able to open has been phenomenal. Young People have benefited so much from that contact with animals and with volunteers.

Compliments

I'm proud of all our services and it's the staff on a grassroots level that I have been particularly proud of during this pandemic. The staff who have been on the front line have really gone an extra twenty miles and I need to pay tribute in particular to our housing staff and Therapeutic Community staff who didn't have the opportunity to work from home.

Of course, I have to thank the Senior Managers and the Board for pulling together over what's been a really trying year. I'm looking forward to getting back into the office and having that sense of camaraderie and a bit of fun. That's something we've lost during the pandemic - it's just work and there's not really a lot of "craic" as they would say in the South of Ireland. We need to get the craic back into MACS. I think the sense of fun and playfulness is what makes MACS so unique.

We've really come up trumps in MACS, like loads of other organisations. We've done our best and I think we've exceeded our ambitions. We didn't have a high staff sickness rate. At the start of the pandemic we envisaged that we would be just crucified with loads of staff out sick and having to put Young People in different places. We were really planning for the worst case scenario but it never happened - is that luck or was it because we managed the process well? I think it was probably a bit of both. We managed the process well and obviously we had a good bit of luck on our side as not many people got sick. We had loads of good measures around trying to protect people and keep them safe.

We did two really good surveys, one with staff and one with Young People, during the pandemic in relation to MACS' response to COVID-19. The response to the staff survey was really positive in relation to how people felt we supported them. The Young People's survey showed that 95% were satisfied with MACS' approach to the pandemic. These are really fantastic results that show we are hearing people's views which allows us to respond appropriately both to staff and Young People.



Mary Ryan.

BOARD STATEMENT



Why did you choose to be a Board Member?

Well, the context for me, is that I've been a Board Member for almost four years (four years this June). I suppose my story with MACS probably starts a long time ago. I used to work for another charity within the same sector; I worked for a homeless charity and I worked for them for 11 years. During that time, I was aware of the work of MACS and whenever the opportunity came about four years ago, I really jumped at the opportunity because number one I was aware of MACS and the great work that MACS did, and the cause has always been something that's very close to my heart. So really at that stage I thought, I'm in a position to commit time, I believe in the cause, I'm familiar with the work, and felt that my experience and my skills were a really good fit. Hopefully, my background has benefited MACS.


We wanted to know how have you adapted to the pandemic over the last year whilst keeping Young People in mind? Have you discovered any new ways of working?

Yeah, probably like everybody it came as a thunderbolt out of nowhere, and no matter how much we all tried to prepare, (within the work environment we will have things like business continuity plans and crisis management plans) it really caught everybody on the hop. So really, from a Board perspective, we always have to consider MACS the organisation first and then the needs of Young People, regardless of the pandemic. It's enshrined in MACS ethos and practices, so no matter what, that's always going to be the case. We have a thing called the Articles of Association, which is our governing document, which says what MACS should be doing as an organisation and what we shouldn't and it's the role of the Board to oversee this.

However, no matter what, we can't ignore the fact that the pandemic happened and really for me the pandemic made us all aware of the importance of feeling connected. Hopefully, when the impact of the pandemic eases we'll begin to appreciate the simpler things in life that we've all taken for granted, things like friends, family, even things like outside spaces, the ability to move freely and socialise. In terms of the practical stuff that we've had to do as Board, obviously we've had to support Mary (CEO) and the team to make the adjustments that they needed to in terms of delivering the service and (on top of that, by virtue of us having this conversation), we've all adopted to technology, we've all become familiar with Zoom and Teams and Skype and as much as we prefer to do things face to face, I think this is a way of ensuring that if we ever have to deal with something like this again, we have the tools in place. Truthfully, I think we're likely to continue to use communication tools like this moving forward, as much as we'll all go back to doing things in a face-to-face way, I think technology is here to stay. I suppose technology is probably the best way that we've managed to communicate and support Mary and the team, we have had some additional Board meetings that we wouldn't normally have had because of the pandemic, but actually, they've been short and sweet and few and far between but the use of technology was essential.

What did you think were the most challenging elements of last year and how did you overcome them?

Again, I think as a Board, we were initially really concerned about the impact of COVID and how it was going to impact MACS. When you look at the context of how the third sector (Community and Voluntary Sector) in general have been impacted, for many, many charities and organisations in that sector the impact of COVID has been devastating. However, when you look at the impact on MACS, it's been limited. So as much as many organisations in the sector have had to focus on a lot of doom and gloom, and crisis management, MACS (credit to Mary and the team and to the Young People themselves) I think we've come out of that at this point in time relatively well and safely, which is a real relief.



The current MACS Board is relatively new, and there have been challenges associated with that. It's been a challenge trying to continue to develop as a new Board, trying to find our feet and trying to make sure that while we're doing that and developing, that we're still carrying out our legal, statutory and regulatory obligations. There have been multiple challenges, but as much as COVID has been really difficult for everyone, it could have been worse for MACS, but thankfully, it hasn't been.

What do you think have been the highlights and what's gone well this year?

Well, I think certainly a highlight being the flip-side of the previous question and answer in that because of the real huge efforts of MACS, the organisation, (Mary, and the team), I think that how we got through that and navigated it, has been a real plus. It's something that everybody really needs to take credit for because it hasn't been easy. I think Young People themselves, (who are accessing the services), deserve a huge acknowledgment for having to go through what has been on a personal level, something that must be really challenging. For that to happen and people to still function the way they do as individuals and collectively, particularly those guys who are living together is something that needs to be highlighted and to be applauded because that can't have been easy.

From a Board perspective, we've been really busy trying to develop governance structures for the Board itself and supporting MACS in general in delivering all of their work and it's all been really worthwhile in terms of everybody's efforts, because people have worked really hard during the past 12 months. I think that's starting to show in regard to us having a better footing in terms of our legal, regulatory responsibilities, because I think sometimes the people outside of the Board forget that actually we have ultimate responsibility for the organisation to make sure that things are being delivered and planned the way that they should be. It's always with one eye on governance that the Board functions. So, I think there's quite a few things that from a Board level, we need to be mindful of the challenges that we've gone through and we've come out pretty well but I think the pandemic and the efforts of the Young People, and MACS and Mary and the team really are the highlights for me.

What do you think is next on the cards for the Board, what is coming up over the next year?

We currently have a few vacancies within the Board, so we'll hopefully get those filled within the next few months and that will help us greatly because it's been a busy time for us. There's been a lot of Board subgroups established to provide additional support to the Board of Directors and having additional members delivering on those pieces of work is going to take a little bit of pressure off the existing members. That's going to be something to look forward to. Ultimately, I think it's about the Board supporting MACS, and the journey beyond COVID and Brexit, because Brexit will have an impact. We're all very focused on COVID now but once the impacts of COVID have lessened (and when we all have our vaccinations and we get back to some sense of normality), the impacts of Brexit will become more evident, which will no doubt pose different challenges to MACS. So, supporting each other through those difficult periods, always being mindful that we must keep our focus on our efforts on supporting children and Young People are going to be the challenges moving forward. I'm confident, though, that we'll succeed because at the minute we're all working together, and we have the one common aim, which is achieving what is best for MACS.

There's something remarkable about the culture of MACS, where it really is person centered, (Young Person centred in particular), and hopefully that never changes. Certainly, from a Board perspective, it's always something that we want to be mindful of. As much as the Board must focus on good governance and the nitty gritty of making sure that MACS are functioning in the way that it does and needs to do, it's also about remembering that the work of MACS is pretty unique, and that we always try to ensure that this is a significant part of our focus.

Well done everyone within MACS for your efforts during the past year and I look forward to reading the Annual Report and thanks Aimee for taking the time to interview me and for the great voluntary work that you do for MACS.

Barry Smyth - Chairperson - 18th March 2020

LED BY YOU

Above & Beyond

This year, I have marveled at the commitment, compassion and loyalty of those involved in our Participation Service which includes both Led By You and MACS Muddy Paws. From our Young Leaders, Volunteers in Muddy Paws, customers and funders, the ongoing support through what has been a really difficult year for individuals, as well as communities, astounds me, clearly demonstrating that even in the darkest of times there are countless moments of light that show who people are and what matters to them.

Despite the challenges of the pandemic we have seen huge growth in terms of service delivery within Participation with the introduction of new programs, educational tools and significant positive outcomes for Young People in terms of reducing their social isolation, completion of qualifications and participation in key consultations on issues such as; impact of COVID-19 on Young People, mental health and housing needs of Young People.

There has been unwavering commitment to the delivery of both Led By You and MACS Muddy Paws – both of which are nearly entirely volunteer-led. It is through the dedication of the Young People and volunteers involved in our service that we have continued to encourage and enhance Young People's participation and as Team Leader, I am immensely proud of each and every person who either helped deliver or participated in the wide range of activities throughout the year. Our approach to Participation is unique and would not be as successful if it weren't for all of those who give their time to both Led By You and MACS Muddy Paws. For that, I am truly grateful.

Trevor - Team Leader, Led By You/Muddy Paws



SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

- This year Young Leaders have volunteered over 2400 hours to MACS. Young Leaders continue to carry out key pieces of work on behalf of the organisation including producing the Annual Report, taking part in consultations on issues affecting Young People and delivery of programs based on needs of Young People using our services.
- Led By You designed and delivered a peer training program to give the Young Leaders the knowledge and skills to facilitate our Isom8 Program with Young People. The 41 Young People from across MACS services who took part in this peer led program felt it reduced their loneliness and isolation.
- 107 Young People across MACS services were supported to participate in activities such as consultations on issues affecting them.
- Led By You developed a bespoke training platform for Young Leaders providing accredited training in areas such as Leadership and Management, Health and Social Care and Youth and Community Work.
- Young Leaders have created a bespoke training resource for Young People to help them identify and challenge racism.
- 204 Young People took part in internal Service Reviews and 100% of these recommendations were implemented

MISSION CONTROL



MUDDY PAWS

Above & Beyond

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Secured £23,700 funding for 1 year for Muddy Paws Worker through Northern Ireland Housing Executives Social Cohesion Fund.
- Piloted our “Canine Foodbank” initiative in Muddy Paws where customers donated tins of dog food and dog treats to us – we then distributed this to Young People from MACS Floating Support Service who; on a low income, were struggling with food costs for their pets.
- Young People and volunteers completed a total of 441 Muddy Paws sessions together over the year.

Peer mentoring in Muddy Paws



Down time at Muddy Paws

MUDDY PAWS

ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN

One Giant Step For Young People

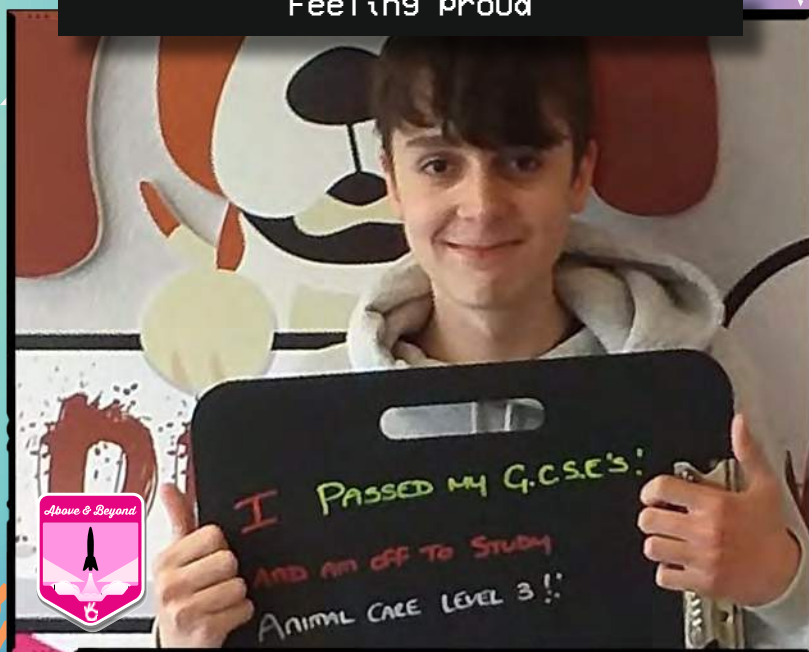
I have always wanted to work with dogs and am really passionate about animals. I heard about Muddy Paws through my psychiatrist. I was having problems with severe anxiety and had taken some time off school to help manage this. I had some experience working with dogs as I had been dog walking for neighbours in my local area prior to suffering from anxiety and felt this would be a really good way to help me get my confidence back. I was involved in Muddy Paws for over a year - during this time it was the only time I left the house and the only social interaction I got outside of my psychiatrist and my family.

I met lots of different people (staff, customers, older volunteers and other Young People) and my confidence grew as I made friends. I took part in several activities such as zoom quizzes and training days and learned about different dog breeds, coat types and how to wash and dry them properly although my favourite part was playing with the dogs! Muddy Paws was very welcoming and I learned practical skills which helped build my confidence to apply for my Animal Management Course.

I am now in the 2nd year of my course and hope to pursue a career in Zoo Keeping with exotic animals. I would recommend Muddy Paw to any Young Person who has an interest in animals, it's very welcoming and I got a lot out of my time there.

Kieran - Muddy Paws

Feeling Proud



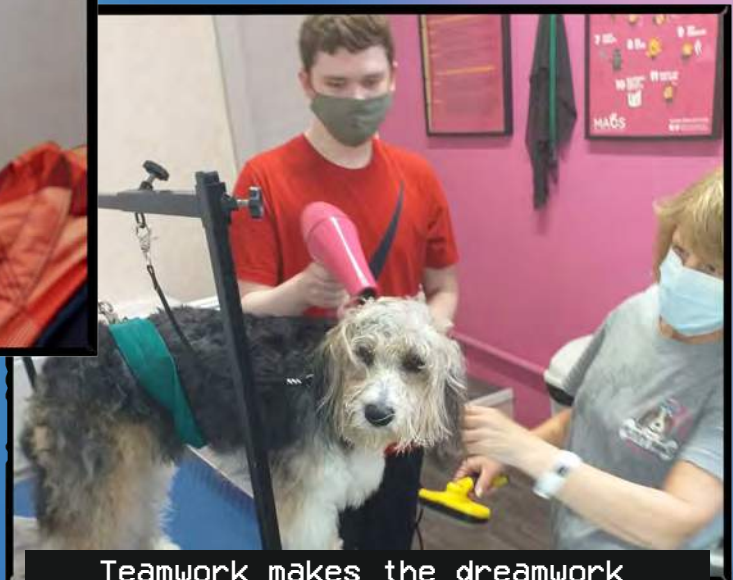
MUDDY PAWS

VOLUNTEER HIGHLIGHT

Homeira has been volunteering in Muddy Paws for the last 3 years. During this time she has been paired with several Young People to help deliver our Walk, Wash and Play sessions. Sharing the same passion for dogs as the Young People, Homeira has built up her confidence working both with dogs and Young People - learning lots of new skills along the way. During lockdown, Homeira also supported our Isom8 sessions by delivering online sessions with Young People she was paired with. As an artist, Homeira has additional skills she brings and her creativity and passion for the arts have been used individually and in groups while in Muddy Paws. Homeira has been incredibly committed and gone above and beyond to support additional activities such as our Puppy Pride Photoshoot and we are very grateful for all her hard work, commitment and effort she puts into her role as a volunteer in Muddy Paws.

Christine has been volunteering in Muddy Paws for over a year and has been consistent and reliable throughout. Christine has done additional 1-to-1 work with Young People and delivered Isom8 sessions on top of her sessions at Muddy Paws. Christine has been a calm, nurturing and supportive influence in particular on Young People who were struggling and this has been invaluable. As a local resident she has been a keen advocate of the work of Muddy Paws and the efforts of our Young People helping to deliver the service. We are very grateful for the huge wealth of experience Christine brings working with Young People and thankful for her dedication and commitment to the Young People.

Doggy cuddles are the best



Teamwork makes the dreamwork

WELLBEING

Above & Beyond

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Creating a Bespoke recording system BASE to help us keep track of all our volunteering work, mentor matches and volunteer training. We are hoping that the volunteers will also be able to use this system to book new opportunities that arise throughout the year for themselves.
- Wellbeing secured another year of funding from Children in Need enabling us to continue supporting Young People in need and help them reach their personal goals. This year through the pandemic we have been able to support 165 Young People.
- We have been able to attend secondary schools in person again to deliver our mental health programme 'Bee Well' to 121 pupils and also tailored this programme to deliver it online during the pandemic using video presentations, surveys and quizzes.



Take 5 Summer Scheme



Pushing ourselves at Take 5

WELLBEING

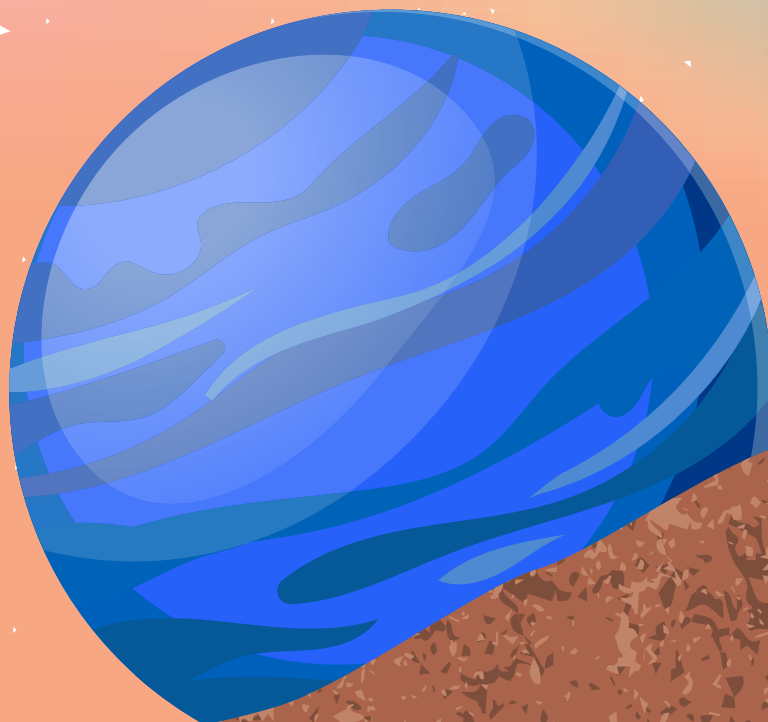
ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN

One Giant Step For Young People

YOUNG PERSON'S STORY

We were working with a Young Person who felt she had no control over her life, had little resilience and low self-confidence, she was already attending support for bereavement and anxiety. After growing a trusting relationship with her Wellbeing worker she began to open up and talk more about how she was feeling and used this time to express herself knowing that she was being heard and listened to. Through these meetings with her worker she was invited to attend some of the Wellbeing groups, she found these enjoyable and began to grow in confidence.

Her worker coupled this with referring her for counselling where she was able to resolve some more of her feelings and helped her secure a Mentor match which was carried out both face to face and online. This Young Person steadily grew in confidence and became more responsible for herself, she was taking control of her life and felt able to go back to teaching some dance classes. Through this time, she was able to leave her other supports for bereavement and anxiety and she is now managing very well.



WELLBEING

VOLUNTEER STORIES

Connor Kelly started his most recent mentoring match with the intention of meeting his Young Person via zoom. The Young Person had not left the house in over a year and found it very hard to even find the courage to meet Connor via zoom. He started with his camera off and often had weeks that he had to cancel due to his mental health. However, in week 8 of 12, after many computer gaming sessions online the Young Person decided to set himself the goal to meet Connor in person. Connor and the Young Person achieved this goal in week 12 when they met to celebrate the successful match.

Rob Holloway has volunteered with MACS for 10 years. He met many young men to provide mentoring matches throughout his time with MACS. Rob has recently begun working with a Young Person who has ongoing thoughts of life not worth living. Rob is a great match for this young man because of his experience and knowledge and he is undergoing some new training through MACS to help him better support Young People. The Young Person is getting on brilliantly and has been feeling in a much better place since starting his match and having this extra support.



DOWNPATRICK INTEGRATED SERVICE



Above & Beyond **SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS**

- Alongside the already existing shared house in Gaol Lane Mews, the team have worked closely with a local landlord and Estate agent to set up another shared tenancy in Downpatrick for 2 new Young People. With a more structured plan this has allowed us to create an even more positive outcome giving the Young People increased stability to continue in education and full-time employment
- The introduction of quarterly review meetings with the Northern Ireland Housing Executive, has created opportunities for better collaborative working, ensuring that all Young People registered as homeless with the Down area are being offered and can avail of MACS floating support, access the 16/17 Homeless assessment flats and homeless flats (for 18- 21 year olds) where appropriate.
- Through a difficult year, the team have had to be creative with the way that they have provided support to Young People and we have had to adapt to ensure that each Young Person received the support they needed. The use of the garden space in Downpatrick was vital in the promotion of inclusion and ensured that no one was feeling isolated. Through the support of the team, zoom check in's, outdoor activities and essential hamper deliveries the Downpatrick Young People have thrived, securing new homes, achieving A-levels and even getting on holiday.



Beating Lockdown blues by getting outside

ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN

One Giant Step For Young People

YOUNG PERSON'S STORY

Emma was referred to MACS Downpatrick Floating Support by her Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN). At this stage, Emma was homeless and was sleeping on her friend's parent's sofa. Emma was struggling with already fragile mental health, experiencing addictions and alcohol dependency.

Emma lost her job which resulted in her using alcohol to cope. This was further compounded by a tumultuous relationship with her family and her role within it.

A Floating Support Worker was able to work with Emma immediately as her sofa surfing arrangements were at risk of breaking down. Emma's worker met with her weekly and supported her to register with the local NIHE, maximising her housing points. A high level of liaising with her CPN was also in place to ensure Emma was in receipt of the correct treatment and medication.

After 3 months, a bed became available in MACS Supported Accommodation in Downpatrick which Emma was accepted for. Support is available here for up to two years. Emma moved in and flourished from the beginning; she began her Level 2 Childcare with SERC, a goal she had hoped to achieve as she really wanted to work with children.

During COVID and lockdown Emma continued her studies, while she was isolated as her placement had been postponed, she remained involved as much as possible. Emma had support from the Housing Worker to ensure she was on the correct benefits and also apply for grants to help purchase essential equipment as she continued her studies from home. As a tenant, she kept her flat to a very high standard, having it cosy and well decorated.

NEWRY INTEGRATED SERVICE

Above & Beyond **SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS**

- We secured funding from B&Q and Supporting People to renovate the back garden with an outdoor cabin for Young People.
- We developed step-down accommodation in partnership with Northern Ireland Housing Executive for Young People moving on from supported accommodation.
- MACS secured the tender for Floating Support in Newry which allowed us to provide support for 25 Young People per year who are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness.
- We developed a new working partnership with Regener8 to support Young People in accessing education and training.

On the Narnia trail at Kilbroney Park



ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN *One Giant Step For Young People*

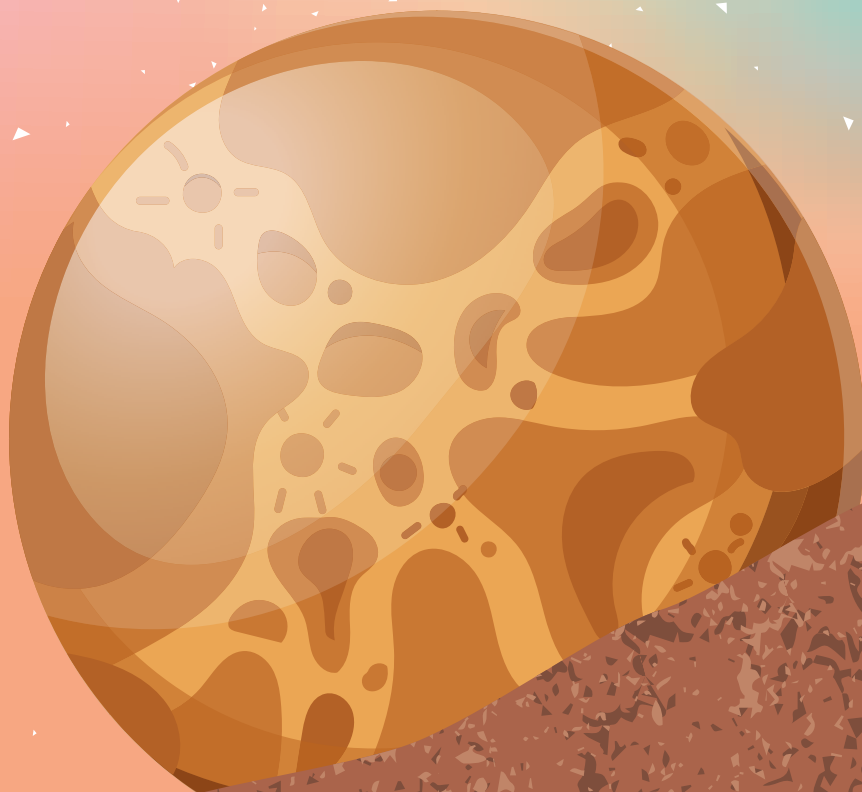
YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES

I moved into MACS Supported Housing in Newry on 7th December 2020 in the middle of the pandemic. When I moved into MACS, the staff helped me pick the paint colours I wanted and decorate the flat so that it felt like home. I've gained many skills whilst being at MACS including everyday skills such as using a washing machine. Now I can do much more by myself and am able to take care of my own flat.

MACS has also improved my confidence and helped me learn the skills to maintain relationships. I have really enjoyed building relationships with the staff and spending time with them – for example, during the Summer we had a great day at Kilbroney Forest Park on the Narnia trail.

MACS have supported me to continue my course in Level 2 Business and provided me with a new laptop through the Community Foundation Bursary Scheme. This has helped me complete online classes much more easily and remain in education.

I got involved with MACS Floating Support Newry and with the help of my worker was able to secure a Housing Executive Tenancy within a month. Prior to getting a Floating Support worker, I had been on the housing list for some time with no offers. My worker helped increase my points which led to me getting a much better home for me and my family. They assisted with the move, got me essential items that I needed and also got other agencies involved too. Without MACS I would still be stuck in the old tenancy which was unsuitable for my young family. My worker also managed to get me a twin pram amongst other baby items which has been a huge help. I would be lost without the emotional support especially after my relationship broke down.



LISBURN INTEGRATED SERVICE

Above & Beyond

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

- We expanded our Floating Support Service which allows us to support a further 30 young people per year to access and maintain accommodation.
- To combat feelings of isolation during the pandemic MACS Lisburn have been able to provide an outdoor space for Young People accessing both Housing and Floating Support services. This was important as a lot of Young People did not have this facility in their own home.

Feeling on top of the world at Cavehill



ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN

One Giant Step For Young People

YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES

My name is Conor, I'm 19 years old and originally from Belfast. I moved into MACS Lisburn in March 2020. When I first moved into MACS both my mental health and independent living skills were quite poor. However, as my days living in MACS continued, I was supported by the workers and made some new friends, who also live here. I learned how to cook, clean and budget money a lot better through the support I received and my mental health improved through making new friends and engaging with the services provided.

MACS staff worked in partnership with another agency to help me re-decorate my flat. They also gave me furniture and flooring which made it feel like a home. My flat is now very welcoming and I enjoy spending time here. I really appreciate everyone's help with making this space my own.

Some things that I have achieved whilst living in MACS include starting my job as a 'Good Relations Trainee.' Youth work has always been a keen interest of mine and with the help of MACS I was directed in the right way to make a CV and apply for my current position. I also studied Barbering at college and recently received a grant from End Youth Homelessness, which has allowed me to further pursue my career goals as a barber. MACS have also helped me with a number of other things such as counselling support and to apply for my provisional license. Whilst living at MACS, I have really enjoyed the outdoor cinema night, cooking new recipes and improving both my physical and mental health. I also enjoyed being part of the MACS Young Leaders Project with Led by You. MACS have made me feel more confident as a person. I believe I have the capability to move into the community when my time in Supported Housing comes to an end. I now look forward to see what the next few months and years have in store. It is also very reassuring knowing I will still have Floating support when I do eventually leave MACS Housing.

BELFAST FLOATING SUPPORT

Above & Beyond

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

- Success and growth of the Prison Resettlement team – we supported 38 Young People that were at risk of homelessness/homeless and had history of offending behaviour with over half of these Young People being supported to reduce or refrain from offending behaviour.
- This Project won the Excellence in Housing Innovation Award at the Chartered Institute of Housing Awards and we have received further funding for another year from the Supporting People's Provider Innovation Fund.
- Success and growth of the Shared Tenancy Project – alongside the Shared Tenancy Coordinator we moved 20 Young People into shared tenancies and Belfast Floating Support are continuing to support them. This Project also received a Highly Commended Award at Chartered Institute of Housing awards for Excellence in Housing Innovation.
- We are delighted that our team has been extended with 2 new Floating Support Worker posts allowing us to now support more Young People across the Belfast Area.

Why have one award when you can have two



BELFAST HOUSING

Above & Beyond

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

- In the very early stages of the pandemic, limiting movement had a significant impact on our Young People and how they coped with existing social isolation. Young People's emotional wellbeing was negatively impacted and teams were providing additional support to promote positive wellbeing. Belfast Housing developed a partnership with CAMHS services to provide support directly to staff that were working with Young People. Staff were supported to explore strategies and coping techniques for both Young People and themselves in order to adapt to a rapidly changing environment.
- We received funding to support Young People to cope through COVID - 19. We were delighted to receive funding allowing us to create bespoke support packages for individual Young People ranging from gaming consoles and tablets to clothing.



ONE SMALL STEP FOR MAN

One Giant Step For Young People

YOUNG PEOPLE'S STORIES

Ahmed is 18 years old and was trafficked into Northern Ireland, from war-torn Syria when he was 17. He did not speak a word of English when he arrived in Belfast and had no family or friend's living here for support. Ahmed befriended another Young Person from Syria in the back of the truck, called Ali, who was also 17 at the time. They were frightened, traumatised and penniless when they arrived. Social services housed them both in B&Bs and referred Ahmed to MACS Floating Support. A Shared Tenancy was found for both young men. Ahmed returned to education and passed his first English exam and is continuing his studies and plans to study Nursing at University in time. MACS has secured funding for a tablet to help Ahmed with his studies and has now purchased a provisional licence for him and driving lessons through the MACS EYH (Ending Youth Homelessness) bursary. Ahmed now speaks fluent English and feels he has everything to look forward to in his future. He attributes all of this to MACS and reminds his MACS Floating Support worker of this every time they meet. Ahmed is the absolute embodiment of a MACS Young Person and an example of the goal's that can be reached when we engage with these fantastic Young People and work together as a team.

We received a referral from the Sentence Manager in Hydebank who was working with a young girl that was due to be released following a conviction of common assault. This Young Person was unsure if she could return to her family home. She has a long history of drug use and severe mental health issues and had been hospitalised 7 times between January - February due to attempts to take her own life. Whilst in Hydebank, she engaged positively with drug support and the mental health team. Our Prison Worker was able to work with her while in Hydebank and complete mediation with family members, allowing this Young Person to return home. Since then, she has been continuing to engage in all support services that have been made available to her. Her relationships at home have improved, she is also now volunteering in a youth club (agreed through Probation) and with support from MACS EYH (Ending Youth Homelessness) bursary she was able to get travel card to allow her to travel to and from youth club as well as new clothes to wear. She is no doubt at the start of a very difficult journey but we believe with continued support and sticking with this Young Person will achieve whatever she wants.

Release date - Helping Young People
move on from Hydebank



Allotment Fever with Belfast Floating

END YOUTH HOMELESSNESS

End Youth Homelessness is a UK-wide movement of local charities that have joined forces to tackle youth homelessness together. It provides a national platform to raise awareness, share experience and generate voluntary income. The funds EYH raises help our members to increase capacity, services and sustainability in extremely challenging times. Our member charities house and support over 40,000 Young People facing homelessness.

MACS is the Northern Ireland Charity partner and we benefit from The Housing Fund and Employment and Training Bursary.

HOUSING FUND

The Housing Fund was set up to enable Young People to overcome the prohibitive costs of accessing the private rented sector, by providing them with financial support for deposits. This is currently supported through EYH and The Body Shop.

In the last year the Housing Fund has supported 16 Young People into their own tenancies – private, rented and shared. We are also currently supporting two referrals for Young People that have left prison to find their own private rented tenancy. This fund can be used for rent in advance or deposit for either social tenancy or private rented.

EMPLOYMENT & TRAINING BURSARY

The Bursary was set up to enable Young People to access employment, education and training opportunities. Supported by H&M and Eversheds – Young People can apply for a bursary up to £500.

In the last year the Bursary has supported 21 Young People to have access to financial support and this has been a huge success during the pandemic.



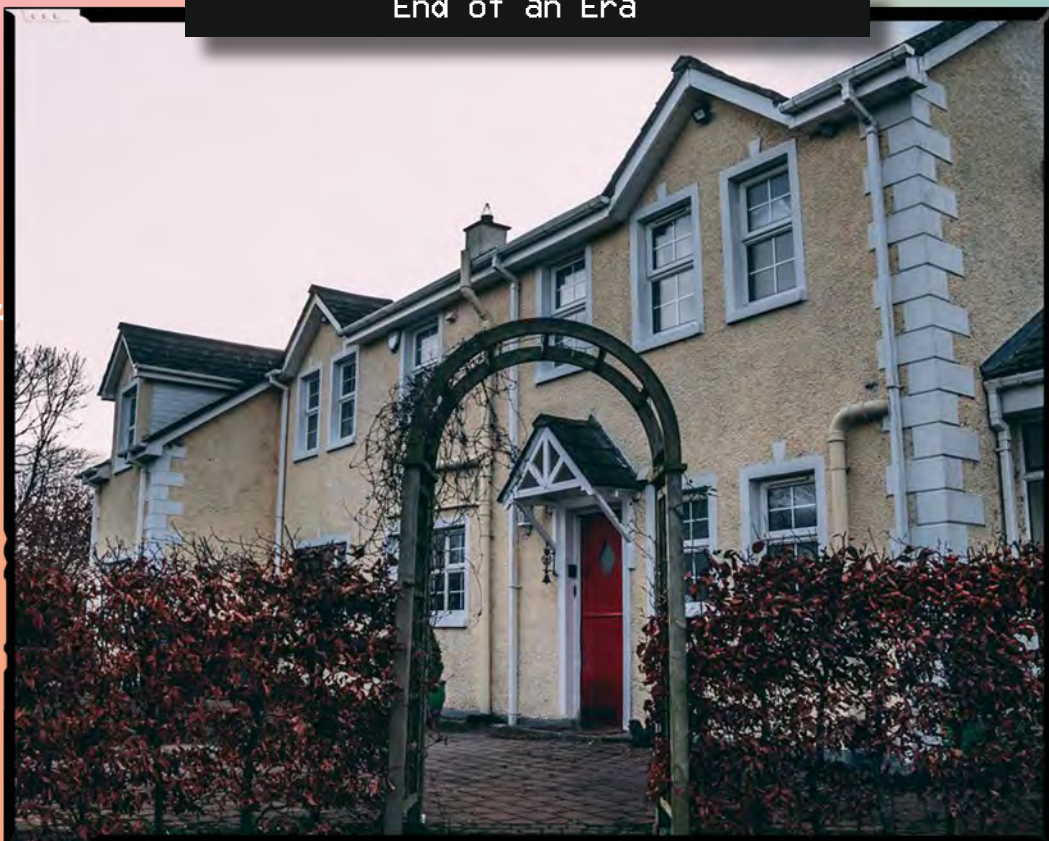
THERAPEUTIC COMMUNITY

Above & Beyond

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

- MACS completed the 2nd year of our pilot service that provided a children's home for 3 children who could not be accommodated in mainstream foster care or residential care.
- During this year we accommodated 2 children and had 1 child successfully move into a foster care placement.
- Upon reaching our second year milestone we undertook a service review of the Therapeutic Community. Despite all that was achieved in the last two years we decided that the Therapeutic Community was not in line with the long-term strategy of MACS and took the difficult decision to close the service.

End of an Era



CORPORATE SERVICES

Above & Beyond

SERVICE ACHIEVEMENTS

Over the past year the HR/Administration team have been continuing to build on individual skills and strengths, developing specialisms in Office, Information Technology and Human Resources Administration.

During this year, we completed 48 recruitment drives and employed 37 new staff. Following a temporary delay in recruitment during the initial months of lockdown, we reviewed our interviewing process and introduced online, paperless shortlisting and video conferencing interviews using Zoom software. Thanks to additional funding streams to support MACS with staffing challenges due to COVID, we have also been able to take on an additional advertising contract GETGOT platform, run by the same organisation as our current HR system, PAMS, which should streamline the processing of applications for shortlisting.

Due to COVID-19, our Sleep Out this year was a virtual event raising over £14,900 and with £10,000 from Supporting People via additional COVID grants for loss of fundraising we were able to match the previous year's income of £25,000.

We received a total of £24,413 in donations from individuals completing fundraising activities on our behalf or making direct donations as well as organisations kindly nominating us as their chosen charity, such as Gilnahirk Church, Keir Foundation, Enso Recruitment, TKMaxx, Made Locally, St Anne's Cathedral and AIB.

We have continued to explore opportunities for further funding and have received a number of grants through the year to benefit our Young People during the pandemic: National Lottery Grant, Supporting People Grant, Health and Social Care Trusts, Barnardo's DFC Seasonal Appeal Grant Community Foundation Northern Ireland Grant, Ending Youth Homelessness (EYH) and B&Q.

- The latest MACS staff survey recorded that 100% of staff surveyed felt motivated in their role and proud to work for MACS with 98.39% expressing job satisfaction
- 100% also agreed that MACS has clear values and that staff have opportunities to learn at work
- Continue to Implement MACS Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-2021
- Financial Strategy developed and approved for 2020-2024
- Maintained Investors In People Gold Award
- Implemented new Organisational Strategic Plan 2020-2024

ORGANISATIONAL OUTCOMES

100%

**OF Young People
ARE HAPPY WITH
THE SERVICE**

800

**MACS SUPPORTED
Young People**

88%

**OF Young People WERE
ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN
PARTICIPATION/SERVICE
USER INVOLVEMENT**

89%

**OF YOUNG
PEOPLE FOUND
ACCOMMODATION**

91%

**OF Young People
BETTER MANAGED
THEIR MENTAL HEALTH**

93%

**MAINTAINED
THEIR
ACCOMODATION**

98%

**STAFF EXPRESSED
JOB SATISFACTION**

COMPLIMENTS

Those Who Went To Infinity & Beyond

“My worker genuinely cared and helped me in every aspect of my life from money to relationships with family. I am currently sitting on my sofa in my own rental property writing this, happy and more confident than when I started in MACS.”

“Even though I felt confident moving on from MACS, I feel I could ask MACS for support in the future if I need it. It was reassuring that I was offered other ongoing support and didn't feel abandoned.”

“MACS is a worthwhile service and a credit to the community. They deserve praise and have even made me want to start volunteering because I believe we need more places like MACS that makes you feel secure and like you have somewhere to turn when you have no one. I would have never been able to afford my own place or have the confidence to be someone who lived on their own before I received support from MACS.”

“During lockdown the calls from staff made me feel less lonely.”

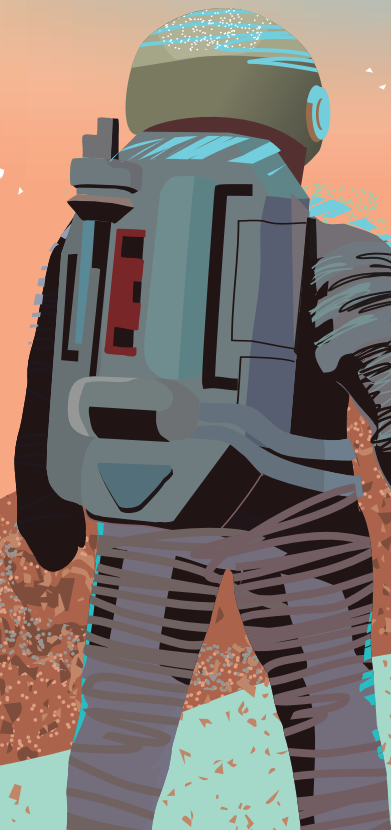
“All the Support Workers in Housing knew how to make me feel better and turn my mood around.”

“MACS was just a comfortable environment and there was no judgement.”

“Without the support I would probably be in a much worse living situation and I have received a lot of help with living essentials and living independently. I have also been helped a lot with income and grants for my flat and knew that if I ever needed anything or some issues arose then I could always contact my support worker for help and advice.”

“As a Young Person it is almost impossible to have all the legal know-how and ability to live completely independently without some kind of help. MACS has all the resources and staff that can help talk through many things a Young Person probably doesn't know much about or has little experience with.”

“I felt listened to and was able to speak about everything that was happening with me at that time.”



"I got support moving out. I had a planner and it helped me know what was happening. My housing worker visited me and I had contact with all the staff. I am also happy because I will get 2 years Floating Support with a staff member that I already know."

"MACS are very supportive and understanding of Young People and their needs. They helped me when I needed it most."

"My worker was absolutely amazing, understanding, supportive and kind."

"MACS has taught me to be more confident in myself, put myself out there and keep trying."

"I enjoyed getting to talk about stuff I could not with others and felt I could open up to the people at MACS."

"MACS gave me options when nobody else did."

"While at MACS Muddy Paws I learned loads about myself and picked up lots of different skills, working with customers and the dogs themselves. I enjoyed the challenges and feel so much more confident in myself and have learned skills to help progress my career too"

"MACS Muddy Paws was the only place outside of my house that made me feel safe. Everyone was friendly, they took the time to help me learn and made the effort to get to know me. I made friends and got into a good routine - it was something to look forward to every week".



STAKEHOLDER FEEDBACK

"Thank you so much for your presentation on Participation. I think you really helped set the scene for what good Youth Participation is and why it is so key. We also appreciate hearing from a Young Leader in MACS - he gave some great challenges to us and some of the people on the team were in the Senior Operations roles, so I think it's especially good to get them thinking! Please pass on our sincere thanks again, he really inspired us! Led By You is doing a brilliant job - well done!" Sarah Goodwin, Princes Trust

"I was impressed by the team's ability to reflect on the information being shared in a professional manner and then offered suggestions in relation to applying this learning to supporting the resident further. It was incredibly heart-warming to learn about the various ways that MACS staff have come alongside the resident being discussed to enable him to tolerate and develop his skills of independence" - Gareth Morgan, Team Leader, NIHE Downpatrick

"Just a quick email to thank you for disseminating our information to your team in Newry. Both Kerry and Jonny have been excellent, and we have secured couple of new recruits thanks to your team's support." - Regener8 Project staff member

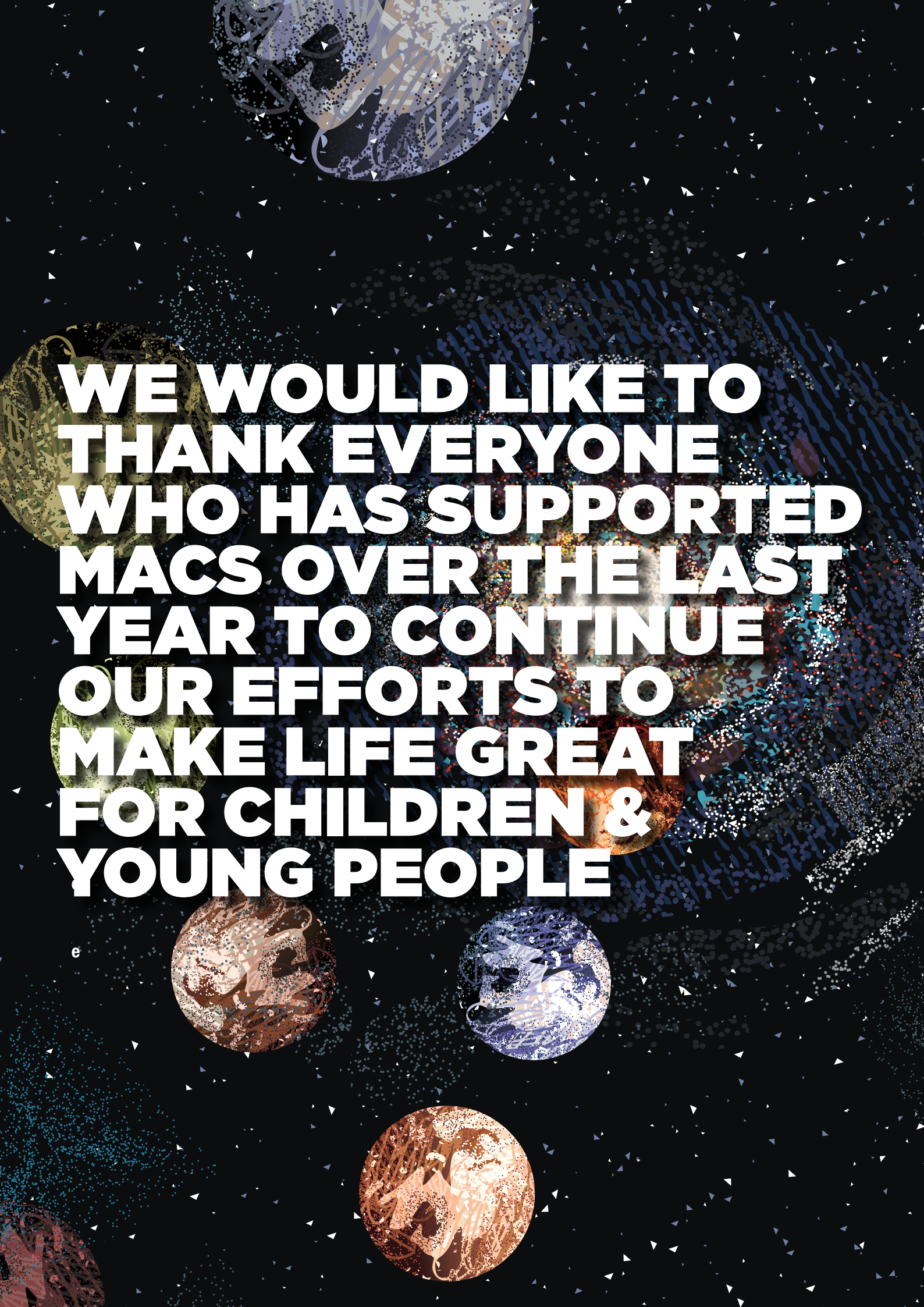
"MACS is always welcoming and person-centred for any Young Person I have had living there. The staff have their best interests at heart which is lovely to see! I always love to hear when one of the Young People I work with is going to live in MACS Lisburn - I know it will be a positive experience for them" Social Worker - Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

"The Belfast Floating Support team is great to work with. We have established a two-way referral process between our projects which is working well and our services compliment each other. The team are all so passionate about Young People and the service they provide. They build relationships and provide much needed support and assistance for Young People which is instrumental in making the right changes in their lives. The impact they have is life changing for many Young People! We enjoy working in partnership with MACS. It has great benefits for us at Housing Rights and for the Young People we work with" - Housing Rights Worker

"The Wellbeing Service is excellent, it has provided a high level quality and effective service to referred clients. Feedback is very positive" - Lisa Toan, Family Support Officer, East Belfast Mission

"Muddy Paws has been life changing for my child - she is a totally different person. It was the only place she would leave the house for and talked all week about her sessions, what she learned and the people there. It lifted her out of a really dark place and I am forever grateful to the staff and volunteers at Muddy Paws - I can't recommend it enough" - Parent





**WE WOULD LIKE TO
THANK EVERYONE
WHO HAS SUPPORTED
MACS OVER THE LAST
YEAR TO CONTINUE
OUR EFFORTS TO
MAKE LIFE GREAT
FOR CHILDREN &
YOUNG PEOPLE**



MACS

SUPPORTING CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE

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