



FACES OF COOLMINE

celebrating 50 Years of Coolmine
Therapeutic Community

Our History

Coolmine is a national drug and alcohol treatment service providing a range of high quality community and residential services to men and women with problem substance use and their families. Established in 1973, Coolmine originated, and remains grounded within, the philosophies of the Therapeutic Community (TC) approach to addiction treatment.

Coolmine was founded by Lord Paddy Rossmore who had become interested in drug rehabilitation as a result of observing a friend's struggle with

addiction. In 1972 Paddy successfully canvassed support to open the first voluntary residential treatment centre in Ireland, Coolmine Lodge. Following much research, Lord Rossmore chose the therapeutic community (TC) model for the service.

The therapeutic community model is a treatment and rehabilitation approach where clients live in small, structured drug-free communities with the overarching goal to encourage positive lifestyle change.



While our organisation has grown and transformed over the last 50 years, our vision remains the same. We believe that that everyone should have the opportunity to overcome addiction and lead a fulfilled and productive life. We are as committed now as we have ever been to empowering people and their families to overcome addiction and support long term recovery.



Though unique, every recovery journey creates a world of opportunity and possibilities. Recovery restores hope. It brings fathers back to playing with children. Grown children back to their mothers. Recovery sees families reunited. It helps people re-find themselves, their purpose and connection. It opens the world.

This is recovery and recovery is Coolmine.

The treatment approach is based on peer support, whereby participants contribute to the general running of the community and to their own recovery. Individuals obtain therapeutic and educational impact when they engage in and learn to use all of the activities and relationships of the highly structured programme.

From these early beginnings, we have grown to be a sector leader, in the provision of evidence based, quality assured addiction treatment and support services in Ireland. The work

of Coolmine TC, during the last fifty years reflects a commitment to the provision of a continuum of care, and to a vision of recovery which strives for an enhanced quality of life rather than mere abstinence from drugs and alcohol.

The evolution of the organisation is rooted in the belief that our clients being afforded, sometimes for the first time, the opportunity to realise their potential and become meaningful participants in society, works.



50 Faces of Coolmine is a collection of some of the people whose lives have been touched by Coolmine's impact. Together these individuals tell a story of recovery in Ireland, and of how Coolmine provides hope and support to those who are losing their way to addiction. This collection of stories provides the real picture of how recovery restores hope.

Thank you for helping us to provide an opportunity for recovery.



www.coolmine.ie/50-faces

Photographs by Barnett Gomez and Cathy McEvoy

PADDY'S STORY

Paddy Rossmore set up Coolmine Therapeutic Community in 1973.

Paddy, having visited Phoenix House in London, invited Brian Delaney and Jacqueline Ballard to Ireland to establish a therapeutic community at Coolmine Lodge.

In 1973 a tiny staff of three people, headed up by Paddy, opened the door of Coolmine for the first time. Paddy founded our therapeutic community in 1973 to help his then girlfriend, singer Marianne Faithfull and others in Ireland suffering with addiction. He introduced a holistic approach to addiction recovery to Ireland.

Coolmine was founded with love and compassion and we are so proud that those are our guiding principles to this day.

Paddy's Words while Visiting Coolmine in 2018:

"A girlfriend of mine, the singer Marianne Faithfull was trying to quit her drugs habit. She was trying

so hard to get everything sorted out. She was seeing a psychiatrist and was being given alternative drugs to help with the dependency. She was really really struggling in herself. And it just didn't make sense to me that she was being given more drugs to help with an addiction.

"Life is about challenges, I really think so. People respond to challenges, because they have to. A friend of mine suggested that I research alternative means of help and I spoke to Dr Michael Kelly who ran the Jervis Street Drug Centre. He said not much was known about recovery methods in Ireland in 1971 and he suggested I go to London.

"So I headed over to London and, while I was there, I was told about a drug-free community which was a rehab community in California where there was an emphasis on self-examination and group talk therapy sessions. The community was started by addicts themselves. As soon as I started to read

the book on Synanon, as it was called, I knew this was what we needed to do. It was so different and so extraordinary. And it worked.

"Phoenix House in London was a therapeutic community based on similar teachings – they used group psychotherapy sessions that were hard-hitting but also compassionate. We're all defensive about our private lives. But if you are an addict then being open can be a matter of life and death. You can't be evasive.

"I got back to Ireland and started working out how to get something similar up and running here. Professor Ivor Browne was programme manager within the eastern health board. He was a very forward-looking man. Having met him he said to me, "if you can find the staff to introduce the therapeutic programme I will get you a house." In time I found the staff, Brian Delaney and Jackie Ballard and when I rang him the very next day we had a house!

"Initially our clients were referred from the methadone clinic on Jervis Street. We were three staff members which in retrospect was far too few. At any given time, in the initial stages, we had four to fifteen residents. We didn't know what the community was going to become.

"When I sit here in Coolmine today, or any of the recent times that I have visited, it is with amazement and pride. It is a place that has meant so much to so many people. And it has saved people's lives. The most incredible thing for me is that, at its heart, the idea of the original programme is still there. It's a place, I think, with integrity. And the holistic approach is still at its centre. That, I cannot believe. And of course, the staff are the most dedicated group of people you could wish for. I'm very proud."





BRONAGH'S STORY

"Before Coolmine my life was at a level of unmanageable chaos and trauma. My childhood traumas had led me to a place of chronic substance misuse and poor health. I was just over 6 stone and had damaged every single relationship. I had prioritised drugs before my son, which is hard for me to say even now 15 years on. My body was so scarred from abscesses due to me thinking it didn't matter: I would be dead soon anyway.

"After numerous failed suicide-attempts I finally found myself a Faith-based addiction meeting in a Church which led me to Coolmine Lord Edward street. I engaged with the pre-entry group where a staff member told me I had clean urine. This was a first after many years of trying to do it on my own. Two weeks from the initial engagement I was offered a bed in Ashleigh house.

"The most prominent memory for me was lying in bed and for the first time

in my life feeling safe. I was introduced to staff and peers. Supported in safety every step of the way by the staff here. Something really special happened in Ashleigh house. I was challenged and pushed. One peer saw me struggling to find motivation. "Just do it" this peer said. And it's a principle I still live by.

"Coolmine taught me very basic skills: paying bills, cleaning, communication but most importantly taking responsibility for my actions. I began to identify my feelings and deal with them as they came up in a positive beneficial way. I learned the value of meaningful relationships and identifying my core strengths and values. I am very grateful God allowed me this chance and that he gave me the strength to keep on keeping on.

"Recovery has given me a meaningful life, transparent and full of trials, challenges and blessings. I've been 15 years drug-free since January. Recovery gave me back my family. I

have been given a second chance. Just as Rome wasn't built in a day, years of trauma's impact isn't undone in a day.

"I have worked now for 14 years with vulnerable people dealing with substance misuses. I have travelled and worked in orphanages in Belarus just loving and caring and giving back. I have educated myself and am currently studying in DCU. I have overseen and been involved in many charity projects, coordinated and trained volunteers for 4 years for homeless outreach. My family and friend relationships have been restored to a point I could never have imagined. I'm currently working with an amazing organisation who are so invested in people, right now specifically working with some women who have come through Ashleigh house.

"I have gained my sanity and my identity. I have gained a life unimaginable. I'm a fully productive member of society and making a difference in the lives of

people less fortunate. I have gained a Faith and trust in God that is the core of my life, Goals and Vision.

"Some of the most amazing hearts can be found when you remove all the predisposing factors for addicts. Maybe you have a friend or a family member in recovery, if you really want to support them on their journey: Educate yourself, ask questions but most of all listen to the voice of the recovering addict. These people have so much to give. If you give an addict the space to recover, step back and watch them flourish like a seed planted in a fertile soul."



BRIAN'S STORY

"My life before Coolmine was like a roundabout going in and out of treatment centres, hostels and various rented accommodations. It became a habit to go in to a treatment centres when the shit hit the fan from the consequences

of my addiction. It was tearing apart any positive relationships I had.

"It became a very isolated place. I did try sobriety a good few times although where I fell short was that emotional regulation within myself. When leaving programmes, I'd always just think that if I removed the drugs I would be alright.

This was not the case, as the concept goes "those who do not examine their past are doomed to repeat it". I had a lot of fears about looking at all that stuff again as that is what drove me back into addiction in the first place.

"There had been an yet another intervention made with an organisation that had been helping me for years. They gave me the choice to reengage with treatment again or to return to the hostels. I had nothing really to lose, even if it was to get a break from the madness. It took me the bones of 3 months of travelling up and down to Dublin from a hostel on a weekly basis attending pre-entry's while I was trying to reduce my use.

"When I finally got in to Coolmine I won't lie, it felt like an open prison. I thought I had made the wrong decision. But I was three months clean and I'd been attending at least three meetings a week. I was aware of all the clichés that I had fallen into in previous treatment centres so I was cautious of this. I couldn't understand the

therapeutic community model for at least eight weeks. I'm very grateful for the staff that were working in Coolmine at the time as they helped me to navigate through the model to suit me rather than the me trying to suit the model. I finally started to trust the process and developed new coping skills such as breaking my image, setting boundaries, been assertive and being myself.

"One change that started to evolve from this was my language; not the language I learned from other treatment centres just to sound good. A language that I could understand and also use while I was out for pro socials and overnights. This was very new to be and my awareness became very high around certain triggers such as people places and things.

"My life has changed since recovery got me, instead of me trying to get recovery. My concept before leaving was "believe in yourself and anything is possible". "When I went on in early recovery I stayed in Dublin for a while working

within the Community Employment Scheme and attempting courses and college. This all felt a bit strange, as my experience had been leaving school early. I also faced homelessness in recovery where I was faced with humbling myself and going living in places that were overpriced while having little or no income.

"I continued to progress in education which led me back to the place I'm from and renting a nice apartment. Now I volunteer in youth project within the city, struggling with having an income once again I started up a little gardening job to make a few quid. This then led to a valeting job as well. I was even able to open a savings account, which was very foreign to me and where I came from. The WAM (Willing Able Mentoring Social Welfare Programme) helped me a lot with this.

"Once I started to show up regularly for life, opportunities then started to present themselves. This included job opportunities within the services. Even after many forms of

rejection from various organisations, I kept persistent in the direction I wanted to go and have now found work that gives me that job satisfaction.

"I started trying new things like going to exercise classes and realising I don't need to give my life story to everyone. This gave me great autonomy. I started putting myself in uncomfortable positions like white collar boxing and a few years on I was winning an Irish title in kickboxing just from showing up. I have become very fond of extreme sports such as marathon, trail running and ultra-running. For me it's very important to still seek that positive feeling as I am aware I didn't give my life to addiction for the bad times.

"I'm no longer renting and I'm officially a home owner and will never be threatened my landlords again to leave.

"I'm aware that it's myself that got me here but I'm grateful for Coolmine for providing the space to find out who I am and what I'm really about."

JUSTINAH'S STORY

"I have been working in Coolmine for almost 4 years and to me the most interesting things about Coolmine are:-

Collaboration - everyone shares the same vision and are dedicated to the mission and values of the organisation.

Good leadership & good company culture.

Alignment between personal and company values.

Different challenges that support daily growth

"I enjoy work-life balance.

I love that I have a great degree of control and freedom within my job.

I appreciate autonomy and daily challenges that have helped my Personal & professional development and growth. I'm happy to be contributing to a larger purpose. I love the spirit of oneness in my team. Everyone loves helping each other.

"I look forward to work because of my team who are passionate about their jobs and are clients centered & oriented. I also



look forward to ensuring everyone is supported and developed in all areas of HR so that they can deliver in their roles.

"There have been varieties of work and people and I have acquired so many relevant skills and experience, which is an added advantage to my career growth and personal development. Also, my mentality about addiction has changed. Before now I thought drug addiction is a death sentence and anyone engulfed in the act may not be able to come out and be productive again, but I realised recovery is possible in Coolmine. Having a forward-thinking, supportive company that realizes every human being are valuable and they can recover from their old state of health really changed my perception about addiction. Now I know life can be restored.

"From working with Coolmine I've also experienced personal and professional development. I have attended many trainings, have participated in different mentoring & coaching sessions. I've also

had the opportunity to be a member of different institutes and networks within the sector and outside.

"Addiction can shorten life span, destroy destiny and expose the society to unrest while recovery restores life, family, hope and peace in the community and the best & safe place for such recovery is Coolmine Therapeutic Community where we hired specialist, qualified therapists, counsellors and staff that believes in restoring hopes to every individual that struggles with substance use."

DARRAGH'S STORY

"Before coming to Coolmine my life was totally unmanageable. I was a homeless drug addict and had very little contact with any friends or family. I hadn't worked in years and felt marginalised and hopeless.

"I started at the stabilisation programme in Coolmine House (Lord Edward Street) and once I had completed that I went on to Cuan Dara for a six-week detox before heading to Coolmine Lodge for six months.

"Everyone at the lodge was very welcoming; I felt at home straight away.

Although it was tough going sometimes, I have great memories of the place and the people I met there. I learned how to take responsibility for my actions and how to be a working part of a community.

"My life now is a million miles away from what it was like before. I have a wonderful, loving partner and a three-year-old son who I adore. I work with children in care, and I'm currently undertaking a PhD in Sociology. Most of all I'm able to be useful in ways I never was before.

"I made some lifelong friends at Coolmine and count myself very lucky to have been given a second chance."







PAUL'S STORY

"I first got involved with Coolmine in September 1981.

"While attending Jervis Street Hospital I had to meet a social worker

while attending the clinic. At the time I was on an outpatient detox and she recommended that I meet a member of staff from Coolmine who came into the clinic to assess people who were attending for treatment at the hospital for inpatient

or outpatient detox (physeptone). I met him, and he told me about Coolmine: how it worked and why the social worker was recommending that I go there after completing the detox.

"They believed that without follow up treatment most people went back using again after completing their detox. At the time I was not interested in any follow up treatment I felt I could get by on my own. I finished the detox and within days I was back using Heroin. Nothing had really changed during the detox: I was doing the same things I had been doing with the same people, so there was only one way it was going to finish up. Trouble with my family and my girlfriend was what motivated me to contact Coolmine about going into treatment.

"I made that phone call to Coolmine Lodge and I was given a date and time when I could go into treatment. I still remember that day so clearly. My brother and his

wife brought me out to Coolmine Lodge and left me there. I had to sit on the bench and they asked me if I wanted to stay or go with them, someone from Coolmine spoke to them and they left.

"Probably the best and hardest decision I have ever made in my life was deciding to stay in Coolmine that day. It was a challenging experience but something I needed to do to get some direction in my life because I was heading into a life of crime and addiction. Sadly to say most of the people I hung out with have sadly passed on after years of addiction. The only time we met up over the years after being in Coolmine was at funerals. Thankfully, I completed the programme. It was tough, but I felt supported and learned a lot and I got enough time and space to break away from my old environment and friends who were sadly still using drugs.

"After finishing the program, I got a place to live, a job and new

activities. This was all part of the aftercare phase that was in place to support you to move on, back into the community and living independently and being responsible for managing your employment and money management: paying rent, bills and feeding yourself. I managed to complete aftercare and graduate from the programme. This was a big achievement for me getting through the programme and living independently for the first time in my life.

"Working in the services was something I had no interest in. At the time I was working full time, when I got a call from the director of the programme asking would I come back and work for Coolmine as they were under pressure. Coolmine was growing and they were about to move to a big facility in Navan to cope with the population of clients coming into the programme. They needed more staff. I thought long and hard about this, but I felt I owed something to the programme for the chance and support

I received when I was on the programme, so I decided to go back and work for Coolmine.

"Forty-three years later I am still part of the staff team and it has been some experience. After being in the programme myself, with all the people I worked with over the years, all the clients that have been through the programme, all the changes and programme development it has been a wonderful experience for me. I feel privileged and forever grateful to Coolmine for the learning and opportunities I have had during my time being a part of the organisation."



FINBARR'S STORY

We are lucky enough to have the support of local community leaders such as Finbarr Murphy, who is Chief Superintendent with An Garda Síochána. Finbarr is a compassionate advocate for the work of Coolmine and works to provide opportunities for hope and reintegration into society for the graduates of Coolmine.

"My first engagement with Coolmine Therapeutic Community was over 30 years ago when a young man who was before the Courts pleaded with the Judge not to send him to prison as he was now clean from drugs and was in recovery in Coolmine. Despite my scepticism, I had no difficulty in agreeing to a long adjournment of the case to see how things would work out. It was in effect a free bet; if he went back on drugs he would go to prison, if he recovered from his addiction he stayed out of prison and everyone was a winner. In this instance

the recovery went well and a couple of years later I was in town with my wife when he came up to me and introduced me to his girlfriend and child and proudly told me he was working, he was still in recovery, he had his life back and was now brand new.

"Over the past 38 years that I have been in An Garda Síochána, time and time again I have seen how in the darkest moments of addiction, when all life's comforts and friendships have been devoured there is one spark of hope that never gets extinguished and that is Coolmine Therapeutic Community. That spark, when embraced resuscitates that which has died, rekindles relationships and allows its warmth and light to overcome the darkness.

"In recent times I have had the great pleasure of attending the annual soccer tournament between Gardaí, local business and those in recovery in the service. It is always a brilliant day where sport is played,

stories told, barriers broken down, burgers enjoyed and friendships and respect are nurtured. "But the real highlight of the year has to be attending Coolmine's Graduation evening. It is so inspiring and emotional to have the privilege of hearing the life stories of those who have graduated from Coolmine and who, having completed the programme are beaming with pride, smiling with their loved ones, planning their future and thanking the people of Coolmine for keeping that spark of hope alive and enabling them to take back their lives and once again become part of their own families and communities. "So, on behalf of An Garda Síochána thank you Coolmine for all that you do. Not only for those in recovery but also for the broader community and for constantly proving to the world that there is always hope and that people can recover from addiction when given a second chance and the right supports."

PAULINE'S STORY

"I started working in Coolmine in June 2005 as a Team Leader in our outreach and day services at Coolmine House. I joined the organisation as our first strategic plan was launched titled "A Pioneering Record, A Dynamic Future: 2005-2008". Rooted within the Therapeutic Community treatment model, the plan contained clear objectives, actions and key performance indicators including the adoption of evidence based approaches, creating pathways for marginalised people to access treatment and set the foundations for upholding the highest corporate and clinical quality, standards and compliance in our service delivery.

"My working career commenced with the Irish Community in London. Men and women who had emigrated from every county in Ireland in search of a better life with plentiful opportunities for work, housing, money and relationships. For the men and women I worked with things just hadn't worked

out, they were vulnerable, isolated and homeless. I quickly learned that every individual had their own individual personal journey and they used alcohol and drugs to manage living with their experience. The positive impact of supporting people to access housing, food, benefits, physical and mental healthcare is unquestionable in terms of improving their quality of life.

"It was through my work on the Aisling Return to Ireland Project (a charity which provided residential trips to Ireland for long-term emigrants with problem substance use) I realised more could be done. A change of environment, reconnection with family and return to hometown created a sense of purpose and self-worth again. In turn this short therapeutic intervention created stability and in many cases abstinence from problem substance use. I realised that when pathways and opportunities are provided people can and do recover from experiences that have made life unmanageable without using drugs and alcohol.

"Coolmine aligns with my personal values and belief that everyone with problem substance use can recover and I am very privileged and honoured to now serve as the current Chief Executive of Coolmine.

"There are so many achievements that make me very proud of Coolmine's work and impact over the past 50 years. Our deep commitment to helping people coming from long term social deprivation by ensuring homeless men and women, mothers, pregnant women, prisoners, Traveller community members can access our services. Our drive is to reintegrate people into society through education, training, employment, care and a sense of purpose. Coolmine Ashleigh House is the first mother and child residential treatment centre in Ireland.

"Our position as a sector leader in the delivery of addiction services in Ireland is due to our quality assurance systems, governance and positive culture. These have evolved within two

distinct, but inter-related paradigms – the Therapeutic Community approach to addiction treatment and the Irish National Drugs Strategies. The Coolmine Board of Directors have placed a particular focus on directing our internal organisational structures and systems, including our client feedback structures, to ensure the best possible service is received by our clients, their children and families. I continually receive feedback from stakeholders that they are reassured when they see frontline staff who worked in Coolmine working and leading out in community addiction services, because they bring their Coolmine structure and training with them. And so perhaps something that makes me very proud is Coolmine's reach during the past 50 years. We have to shaped, influenced, staffed and supported the delivery of quality community drug and alcohol treatment services across Ireland. For me, that is a Pioneering Record.

"It will always be the personal and individual journeys of the clients that we serve, their

stabilisation, progress and recovery that makes my job so worthwhile and fulfilling. From graduation ceremonies to a chance conversation with a new admission to a service I am very privileged to be reminded of the impact of Coolmine's work daily.

"I have worked with such committed colleagues, paid and voluntary, over the past 18 years in Coolmine

and in recent times as we have grown our services in the East, Mid- West and Southwest regions. I cannot thank you for dedication and commitment to Coolmine but more importantly to the people and families we serve.

"Here's to those who continue on Coolmine's journey over the next 50 dynamic years!"



GARY'S STORY

"Like a lot of people during lockdown I was getting increasingly anxious and not sleeping properly. I was working from home and I live in a very rural area so I was not interacting with anyone in person and the only people I spoke to were via a computer screen or over the phone. I gradually got more depressed and withdrawn.

"As 2021 progressed I began to rely on alcohol more and more in order to help me sleep. In a short space of time I found I was drinking alcohol at various times during the day. Even to get through a work Zoom call required me to have a shot of vodka to steady myself.

"It got to the point in October 2021 that I had to have some alcohol the minute I woke up to stop the physical withdrawal effects and to just do simple things like getting out of bed and walking down the stairs.

"I realised I had a serious problem so I got my partner to drive me to A&E where I detoxed and remained in hospital for 4 days.

"When I got out of hospital it was a bank holiday. I knew that now that the physical withdrawals had stopped I

had to do something about my mental dependence on alcohol. I went online to see what supports were available and I came across the Coolmine D15 CAT website. The next day I rang the office and spoke to Lorraine and we arranged for me to come in for a chat later that week.

"While I knew I had a problem and needed help it wasn't easy for me to admit that. I had spent my adult life thinking I had to sort my own problems out so for me to admit what I felt was a shameful secret to a stranger was daunting. However, from the moment I walked through the doors of Coolmine D15 CAT I was given a very warm, empathetic welcome. I immediately felt at ease and felt comfortable telling Lorraine why I was here and what brought me to this day.

"The biggest thing for me was to realise just how many people have alcohol and drug dependence issues. I would have had the perception that addicts were a certain type of person who came from broken homes and were in and out of prison. That was not the case at all. From doing the sessions in Coolmine I quickly realised that I had so much in common with the other people who attended.

"Being able to talk in a safe environment about why we were in the room was eye-opening and gave me the confidence to not be afraid to open up and talk about my feelings.

"I had heard about CBT (Cognitive Behavioural Therapy) but had never actively looked into it before. It was such a useful tool for me to learn and put into practice. I learned what makes me anxious, stressed and how my brain can deceive me. I learned how to manage my emotions, how to have safeguards in place if I felt that I wanted a drink. The regular one-on-one sessions with Lorraine were so useful because I felt so comfortable talking about how I felt.

"I found my sense of humour again. I was more confident in work and in my relationships with friends and family. Even though I knew I couldn't drink again it didn't mean my life was over. It is obviously an ongoing experience and I know that I have to practice the tools I learned in Coolmine in all aspects of my day to day life because life happens. Just because I am not drinking it doesn't mean that sad, stressful things will not happen. Life is not all sunshine and rainbows and in 2021 I lost family members and friends and while it was sad and emotional I was able

to properly deal with those feelings.

"My life has changed immensely. I am at the top of my game in work. I am doing things that I definitely did not think I could have done 2 years ago. I have a fantastic relationship with my partner and my family. I sleep well and eat well. I exercise and make sure I make time for my hobbies. I feel calm in my life and to be able to wake up in the morning and not have the awful feeling of dread and fear in my stomach is amazing.

"I have DJ'd a number of events and not once did I feel like I needed a drink to get through it. I had a sober holiday in Turkey and actually got up early to go on tours and do things like climbing a mountain and paraglide of a cliff. I have put myself forward for promotions in work and am now involved in an Equality, Diversity and Inclusion project where I am chairperson - where I work employs over 500 people so it is a big commitment. I cook more. I completed a number of DIY projects around the house. I invited my family to my house for Christmas and cooked Christmas dinner for everybody.

"I started to go to AA meetings and I regularly chair

at those and I even did a 3 month stint of secretary of a morning Zoom AA meeting which I completed just before Christmas. I volunteer at a number of places.

"There is so much I have done over the last 15 months that I (at one time) never thought I would be able to achieve. Being in recovery has allowed me to regain my sense of humour, my drive and commitment and my confidence.

"The big thing to remember is that life gets better. Your life is not over just because you can no longer drink or take drugs. Yes, you might have to

let certain people go out of your life but you will quickly realise that they should not have been in your life in the first place.

"Recovery gives you back all those things that you either forgot you had within yourself or that you didn't realise you had in the first place.

"You laugh, you cry but you are sober and that is a precious, precious gift. "If anybody out there is struggling I would encourage you to reach out and ask for help. It is not a sign of weakness. In fact, asking for help is one of the bravest things you can do."



JENNIFER'S STORY

"My life before I entered Coolmine had ups and downs. My journey of recovery started in 2016 when I entered Coolmine. My journey of a thousand miles began

with this first step. This is when I began to find out who I truly am.

"The staff and my peers supported me on the good and bad days. When you enter Coolmine it's a change and like anything you get the good and

bad days. Coolmine gave me the skills to love myself, compassion, the confidence and resilience to bounce back and it gave me the opportunity to find my strengths.

"From this I went on my way to recovery and education opportunities in addiction studies, community development, healthcare and special needs. I'm now in my fourth year of an Honours Degree in Social Care and will be beginning my Masters in Social Care and Leadership next September 2023.

"I'm now a project worker in Coolmine Midwest in Limerick. I'm grateful to bring my knowledge and skills forward to help people overcome challenges that individuals encounter. The personal development you achieve is life changing as are the people you meet. Staff and peers will always reach out to the best of their ability. Coolmine offers support not just for the individual but the whole family unit."





EOIN'S STORY

"The variation of the interventions and programmes that we provide is wonderful and appropriate for clients. There is a common erroneous perception that addiction or problematic drug use requires an individual to attend for counselling, which can happen as part of a care plan; however,

the evidence-base for treatment is what is followed in Coolmine through programmes such as CRA, PuP, TC, all through key working care planning and case management.

"The people I work with in Coolmine are inspiring which makes my management role a lot easier! I think all of us in Coolmine are driven by seeing clients in the

services who enjoy coming to Coolmine and whose lives are improved by the work they put in alongside our staff.

"Recovery is possible, regardless of a person's circumstances. The support is there to work with people as individuals and to be led by their wishes. Recovery is something to be enjoyed."

DAVID'S STORY

"My life before Coolmine was hectic and out of control. I got in with the wrong crowd from an early age and in my late teens and early 20s I ended up in prison regularly. My life was completely unmanageable from drink and drugs and gambling. I came from a lovely home and was brought up well but somewhere along my journey I crossed that line that most people do not cross, and it led me down a very dark path for many years.

"From being in prison for many years due to addiction I got introduced to a drugs counselor who asked me would I be interested in going to Coolmine, which I was. When I first got to Coolmine it was brilliant; friendly and caring, but also very weird as well and it took a little while to adapt to how the programme worked. In Coolmine I learned about taking responsibility for my actions, having discipline in my life and

learning I cannot get things I want all the time. I struggled with emotions and feelings but learned that that is all they are: feelings.

"As time went on and through groups and talking with peers I started to grow and change. I learned how to grow and respect myself. I started to learn how live my life drug and alcohol free, and that I did not need a substance in me to survive.

"Since graduating from Coolmine in 2018 my life has changed drastically. I have my own place, a lovely apartment in Clontarf which all started with the help of Coolmine. I have all my family and friends back in my life and many more new friends and good people in my life. I went on and got a job and a full driving license and I am also in my last year of a Level 8 Honors Degree in Sociology/Social Policy, and I plan to go on further and do a masters.

"I provide at home, and I am a loving father and a loving partner. I am now



reliable and trustworthy, and people can count on me when needed. I travel the world regularly now – the furthest I had traveled in addiction was from court to prison.

"To say my life has changed is an understatement. I thought the life I live today was only for other people, but I am living the best life I ever could have dreamed of, and it all started in Coolmine TC."



SHANNON'S STORY

"Before Coolmine my life was hectic. I was a shell of a person who was hurt, I didn't know myself and I was really lost. I felt I had failed as a mother and had no future goals. All I could see or feel was this darkness over me.

"I came to Coolmine from prison on temporary release. I was tested weekly in prison before I came in. I knew I wanted to change but I didn't fully understand recovery or what my life could be like. I just wanted to get better, or at least try. It was my first time in a treatment centre.

"I was nervous going into Coolmine, I didn't know what to expect. The staff and the girls made me feel welcome and soon I was like a part of the furniture! You get close to people in there and I still have lifelong friends from there.

"I learned a lot but mostly my emotional management. I used to


be very angry because I was hurting. I realized not to judge people, because anyone can fall into that dark place that I found myself. I learned I wasn't a bad person or a bad mother. I believed I just needed help and I grabbed it with both hands.

"Since then, it's been a lot of different emotions. I have my children home full time and the best partner who understands me. I got a new beautiful home and I am the first Traveller to be hired by the Irish Red Cross in history.

"I go back to the same prison I was in to do talks and workshops and in other places where people may be battling addiction or want to know more about recovery.

"I've gained a lot since not being in addiction. I've gained my confidence and self-esteem. I now know I'm worthy and capable of anything. And like I said to have my kids home and give them





their mammy back was my biggest goal and it happened.

"I won't lie it's not easy being in recovery; you get tested and you have to want it for you. You have a different outlook on life. I never thought I'd be working a good job and running a home while still being a full-time mother. As long as you know what and who you're doing it for and you want to get out of that bottomless pit; you can do anything you put your mind to. I believe recovery doesn't give you your life back, it gives you a fresh start at one."



CATHY'S STORY

"Although I did not come from a background in addiction treatment, I've always wanted to work in a role where I felt like the work being done was helping people. I've always wanted to feel proud of the work that I was doing. That is exactly how I feel working in my role with Coolmine.

"My role is Communications and Fundraising, so I do not work directly with clients. But I am lucky enough to meet clients, graduates and staff members who are generously prepared to be vulnerable and to tell their personal stories to inspire others. Every time I step foot in any of our frontline services and meet the people we work with I am moved. Hearing peoples' individual stories is humbling, and has really shifted my perspective.

"In working for Coolmine I have learned so much, both professionally and personally. Professionally I've learned so much about how positive a

culture in an organisation can be. The ethos of care coming from Coolmine's leadership team is so strong that it radiates through every aspect of the organisation.

"On a more personal level I've also learned an awful lot about things in our life that many of us can take for granted. "We are not all in the same boat. We are all in the same storm. Some are on super-yachts. Some have just the one oar." For me this quote sums up everything that I have learned from working in Coolmine and meeting so many different people at different stages of their journey.

"There can be a dangerous stigma attached to substance use, that those struggling with addiction are solely responsible for the situations they've found themselves in and are therefore not deserving of compassion or help. My experience in Coolmine has shown me that we are often not even in a position to imagine the circumstances that have led to someone finding themselves

battling addiction – let alone make any judgements.

"Everyone deserves the opportunity to overcome addiction and lead a fulfilled & productive life. Every single person I've encountered working for Coolmine not only shares this belief, but goes above and beyond to make sure that they're providing this opportunity every day. This applies to every person engaging with Coolmine's work, from the Board of Directors, through to the Management Team and the dedicated staff, as well as the donors, corporate partners and supporters. Coolmine is not only an organisation, but a community, that is built on abundant compassion, patience and generosity."

REBECCA'S STORY

"I went into Coolmine Ashleigh House when I was 18. My life before Coolmine was like a rollercoaster. I never knew if the days were going to be up or down. I had a normal life growing up, in my eyes it was perfect. I lived with my Mam, step dad and two younger sisters. I turned to drugs at the age of 14. At first it was to fit in with the crowd but eventually I depended on drugs. In such a short space of time I had lost everything: my family, friends, jobs, hobbies and most importantly myself.

"November 2020 I remember looking at myself in the mirror and I broke down, the person I was looking at was not me. I got in touch with The Light House in Pearse Street, who gave me weekly check ins. They put me in touch with Coolmine Lord Edward street where I then went to weekly groups which had taken me from November to March. My progress was slow, but I knew I could do this if I really put my mind to it.

Within 3 weeks of that I got a call to say my bed was ready in Ashleigh House and I had to be there in 2 days. I've never been so proud of myself for getting this far but reality kicked in and I realised this isn't a game; this is life or death.

"On the 5th March 2021 I arrived in Ashleigh House. I didn't know what I was going into. I remember ringing the bell and one of the staff came out and welcomed me and brought me in. I was so scared leaving my family at that door and going into a house full of women I didn't know. My first day all of the women made me feel so welcome, they brought me goodies, movies, books and checked in on me every couple of hours as I was in isolation for the first week due to Covid. From the day I entered the house until the day I left I felt like I had 20 mummies minding me.

"The main thing I learned in Coolmine was how to love myself again and how to cope with my feelings without taking drugs. I learned to walk away from





situations and also how to handle situations. I learned everyday things that I had lost during my addiction.

"Recovery has changed my whole life around. It has given me good relationships in my family. I am able to sit with my feelings and not take drugs to make the feelings go away. I am able to do normal everyday things that I couldn't do in my addiction. It has given me so many great opportunities, new friends and a beautiful godson from Ashleigh House.

"From being in recovery I am now able to hold down a job. I can buy myself nice things without depending on my family. I have paid for a holiday for myself. I have gotten friends and family back that I lost during my addiction.

"I wish people in addiction knew there was more to life than taking drugs, there is so much more in this world for everyone. I wish they knew the things they can achieve in life in recovery. I hope everyone in addiction gets to see sobriety."

MARIANO'S STORY

Mariano is Head of Human Resources for Mediolanum Irish Operations, one of Coolmine's generous corporate partners who donate their time and expertise to support Coolmine, while also raising funds and organising events.

"Coolmine Therapeutic Community has been a charity partner of Mediolanum Irish Operations since 2017. Our aim is to give a concrete and strategic contribution through our employees' voluntary work, coaching, mentoring, sharing our expertise and making our corporate partners available to the charity. Coolmine is becoming increasingly known for the quality of service provided and the effectiveness of what they do. It is vital that we continue supporting them in their growing journey to achieve their long-term development objectives.

"In addition to financial support, we deploy

several initiatives aimed at helping the charity in its growth and service offering, like:

- Marketing and Communications support
- PR Support
- Media content (photography and videography) support
- Governance coaching and mentoring support with regards to management in general
- Participation in Steering Group committees & fundraising
- Events sponsored by Mediolanum and Fondazione Mediolanum (in 2022 we sponsored the Solstice Swim)
- Secret Santa presents for the children in Ashleigh House at Christmas
- Donation of IT equipment

"Our work with Coolmine has also had an impact within our own organisation:

"It is in Mediolanum DNA and culture to be supportive and to give concrete contribution to





people or organisations in need of help. Our Fondazione Mediolanum, since 2002, has helped thousands of children across the world and it is with this spirit that we are so glad to be able to help Coolmine, its clients and its clients' children.

"Mediolanum staff appreciate the struggle that certain people have to deal with and that in many cases addiction is not a real choice but a consequence of an unlucky situation in which people find themselves without a choice. Our staff also appreciate the resilience shown by the clients of Coolmine in overcoming incredible adversity, with resilience being a fundamental characteristic to have in life in general and in an organisation like ours.

"We believe that the more people understand of why certain people end up in need of recovery and the opportunity to overcome addiction, the more they will be sympathetic to their effort to succeed and then potentially support more organisations like Coolmine."



TARA'S STORY

"I love to see the women we work with here in the Mid-West blossom and grow in confidence and develop their self-esteem.

I always tell them that it's such a privilege for me to be a part of their recovery journey.

"One of my friends remarked about how passionate I am when I

speak about the work we do. They tell me my eyes light up when I speak about Coolmine and the work we do. I love the work I do, it's challenging at times, but there is always learning in it. I always say there is never a dull moment, which is a really good thing.

"Everyone who experiences addiction has been impacted by trauma in some way and we need to look at the whole person and all aspects of their lives to support them in their recovery.

"I wish everyone understood that no-one chooses to become addicted to substances, that as a child we all had dreams and wishes and those did not include falling into addiction. I also wish that people understood that recovery is a journey, which at times can be slow, and it's about having the courage to change every aspect of one's life."

DANIELLE'S STORY

"Remember Where You Came From" is something that has stuck with me since my journey in Coolmine Ashleigh House. I am a proud Mother of three beautiful children. I struggled with addiction for a number of years and it brought me to my knees and left me with nothing. I lost everything, even my children. I hit my rock bottom and I knew I needed help. I was broken and consumed with guilt and shame...

"I was pregnant with my third child and found out that Ashleigh House was Ireland's only residential addiction service that houses women and their children. I got in contact with them and started going to the pre-entry groups each week in Lord Edward Street.

"I was seven months pregnant when I arrived at Ashleigh House and very nervous. I remember being welcomed by all the staff and my peers. My beautiful baby boy was born when I was in

Ashleigh House. I was given loads of support from everyone especially the creche staff. I also had my struggles but always had my key worker, creche staff, staff and peers around me who understood what I was going through. I put everything I had into the groups which were part of the programme and worked on myself – something I never done before. I built a relationship with myself, my children, family and friends; everything I lost in my addiction. I am so proud of myself today and I couldn't have done it

without all of my supports. "When I completed seven months of phase one on the programme I attended Aftercare and counselling each week which helped me to continue to work on myself and life outside of Ashleigh house. Today I have my children back in my life. I have peace of mind and I am no longer living in guilt and shame. I still attend regular meetings and counselling. I get a lot of support through my family and friends. I can enjoy simple things in life which I used to take for granted."





LISA'S STORY

"Working for Coolmine has been the most interesting and rewarding job I have ever had. I began my journey in Coolmine as a student in 2009. I have since worked in various front-line and management roles and currently as Head of Services. The most interesting aspect of the front-line work was witnessing the positive impact the Therapeutic Community has on the client's progression and observing the positive behavioural change throughout their treatment episode. Staff development is a passion of mine in my current role and I believe that it is important to provide a workplace where staff have autonomy, continuous training and development and can progress in their roles; which ultimately serves to benefit our clients. The primary ethos of a Therapeutic Community is to foster individual change and positive growth and I am proud to contribute to an environment where

this culture is promoted and applies to both clients and staff.

"Coolmine's vision, mission and values are strongly aligned with my own personal values which is a huge motivator for me and as a result I look forward to work on a daily basis. I enjoy responding to statistics and trends analysis to ensure the organisation achieves the best possible outcomes for clients via evidence-based practice, service growth and adapting programmes to presenting client needs. I am also passionate about Servant Leadership and I have been providing training to staff to help them to realise their potential as Servant Leaders via a shared approach. Servant Leadership aligns with the values and ethos of the Therapeutic Community and by reframing our views and actions within the servant leadership context, clients and staff can benefit from a positive and serving culture. "Servant Leadership is all about making the goals clear and then rolling

your sleeves up and doing whatever it takes to help people win. In that situation, they don't work for you, you work for them" (Ken Blanchard)

"2023 marks an exciting time for Coolmine as we prepare to celebrate 50 years of providing quality residential and day services to people with problematic substance use and their families. This has been a massive team effort and all Coolmine staff, clients and stakeholders (past and present) have contributed to the evolution, culture and impact to date. I feel very privileged to have been a part of the Coolmine history and shall look forward to the coming 50-year celebrations and beyond."

ROBERT'S STORY

"My life before Coolmine was a mess. It was in complete chaos. My daily routine consisted of using or looking for the next fix. I lived in complete squalor and my health was in a shocking state, both physically and mentally. My mental state was not good and I was in a very dark place. I was unable to manage my emotions in a positive way and constantly turned to drugs and alcohol to try and bury them. As my addiction progressed this became harder and harder and involved using more and more just to try and feel "Normal".

"I started in Coolmine in 2018. I'll always remember it. It was June and we were having a great summer, it was very hot and the trees and flowers were in full bloom. It's always something I remember vividly. Having been in prison for the past 12 months I had grown accustomed to grey concrete and black tarmac so experiencing

this for the first time in a long time felt great.

"Coming into Coolmine was a huge achievement for me. I remember being collected by the nursing staff in the little old blue Ford Fiesta. They were very welcoming and made me feel at ease. I was full of fear and trepidation not knowing what to expect. When I arrived, I was greeted by my "Big Brother". All the clients and staff made me feel very welcome. This was something very unfamiliar to me, especially people being friendly without any other motive.

"Since being in recovery my life has changed immensely. I'm back working as a painter and decorator and can hold down full-time employment. I can be reliable and depended on when needed. I'm also currently employed by Coolmine and have 2 different roles. I'm a Graduate Co-Ordinator and Weekend Support Worker. This was something very unexpected as I never

thought I would have any interest in helping other people. Next year I will be studying for a Level 7 in Addiction Studies and am really looking forward to this challenge.

"Being in recovery is one of the best decisions of my life. Learning how to overcome the trauma and challenging times in my life, without resorting to drugs has been a God send. I will always be grateful and remember where I came from. Recovery for me is about connection. Connection with family, friends and more importantly a connection with myself. Being able to put my head on the pillow at night, knowing I haven't hurt myself or anyone else is priceless. Your toughest day in recovery is still 100 times better than your toughest day in addiction."



CHARLES' STORY

"Growing up in a socially deprived area I found my identity through a crime and drug culture. Before my teens I entered the Criminal Justice System, first being placed in detention centres and then progressed to the Irish Prison System right up to the age of 38, with some short periods spent in society. This confinement coupled with crime and drugs led to being unable to manage emotions and in turn led to having a distorted view of the world.

"For maybe 7 years I knew that the life I was living was one I would like to change. With help from an addition counsellor, support from family members and two major catalyst moments I sought addiction treatment through the criminal justice system. A Circuit Court Judge agreed to suspend what is now my very last prison sentence in part, on the basis I would

enter Coolmine Lodge. "I was met with a very warm welcome from clients and staff, and although I was cautious and very fearful, I knew this was the right thing to do. What helped the most in the first few weeks was seeing people that I had been familiar with through the prison system who now seemed lighter in their physiology and appearance. These people were role modelling positive behaviours which were attractive.

"I learned how to look at myself through the eyes and hearts of others. I learned how to identify and manage emotions. I learned that when I live in line with my values that anything is possible. I learned how to self soothe by knowing its actually okay to feel all emotions. I learned that there is freedom in helping others. I learned that what I put in I get back.

"Some changes that have happened are I educated myself with the help of others and





have created a whole new identity and career. I have relationships which are based on love. I live a nurturing life full of nourishing moments. What is very powerful as I am writing this is that I am the Team Leader of the Coolmine department that is responsible for the intake of clients from the Irish Prison Service.

"I want people to know that when you believe in yourself that anything is possible."

ELAINE'S STORY

Thanks to an incredibly generous legacy donation from Elaine, we have been able to create a purpose-built wellness room for the women and mothers in Ashleigh House. This gift will provide a space for relaxation and peace for those residing in Ashleigh House for years to come. The words below have been provided by Elaine's husband, Eamon.

"Elaine entered this world on the 14th March 1959. Due to her mothers circumstances she spent her childhood years in the "care" of the Sisters of Nazareth in Nazareth House, Derry. She had an incredibly difficult childhood suffering extreme physical and emotional abuse. In her late teens she moved to Dublin, where her life quickly went out of control, mainly due to alcohol abuse and also drug use. She was in and out of Jervis Street hospital for detoxification where she was helped by two social workers, Peggy Cumberton and Barbara

Law. They persuaded her to enter Coolmine Therapeutic Community for rehabilitation, which she did early in 1979. She successfully completed the programme in Coolmine in 1980.

"Upon leaving Coolmine she lived and worked in Dublin for a number of years, then moved back to Derry. In 1997 she moved to San Francisco and lived and worked there for 14 years. She moved to Barcelona in 2011, partly because she wanted to be closer to home in order to follow up on issues relating to her childhood. Her childhood abuse remained a constant

problem for her, resulting in post traumatic stress syndrome, for which she attended counselling for many years. She participated in the HIA inquiry into institutional abuse in Northern Ireland. The inquiry awarded her the maximum amount of compensation, unfortunately this was not forthcoming until after her death in July 2020. Part of this compensation has been used for the construction of an extension to Ashleigh House, in appreciation of the important positive role that Coolmine Therapeutic Community played in her early adult life."



NEIL'S STORY

"Before Coolmine I was a frantic ball of nerves who used drugs to escape my worries, regrets, resentments and sadness.

"A fellow from the meetings and former Coolmine resident helped me get in. It was very strange at first, it was a closed house and the

pull-ups were difficult to take, but the welcome was very warm.

"I learned if it doesn't apply let it fly. I learnt how to listen to my feelings. I became a much calmer forgiving person. I learned how to ignore my first reaction. I gained the trust of my family and now my business is running correctly.

"I unexpectedly don't curse like I used to I not only remained clean from drugs, but I haven't drunk alcohol since I went into Coolmine – I never thought I would, should or could give up alcohol.

"I wish people, especially homeless addicts who are not long for this world could realise that help is abundant, free and life changing."



ALAN'S STORY

"I imagine that most people living in Dublin 15, like me, have walked past Coolmine Lodge for decades, not realising the depth of work that goes on there.

"Having joined the board of Coolmine in 2014 and meeting board members, staff and Coolmine programme participants, I very quickly learned that I knew almost nothing about addiction.

"I learned to understand that abstinence is not

enough. That everyone should have the opportunity to overcome addiction and live a fulfilled and productive life. In practice, this means delivering high quality treatment and also targeting services to give people the opportunity to reengage with family, develop positive peer relationships, support access to housing and employment or to access training and development.

"On my first visit to Coolmine Lodge, a statement which was printed over the door of

the group room had a big impact on me – "you alone can do it but you can't do it alone". I have found this phrase to be so appropriate and valuable in the context of family, community and business.

"The first client Graduation event I attended in Draíocht was amazing. This is where programme participants explain with disarming honesty their experiences of life in addiction and coming into the Coolmine programme. Another deep impact was learning that women's experience of addiction is different to men. That women do not easily seek treatment for addiction, are subject to stigma and have lived experience of trauma.

"The Chief Executive's reports to the board of directors are critical and following her advice that more than 60 women daily sought access to Coolmine's services, the board made one of its most significant decisions in recent years, to establish a temporary residential facility in the Midwest for pregnant women and women with children. The first phase of



this project was realised in 2020 with the opening of community day services in Mahon House in Limerick City. The second phase saw Coolmine open a residential service for pregnant women and women with children in Limerick in 2022. It is fantastic that we can now no longer say that Coolmine Ashleigh House is the only such residential treatment centre in Ireland. The third phase, to open a permanent residential facility, faces serious challenges. However, we remain determined to establish that facility, in partnership with the HSE and Limerick City and County Council.

"A hugely significant milestone in the expansion and establishment of Coolmine's services on a national basis in 2020 saw Coolmine partnering with the HSE to consolidate and manage the drug and alcohol services in counties Cork and Kerry.

"It is remarkable to witness board members using their skills, knowledge and experience individually and collectively, to support the Chief Executive and her team to ensure excellent governance and in particular

to manage the risks relating to Coolmine's rapid expansion. Being a board member carries significant legal responsibilities but working with skilled and committed board members and an outstanding Chief Executive makes the job very satisfying.

"Coolmine works with people who are vulnerable and marginalized with lived experience of trauma, mental health issues, homelessness and physical health issues. We see a prevalence of second and sometimes third generation families with addiction problems and a central part of our work is to break that generational cycle of addiction especially through working with mothers, fathers and their children.

"I have found Coolmine staff to be exceptional. I learn from them all the time. Operating residential facilities during the COVID years was uniquely challenging but our staff took on these challenges and adapted to new ways of working. Tripling staff headcount in recent years has been managed with an excellent training and

development programme together with a solid performance management system and team building. "Coolmine has an established research culture. One of my hopes for the future would be that we would follow up on the Trinity College Dublin Longitudinal Outcomes research that provided evidence that 72% of Coolmine clients remain illicit drug free two years after treatment.

"I love talking to Coolmine programme participants. I find that the residential facilities are places of great hope. Ashleigh House is a house of real joy. "Changed my life" and "saved my life" are phrases used commonly by participants of Coolmine's programmes. it's such an honor to contribute to an organization that is involved in producing outcomes that change lives and save lives. Such an amazing experience!

"Ireland will see a continuing demand for addiction services and Coolmine will continue to develop and improve over the next 50 years, focused on delivering quality outcomes."



PEGGY'S STORY

"I was a Social Worker in the National Drug Treatment and Advisory Centre at Jervis Street Hospital when Coolmine opened in 1973. I was involved in the detoxification programme and had been referring clients to Coolmine along with my two Social Worker colleagues for rehabilitation following detoxification at the clinic. My husband, Jim, was involved with Coolmine from the early days too, in a voluntary capacity, at first. In the early 1970s he

met with Paddy Rossmore and joined the committee and was very enthusiastic about the programme. He had always been very interested in therapy even though he worked in PR and journalism at that stage.

"He and Paddy, along with Brian Delaney and Jacqueline Ballard who Paddy had brought over from London all worked extremely hard to get the programme off the ground. I can't think of anyone else who would have been able to get this off the ground in the way that Paddy did.

I remember visiting the States in 1970 and seeing the Therapeutic Community Model and thinking that this would be the ideal model for rehabilitation if only there was some way of getting it going in Ireland – but I didn't see how this could be done. It was so special and such a specific model.

"Around 1982 Jim became the Chief Executive and Chairman. At that stage it was still a very small little voluntary organisation. Coolmine ran into a very difficult period in the 1980s with the AIDS epidemic. With that came a total change in government policy around drug addiction and funding for Coolmine was reduced as a result, with a focus placed instead on harm reduction programmes. I've always felt that Coolmine added a huge dimension to the whole recovery programme, without Coolmine's approach it was incomplete.

"What appealed to me very much about the work of Coolmine, was the fact that these are all

such young people. Their lives should be ahead of them. They should not be doomed to this dreadful captivity. I met so many lovely young people that never should have seen the inside of a prison or a treatment centre. But they had fallen foul of the drug scene which was so prevalent in so many areas of Dublin. One obstacle to their recovery was that so many of them had become addicted so young. Children aged twelve, thirteen, fourteen had dropped out of school, and then emotionally they missed out on years of development. They were stuck in addiction when they would otherwise have been learning to cope with life's struggles.

"I then retired from the drug centre in 1994. But I knew I would like to continue working in the addiction field so I began helping out with facilitating the family groups in Coolmine House. That was a group made up of the parents, the families of people in addiction.

"This was a very good group which was

facilitated by two very stalwart mothers who had been through the mill with their own children. For these parents of young people who got into drugs it was devastating, they were so ashamed and they felt like there was no one they could talk to. This group was able to give them huge encouragement and reassurance. It also helped the parents to see ways in which they could be helpful to their son or daughter, and also what was not helpful. Enabling was a huge factor to consider, when people think they're doing the right thing but in fact, it's not.

"The family group was just great. The way that they all supported each other, the way they shared their worries and problems, and were able to talk about how things had gone and what to try and do. It was like a step by step programme.

"Supporting the families was also a way to help them to help their child to come forward, at the end of the day, for treatment.

This could be incredibly difficult, especially with girls, their situation became incredibly complicated. If they had children of their own their journey was fraught with difficulties even to go into a Coolmine programme, because they would very often be seen by their own communities as abandoning their children. There was also the very real fear that if they gave their children into care while they were undergoing treatment that they might never get them back.

"One of the great things that Coolmine is doing now is the Parenting Under Pressure programme, which works with the parents. It enables them to bond with their children in a way that they hadn't been able to before, through their addiction.

"Jim was the Chairman and Chief Executive until he retired in 1998. He went on to write a book to help parents, entitled *Drugs and Young People*, published in 1982 – this was a guideline for parents of children in addiction."

IAN'S STORY

"My life before Coolmine was all over the place. I was involved in crime from an early age. I was taking drugs and I was in and out of prison. It was just not good. I was in a bad place and basically out of control.

"I started with Coolmine by getting on to a family friend who was in Coolmine and he helped me out. When I first came to Coolmine the welcome was very warm. I met all the key workers and they were all good to me. I could relate with most of them because they came from where I came from so I could trust them. Coolmine was a great place, you can see that, they try to help you if you let them. They are all good people and it's a very warm and welcoming place to go if you have nowhere else to go for help. It's a great place to be if you are struggling with problems in life.

"In Coolmine I learned about the impact of

addiction, something that I never knew anything about. I learned how to pick up a phone to ring people when I have problems in addiction so that I can take the power out of the thinking. I learned to be a better person, a better father to my daughter. I learned about behaviours, especially my own behaviours because those behaviours used to get me in trouble. I learned how to work on my behaviours and I learned that it was okay to be sad because of the stuff that was going on for you. When I went to Coolmine I was stacked up in my life, I had lost so many people and had never grieved for most of them because I was on drugs most of my life.

"I learnt to not listen to what your head is telling you to do. I learned how to help other people and give back. I learned how to get on with my family members. I learned how to listen to my family and how to be a good father. My bond is so much stronger with my

daughter and the rest of my family.

"Recovery has changed my life in a massive way. I have my daughter back in my life who I love more than anything in this world. I have the trust of people back people who I let down in life. I have met new friends in recovery. Basically, it is crazy, I have never felt like this in my life. Sometimes recovery is hard but then I see my family that love me happy every day because I am doing well. It is a good feeling and recovery has done a lot for me

"I don't take drugs anymore and I don't commit crimes. I'm not getting in trouble and people trust me now. My family trust me and my new way of thinking. I don't think like a criminal anymore or an addict I just get on with my life. Thanks to Coolmine I have achieved everything I wanted to achieve. I have a job, I have a family, I have no worries in life at the moment. My achievement was to get

my life together for my daughter and family and the biggest achievement of my life was getting off drugs. I achieved everything I wanted and more thanks to Coolmine. I've recovered the broken relationships I had with my family, with my daughter and I gained these relationships back and so much more since coming to recovery.

"I want to let people know it is okay to look for recovery. Coolmine helps people who are struggling with the darkest things in life and addiction. Coolmine is really a great place to be."




EDEL'S STORY

"Working for Coolmine, the most interesting for me is watching clients progress in recovery. They are supported and guided along their own recovery path with compassion and a client centred approach. This is invaluable to the client and the interesting progression is part of their own empowerment towards living a happy balanced life.

"Coolmine are invested in each person's pathway, offering a variety of diverse groups to suits different client needs at that time. One to one key working sessions also are invaluable particularly when clients are completing their recovery in the community.

"Having begun my own recovery, supported by a community drugs worker in East Cork, people are often interested to find out how I accomplished my progression from living in active addiction to now working with Coolmine. Enrolling in College, changing my life and my children's lives,





with the support and guidance from Coolmine, and attending cognitive behavioural groups, such as Smart Recovery.

There is always Hope. Knowing this builds motivation to help change some aspects of a client's thoughts, leading to changes in behaviours, therefore enhancing the overall lifestyle for the client and of course their families.

"In my role, I look forward to facilitating Smart Recovery meetings, Acupuncture and Meditation Groups. I look forward to meeting with my colleagues every day. I look forward to chatting with clients and also I enjoy the regular pro-social events organised by Coolmine for staff and clients. I look forward to upcoming trainings which are provided regularly by Coolmine. I have attended lots of training provided by Coolmine, which I am very thankful for. Case Management, Dual Diagnosis, Acupuncture, Children's First Policy, Overview of Smart Recovery, Custom Guide IT

Skills Training, Facilitating groups training, among others.

"My previous beliefs around addiction have changed. Addiction is an unhealthy response to unhealed trauma, build on small positive goals which over time result in big accomplishments. Replacing negative thoughts, with positivity helps realign a person's outlook on life. With support of trained staff and an interagency approach which Coolmine are absolutely committed to.

"There is always Hope. There is always support and guidance available. Harm Reduction/Relapse is often part of the process, not the end of trying, just a lesson to be learned from. Self-love and Self-Compassion are extremely important to have for yourself. Awareness and practice are key."

SINEAD'S STORY

"When an opportunity came up to work in the Ashleigh House creche I applied straight away. I had already been working in a creche for a number of years but knew I wanted to work with kids coming into recovery. Coming from addiction myself and been in recovery for a long time I

felt I could bring my own experience to the role.

"I find it so rewarding seeing how far and kids and their mothers have come since walking through the door. I have witnessed some absolutely amazing transformations. People are always surprised when I tell them where I work but mostly because they have never heard of it

before so I am happy to tell them all about the services we offer.

"My new skills and training I have learned in Coolmine have allowed me to have a better understanding of the children's needs and how I can best help their transitions. I am so much more confident in my role now and I hope that growth continues through my work at Coolmine."





KAREN'S STORY

"Working with Coolmine as a Nurse has impacted my professional career by understanding more clearly the struggles of addiction and how we as Nurses can help with these difficulties through our training and experience. Perceptions of the recovery path are

clearer after working in his field for several years, as a professional one is trained to treat the holistic person and not have perceptions.

"My favourite thing about my role is working as part of a highly experienced Nursing Team each with their own specialities and years of experiences. Providing a high standard

of Nursing care in a community setting whilst adhering to our professional guidelines. The positive feedback from clients is rewarding. Nursing colleagues' perception of my Career have changed through sharing of knowledge and information of the success rates of Coolmine. Usually, they are surprised at the variety and different settings we work. The fact that we are the main coordinators for providing detox and health care needs on a daily basis 365 days a year.

"If people really knew the difficulties of addiction, family, health and homelessness they would understand better how clients are impacted. I have such high respect and admiration for those on their recovery journey. It is an inspiration working as a skilled Nursing Team in this environment."

JOE'S STORY

"I grew up in Clondalkin, in my Ma's house. When I was younger I started using substances basically trying to fit in with the crowd. I used to play sports a lot, and that was the only time I felt comfortable. In school I couldn't concentrate, I couldn't do anything. But when I took drugs that gave me confidence, the confidence to talk to people. I would talk to anyone when I was on drugs, but when I didn't have drugs in me I was quiet as a mouse. I'd come from a broken family. My father was gone from when I was four, and I have a younger brother who was only two. I just always wanted him to be there, he's my Da.

"That's when I started acting out in school. My mother often told me that if I was bold then she'd get my Da, and that was a lightbulb moment for me, I was trying to get my Ma and Da back together. Then, as the years went on I just started doing harder and harder drugs, I tried almost every drug out there.

"I was 21 when I moved on to heroin. I used to slag 'junkies', because I didn't understand what an addict was. And then it just went out of control. My Ma caught me using in the bathroom and she threw me out. I was out of the house for a few years, staying in hostels and sleeping on the street.

"Then one day two people died in the hostel from overdoses. And I said I can't live this life anymore. So, I reached out and asked for help.

"When I came to Coolmine Lodge in 2019, it didn't feel like a treatment centre – it was really good. I was fed, I had a bed to lie in, I could even watch telly. I had come from sleeping on the streets.

"I had done the day programme in Coolmine House, so I knew what was ahead of me. I understood I had to be honest about what was going on. Even when I first arrived in Coolmine Lodge I was opening up and talking about things, and people had to tell me to slow down, that I had plenty of time. But I was just so eager to get everything out.

"I remember when I was first in Coolmine, I was always looking at the ground. In meetings I'd be always looking at peoples' runners, because I didn't have the confidence to look at anyone in the face. Now I don't need a drug to give me confidence. Sometimes still my confidence does get low, but I just remind myself "Joe, look what things were like and look what you went through to detox" and it's amazing.

"I had a lightbulb moment with my keyworker, Terry, about my relationship with my Da. He was living in England, and although I was seeing him over the years, I was trying to blame him for not being there. I had thought that maybe I wouldn't have started taking drugs if I'd had a role model in my life. But Terry said to me "Joe, you don't know what kind of life he's had." I understood then that it was about getting to know my Da, getting the chance to build that bond with him.

"Going to Coolmine is the best thing I ever did. The only reason I had gone into Coolmine initially was to get

my own house and to get back together with my ex-girlfriend. I wanted to prove my family wrong, and show everyone that I could do it. But after a while I realised it was never really about that. It's about me – making those changes for me, and having a better life for my daughter.

"Coolmine is the first treatment centre I was ever in, and it's going to be my last.

"I have my house now, I have my daughter back in my life and I have that bond back with her. I was able to talk to my peers in Coolmine who also have teenage kids about what we were all going through. I talk to my Da all the time now, and I can be honest with him and talk to him about anything, no matter what. I never expected my family to take me back so quickly. It's great. I can now be honest with them, and with myself. I don't have to lie.

"Since leaving Coolmine, I travelled to Scotland to play football in the Homeless Eight Nations Cup. We play every week now, and this

year I'm doing trials, where I'll hopefully be picked to go to New York and Los Angeles to play for my country, and fly the flag again.

"I'd like to say thanks to all the staff in Coolmine and all my peers that got me through it. The people I've met in Coolmine will be friends for life. Thank you to my family for putting up with me, and for keeping that door open. It was never their fault, it was my own actions. To my

daughter, I love her. I'm in a new relationship now with Joanne, who has four more children, and we're engaged. We've been together for three years, and I was able to be honest with her right from the start.

"Seeking recovery is terrifying at the start. It's so much change – addicts don't like change. You hear what people go through and it's scary. But it just takes time, you have to take your time with it and do everything bit by bit."



SHAY'S STORY

"My life was unmanageable for several years before I came into Coolmine Lodge on 21st September 1989.

"I had participated in several programmes in Ana Liffey, Jervis Street and Trinity Court, but all unsuccessfully. The talk on the streets back in the eighties was that the only place to become completely drug free, including methadone, was a long, two-year residential programme in Coolmine Lodge. I was 21 years old on my admission to the Lodge.

"My entry into residential service took approximately two weeks with the support of Mr. Bill Breun and Mr. Paul Hatton, who worked in Coolmine House at this time. On entry to Coolmine I was overwhelmed with the dynamics of all the residents in Coolmine Lodge as I had been friends with some of the participants before they went to Coolmine.

"My father was great support to me when I was entering Coolmine Lodge but it was a very difficult for my parents.





He was employed by the Probation service as a supervisor over lads doing community work instead of a prison sentences for crimes committed. So, he had some insight to the negative impact drugs were having in communities in Dublin in the eighties.

"On my entry into Coolmine residential on September 1989, my father and my mother got the support of the Parents and Friends group held in Coolmine House every Thursday - this group was run by parents but overseen by Mr Jim Cumberton, who had a great understanding and knowledge of addiction and the types of drugs being taken in the eighties. Jim was Coolmine's Chairman at this time. My mother Marie and my father Shay stayed involved with these groups for five years, and thirty years on; still talk about them fondly. My father just recently celebrated his 87-years-young birthday.

"I finally graduated in December 1992 in St. Werburgh's Church, a

beautiful old building. I went to work in Coolmine in 1993 for the next two years as a full-time project worker. I met a lovely woman in 1991, Jackie, and we just celebrated 27 years of marriage recently. She has been an inspiration to my recovery and life in general. We have three wonderful daughters who are all working in great jobs and making a difference in people's lives. My eldest daughter, Emma, got married last year to David, which is another milestone in my life of recovery. It's great to see all my family enjoying life.

"Thanks to the help, support and training Coolmine afforded me all those years ago I had the confidence and skillset to also become an employer and set up a business for the last twenty years. I've recently become employed back in the service with Coolmine for the last several years - and it's great to see them celebrate 50 years this year and for me to be involved with this."

JOE'S STORY

"I started in Coolmine years before I actually went into the Lodge as my family had wanted me to get help. I met with Robbie a couple of time but once I stopped getting asked about how the meeting went I blocked Robbie's number and unfortunately ended up back doing what I was doing previously! This time I wanted it for myself, so I made strides to get in myself into Coolmine without my family atem 101 different times I would stop. I began pre-entries in Coolmine House with Tony and that's where my journey started.

"When I arrived in Coolmine it was a very warm welcome. The first person I met was my keyworker Frank and he made me feel a little less nervous about being there. Everyone else then made it very easy for me, from my "Big Brother" Ronan to people I now call friends - they all played a part in making

my stay there as easy as possible. The staff played a huge part in making me feel okay being there as I had this worry that it would be different for me as I'm a Traveller. But this wasn't the case and I was treated like everyone else in there, just a bunch of men looking to change for the better, no labels!

"In Coolmine with the pull up system and the way it is laid out I was able to learn to control my emotions. In the beginning I was reacting to everyone, full of anger, I was blaming everyone; my family and my father especially for everything that was going wrong in my life. For the first time in my life I began taking responsibility for my decisions and began looking at myself. I've changed a great bit since I went in there I feel I've become a lot calmer, I am not as selfish, I am trying to better in everyday life. Some days I fall short but once I'm trying to be a better and not using I'm happy with that.

"These past two years of my life have been the best two years of my life. Peace of mind wise, I am no longer hiding in my own home in the room afraid to see my family, in case the noticed I was on something. I am mending bridges with the members of my family. Although not always perfect, and we still argue, it is way better than it was before. I am accountable today, I am no longer trying to impress people who really don't care about how I am doing, I am happy in myself! I have gained an awful lot in recovery some of which I didn't think I'd get. Sometimes the responsibility can be overwhelming but it's great being trusted by people now. Being trusted by my family and my mother not having to worry about something happening to me. She tells me she can actually have a good night's sleep now and the relationship I'm getting with my father are two of the best things I've gotten in recovery!

"What I wish people knew about recovery is, to the people in addiction it's not just you who's unwell. This is a family illness and it impacts everyone close to you. The person in addiction is usually the last to see the carnage we are causing! To the families it's obviously extremely difficult to be seeing a family member like this but try remember it's not the person, it's the addiction that's the issue!

"To other Travellers especially, don't be worried about how other Travellers will see you. You'd be surprised how many would actually praise you for going to get help, so take the jump. It was the best decision I've ever made in my life. My life now is absolutely amazing and I wouldn't give my worst day in recovery for my best in addiction!"





RACHEL'S STORY

"Before I came to Coolmine, my life was in turmoil and very chaotic, as a result of my drug use. I had nothing in my life but the drugs that I was enslaved to. I had lost my son, family, friends, home and job. I remember the final days of being in that place as nothing but pain and misery. I had completely lost myself, I felt worthless and so alone. I was living in a dark side of life I never even knew existed.

"I heard about Coolmine from an old friend who was a graduate from years ago who was doing pre-entries in Cork and he suggested it would be the perfect place for me to go to do my detox and get help to change my life. He told me how it saved his life and it gave me a glimpse of hope. This is where my journey began...

"When I arrived in Coolmine I always remember being greeted with a lot of warmth, then I met my "Big Sister" which instantly made me feel

safer. Seeing the children in the residential gave Ashleigh House a sense of home and it helped me relax. I found everyone extremely kind and caring which increased my capacity to feel safe. This was the first time I felt the weight I had been carrying for so long was finally easing.

"While in Coolmine I learned about myself, my behaviours and why I used drugs. I learned a lot of coping tools and skills which helped me to live a productive life. We learned how to manage life as parents to our children through the Parents Under Pressure Program and many Relapse Prevention Skills. I learned new coping strategies like Positive Communication Skills and how to identify triggers when they arise. I slowly began to believe in myself again, the Behavioural Pull Up System helped me become aware of my behaviours. I began to change them and slowly I started to mature. While in Coolmine I also learned how to connect with my emotions.

Connecting with emotions was difficult as for many years all I knew was how to disconnect and run from my feelings, that's where drugs served their purpose.

"I learned I don't have to escape reality anymore. Coolmine thought me its ok to have feelings and emotions. I was given the tools which helped me feel, and acknowledge what I was feeling, and that's where my healing began. I also learned how to assert myself which was something that I still practice today.

"Since being in recovery my life is a million miles away from where I was. I am living the fulfilled and happy life I have always wanted. I have an amazing relationship with my son, family and friends. I have my own home, a secure full-time job within Coolmine and I'm currently educating myself through college. I have hopes and dreams for my future and continue to achieve amazing things in life. Fitness and meditation are a big part of my social life and

most importantly I have peace of mind and a contentment I've always longed for.

"I have achieved a lot since leaving Coolmine including educating myself. I now have a Level 5, 6 and 7 in Substance Misuse and Addiction Studies, I hope to complete a Degree in Counselling and Psychotherapy. I have set many other personal goals and have achieved every one of them to date.

"I wish people knew that there is light at the end of the tunnel. I have been in that dark place of loneliness and despair. I know how desperate it feels to have no hope but I am living proof recovery is possible, I am living a life I have always dreamed of thanks to Coolmine."



CONOR'S STORY

Conor is the Executive Director of CJK, our generous corporate partners who not only support Coolmine through fundraising and events but also provide life changing opportunities for graduates who have

completed treatment programmes with Coolmine.

"In September 2018 Damien Petticrew, our MD at the time, attended an open day for businesses in Coolmine and our partnership began.

"Damien and I met Jamie (Group Leader/Key Holder)

in Coolmine and agreed to employ Jamie as a General Operative on a part time basis (three days a week). This role then transitioned to fulltime until October 2019. By October 2019 Jamie was registered as an electrical apprentice and is now only a year away from being fully qualified. Samir

has followed an identical journey but exactly one year behind. Both apprentices have been winners of apprentice of the month and are viewed as being in the top tier of CJK apprentices (we have a total of 140 apprentices).

"Since 2021 CJK have employed four general operatives. Two are now full time in CJK, one is employed on a part time basis and one fell back into addiction. Please note that he was an excellent employee for 9 months until this issue arose.

"When the initiative started out, we honestly felt that this was one way - that we were just doing our bit. Over the last four years this has flipped. Originally, we were nervous entering the initiative (maybe even with trepidation). But how wrong we were. CJK now views Coolmine as an important partner that has provided us with a recruitment opportunity providing hard working, talented candidates that have taken their opportunity with both hands.

"This partnership fits in seamlessly with our culture. No judgement, everyone deserves an opportunity and a second, third or fourth chance.

"Our staff have also experienced huge positives. We've all learned not to judge a book by its cover. Many of our team, like the general public have previously had preconceived ideas about people in addiction, particularly opioid/heroin addiction. Our team comes from all walks of life and working alongside Coolmine Graduates has dismantled these preconceived perceptions. In fact, it has been heart-warming to see a genuine willingness and encouragement from our team to see the graduates succeed. We believe our team are looking at this initiative with the view "if they help people through addiction, they will help me if I slip and fall". Our team is stronger because of the partnership with Coolmine TC.

"Giving people the opportunity of employment after

addiction recovery programmes is vital to support their ongoing recovery. All families have or will encounter addiction in one form or another. Going through addiction and recovery builds a resilience that if channelled in the right direction results in reliable hard-working candidates. We now have first-hand experience of giving people an opportunity when they feel the wider community has given up on them. Our five Coolmine graduates' performance has been exemplary. Always on time, never off work, hard-working, reliable and full of "can do" attitude."



HELENA'S STORY

"For me, the most interesting thing about my role is seeing the children thrive when they come into Coolmine. The importance of attachment, structure and being shown love and stability in a child's life is so important. "For a child to discover the magic of

childhood." I look forward to welcoming the children and mams into our service and watching them blossom. To be the parent that they want to be. I have worked in the creche for the past ten years and it never ceases to astonish me; watching a mother and child reconnect...

"People are often very surprised to learn that we

work with babies as young as three weeks old.

"There are many opportunities for training and development. I have recently done a baby massage course. I am looking forward to rolling this out in the creche and teaching our mothers, how to do it. The benefits are huge for both mam and baby."

TOM'S STORY

"I love working with so many different personalities. People walking through the door are unable to make eye contact and are often broken. Getting to see people slowly beginning to heal and believe in themselves. The transformation and growth with the people we work with is amazing.

"Ashleigh House is unique because we work with women in recovery where they get the chance take part in our programme while their young children can live here with them. The ethos of Ashleigh House is very much geared towards family, as such all children up to the age of 12 can stay over on the weekends with their Mams.

"One thing I really look forward to in my role, is what's called a "journey". This happens when clients are completing their stay in residential. In this the Women get the chance to acknowledge all the hard work they have done and the support they

received from their peer and the staff team. This is then reciprocated by participants in the group. A candle is blown out at the end as a symbolic gesture to state they have completed that stage of their "journey" and are moving on to the next stage.

"Addiction does not distinguish itself between people. We know the behaviour/ substance is often the result of some type of underlying trauma where people have learned to change how they feel about themselves by engaging with this. I'm

not aware of any 12-year-old, when asked by a teacher what they wanted to be when they grow up, replying "I want to be a drug addict". People learn to cope with life in many different ways with some less healthy ways than others. The reasons are often very complex with no straight answer to what causes people to become addicted to something.

"The same applies to recovery, it is possible. It's about tipping the weighing scales where a person's life becomes valuable to them again."



BERNARD'S STORY

"I'm a recovering drug user from heroin and crack cocaine. My first experience with drugs began when I was 14 years old in 1994. Due to the loss of my father through cancer I turned to drugs to alleviate the pain of his loss.

"When my family discovered my drug use, they blamed some of my relatives who were themselves using drugs. I was taken to our family GP. At that time, most GPs were not dispensing methadone, or Physeptone as it was called then. The GP gave me a two-week prescription of methadone in two enormous 500ml bottles to take away. For this my mother had to pay 200 pounds to the pharmacy.

"Following this, my mother did some research and asked some people we knew who had been drug users. My brother's friend was a previous client of Coolmine and suggested I link in with Coolmine House.

"I met a Keyworker called Patrick who encouraged me to engage with the Coolmine residential programme, which I did. I found the experience very intimidating initially, as I knew several of the existing clients. I spent approximately six months in the residential and step-down services. Afterwards, my mother arranged a job for me in DCC (Dublin City Corporation) during this period I continued to live as a functioning drug user, for 13 years. Over the years I had been in and out of treatment centres and methadone clinics.

"In 2009, I was convicted for a crime and incarcerated for four years in Mountjoy prison. In 2011, I returned to the Coolmine residential programme. It was a different experience for me this time around and I graduated in 2013. During the programme however, I had a slip and used heroin for a week. One of my peers passed me back to my Keyworker for a test, as he thought I was using due to my behaviours. My Keyworker asked me quite soon afterwards, if I had been

using and I admitted I had been. I was placed back in Coolmine residential programme.

"In 2014 my mother passed away and I relapsed fully on heroin and crack cocaine. I ended up sleeping rough on the streets. Staff from Coolmine continued to link in with me and encouraged me to reengage with their service. I attended the needle exchange programme in Coolmine House and engaged with the pre-entry team. My sister found me on the streets. She told me that I reminded her of our father physically as I had lost a huge amount of weight. I linked in with the Graduate Group who supported me with my self-belief, confidence, physical and mental health. Due to my drug use I was going through psychosis.

"In 2018, while on the Coolmine pre-entry programme and despite having a few slips, Julie the Coolmine nurse helped me to get admitted into Coolmine Lodge.

"This time around was a completely different experience. My mental and physical health had seriously deteriorated. It was difficult for me to accept the impact of my behaviour and actions on those close to me. The honest truth is that I was so in love with drugs that I even ignored my own daughters. My priority was my habit so I would use every and any excuse to not see or meet them.

"With the support of Staff and Peers, I finally reflected, and accepted, the person I had become. I started treatment for Hep C, and with the support of Coolmine's nursing team, became the Hep C Peer Support worker in Coolmine. I performed this role initially on a voluntary basis which led to my becoming the full-time Hep C Support Worker in a hospital setting working with a clinical team in the community. I am also a Support Worker with Coolmine.

"I am, to the present-day drug free and working to support others in addiction and recovery.

"I have now rebuilt my relationships with my children, family and friends. I am very proud of the work I put in, with the fantastic support of Staff and peers, who have helped me get to where I

am. I will continue to offer my support, advice and lived experience to those who need."

"In order to keep it, you have to give it away"



EMMA'S STORY

"Coolmine was the end of a downward spiral for me. People talk about all the things you can hypothetically lose due to addiction – but you don't really believe it'll happen to you.

"Before I came to Coolmine, first I lost my job due to my addiction. Then, very soon after, my partner left me, taking our baby son with him. This meant that I also lost the home we had shared, as I was unable to pay rent on my own.

"I went from being a working mother living with my partner and baby, to being single, homeless, jobless and without custody of my son, in a frighteningly short space of time. I was also living far away from family and friends, so I was completely isolated.

"From then I had no real home for the next couple of years, and I was in and out of treatment centres and psychiatric hospitals, sometimes staying with friends (who were also in addiction) or in homeless hostels in between. Any

time I was discharged from a treatment program, I was out completely on my own with nowhere to sleep and no structure to fill my days, and I relapsed immediately every time.

"When I went to bed at night, I absolutely didn't care if I woke up in the morning. I'd already lost everything I cared about, and it seemed impossible that anything would ever change for me.

"As I'd been to so many other treatment centres, I thought I knew what to expect, but Coolmine was a little bit different. Instead of staff showing me around the building on my first day, and telling me about the rules and procedures, it was other clients welcoming me, who were just a little bit ahead of me in their journey. I found this really inspirational – I recognised myself in these women, and wondered was it really possible that I could become as strong and confident and assertive as they were, if I just stuck this out.

"The early weeks were certainly a struggle, but I was really "minded" by more senior peer in those first few



weeks. The other women were always checking in with me, and while I was often anxious and overwhelmed, I was never left to go through it on my own. "It's been five years since I entered Coolmine. At that time, I was homeless and unemployed. I had extremely limited access with my toddler son, and whatever access we did have had to be supervised. My son's father wouldn't speak to me, nor would most of my family or friends. My mental health was in absolute shreds.

"Five years later, my son's father and I share custody, with my son spending plenty of time with each of us. My son is happy and healthy, and his father and I are able to make all parenting decisions together, with our son's welfare as our priority. "Coolmine helped me find suitable housing after I left the residential part of the programme – after a few months in supported housing, I found a place of my own to rent, where my son and I are still living today.

"After leaving Ashleigh House, I wasn't ready to return to full-time

employment straight away, so I started off working on a Community Employment Scheme with Coolmine, to build up my confidence again. I am now back working in Finance – I have a job that I love, in a great company and with a really wonderful team of people. I'm also studying for further professional qualifications, to help me progress in my career.

"The above is all Recovery Capital – a concept I'd heard mentioned in the past. But what's different about Coolmine is that they actually give clients real practical assistance with building the supports and assets that are needed to maintain recovery.

"Every single day I am so happy and grateful that I'm a productive member of society again. It's something many people take for granted, until you've lost it all.

"Looking back to five years ago, I wish I had known that life in recovery could be as good and as rewarding as it is! As I was so dependent on substances to get me through every minute of every day, when I visualised

life without it, everything seemed so miserable and overwhelming. The reality is, I wake up every morning full of happiness and gratitude for the day ahead of me. Of course, I face struggles and challenges, all of the time, but it's all so manageable with substances out of the picture.

"For anyone considering looking for help in overcoming their addiction, my advice would be that – yes it will be difficult, and yes it will take time, and you'll find yourself discovering inner strength and resources you never imagined you were capable of – and it will be worth every minute.

"Addiction tricks you into thinking life is unmanageable without your substance, the truth is that EVERY challenge is manageable once you're free of the slavery of addiction. Addiction tells you you're a worthless human being and you don't deserve recovery – the truth is that, when your addiction is stripped away, you'll find that deep down you're a good person, you always were, and you and your loved ones deserve you at your best."



walking the streets of Dublin when you see people suffering from addiction. Now I feel reassured that Coolmine is doing everything possible to help and support people.

"The governance that the board and senior management of Coolmine provide is exceptional. The safety and wellbeing of clients is the highest priority and therefore attention to every detail is essential. I am delighted to support Coolmine's growth.

EMMA'S STORY

"I joined the board of Coolmine 3 years ago. I met Alan, the chairman of Coolmine, and Carthage, the Secretary, at an event that matches people looking to join boards with boards looking for board members. When they told me about the work that Coolmine does I was immediately inspired and wanted to help.

"It has been amazing to see the growth of the

services in Coolmine over these last few years. We have expanded our services across the country meaning we can help to change more people's lives for the better. Meeting the clients in Coolmine you see the difference this help and support makes – not just for themselves, but for their families.

"Working with Coolmine has made me more aware of the challenges faced by many people in our society. I have always felt hopeless when

"I wish more people would realise that addiction often stems from a difficult and troubling childhood. That addiction can run through families generationally and that if we can support one person fully into recovery, we not only help them, but we help their children and future generations too. In order for recovery to be successful a person needs support in every facet of life from emotional skills to work skills."

DANNY'S STORY

"I always wanted to have people around me and feel accepted. This came from my early childhood being in a Foster Home seeking acceptance and wanting to feel part of. I now know that seeking these things led me into a life of drugs and crime, which led me to 4 years in prison. Afterwards my addiction spiralled out of control and I eventually became homeless and lost everything. Throughout my adult life I had always done whatever I could to be accepted. I lied and told stories that were not true just to fit into the crowd. I fell in love early and broke her heart so many times. I abandoned my partner and kids so many times and chose drugs. None of this I am proud of and I used to never want to speak of this, but since walking through the doors of Coolmine in 2018 my life has changed.

"I remember walking up thinking what am I doing just go back out there you will be fine, but I knew I needed this help. From the moment I stepped foot inside I felt safe, I felt secure,

I felt accepted. Throughout my programme I looked at the reasons I used and where it all started, and then I was able to deal with these feelings I kept suppressing with drugs. Nothing has ever hit me like the stories I've listened to while in Coolmine Lodge. The people I've met and the staff that have helped me are all super heroes in their own way.

"Since finishing my programme, I am living a life I love. I represented my country in Mexico City playing football, I was on daytime TV shows telling my story and newspapers wrote articles. I set up a running

club in my area that has over 80 members. I have taken part in David Goggins 4x4x48 challenge the last two years in a row and raised nearly €10,000 for Coolmine and another charity and will do again this year. I have been on RTE's Ultimate Hell Week, I am not afraid to take on any challenges that life throws at me, I now seek challenges.

"There is not a day that goes by that I am not grateful for all Coolmine has done for me. I am proud to say I completed the programme and I now accept myself for who I am and I am proud of myself."




LISA'S STORY

"I am the Team Leader in Coolmine's Cork City North Community Day Service on the northside of Cork City. We receive many referrals from people looking to make small changes to their lives. What Coolmine offers is a service to people at all of the stages of their journey into recovery. Every day is different and every day brings a new challenge to myself and my team. The changes that service users make each week are so evident. Services users attend one to one sessions or groups.

"People are always interested to hear you speak about people in addiction and recovery. I like to see every interaction with people as an opportunity to highlight that people we work with are people first and not just the addiction they present with. When I talk about the Here & Now groups we run in the centre people are very interested. The aim of this group is to meet





people where they are at in the here and now of their journey. Many times, people who reach out are ambivalent about what changes they can make. The Here & Now group supports them and motivate themselves to look at what small changes they can make each day. So far, this group has been a great success and a great starting point for service users.

"I look forward to work each day as each day is different and challenging and rewarding. The staff in Coolmine are great to work with and I work with a great team of professionals in The Glen.

"I think when working with people in addiction you get a real sense of how life can change any given moment in time no matter who you are. My perception of addiction has always been to see the person first and hear their story. I'm very privileged to be working with an organisation that offers too much to people at the early stages of their addiction right through to recovery.

"Following on from my degree in social studies in the early noughties I went on qualify as an addiction counsellor. This involved much personal development over the years and is still ongoing. I think my role as a parent also requires a great deal of personal development as you strive to be the best you can as a parent. As for my professional development this too is ongoing on a daily basis in my current role as Team Leader.

"Overall, I love working with Coolmine and I love how welcome people are made to feel from the minute they walk in the front door of the service."

MARK'S STORY

"My life before Coolmine was a mess. My wife left me to go back to America after a year of being here. Then my girlfriend also left due to my relapse prior to Coolmine.

"My thinking was in no way logical or rational. I never had money to spare and ran up debts due to my alcohol addiction. I had been signed off work for the 2nd time due to my addiction and was in danger of losing both my mind and my job.

"I was sitting on the local library steps talking on the phone and a place was recommended to me. It was a Psychiatric Nurse I was talking to and my question was should I be admitted. I was told to get myself into a place called Cool something or other.

"I went home and googled and up popped Coolmine. Turns out the recommendation was actually Cuan Mhuire. However, everything happens for a reason!!



"It was a very warm welcome into Coolmine by Christina. Unlike some previous places I had gone to the conversation was not accusatory or confrontational. It was a 2-way chat. It felt so amazing not to be judged. However, getting into the pre-entry was a little ropery as I couldn't put down the drink and I had to be off it a few days to get in. So, on my behalf it was rocky! Once I did, the Counsellors and Group attendees were amazing and helpful and supportive.

"I learned so much through Coolmine and remember a lot as I go along as opposed to everything, if that makes sense. The toolbox they gave me was so big I had to put it on wheels. I remember one counsellor saying the guy who cuts in front of you in traffic... maybe he has a sick child in the car or such – basically, have compassion and understanding rather than getting mad.

"Recently I underwent a medical treatment and it was very painful. A quick thought passed through

my mind of having a drink. I was asked later by that psychiatric nurse about the treatment and mentioned that to be told you can't think of a drink. My reply was "it was only a thought" it doesn't harm anyone. (Thank you, Christina!) "Taking things one day at a time is huge. Don't be worrying about things that may or may not happen in the future. I learned to be grateful. There are a lot of people so much worse off than myself. I learned that sobriety has to be Numero Uno!!

S – Stop
O – Observe
B – Breathe
E – Expand
R – Respond

"Since being in Coolmine, my "washing machine head" has stopped spinning. I believe I am able to rationalise things better and have more patience than lashing out mostly anyways. I have reconnected better with family. I wish people knew how our heads/minds worked in addiction and in recovery. That everything to us isn't so simple as with others. That

anxiety can be a huge issue (for me anyways).

"I have been able to go abroad and get urgent dental work started. All be it I had to borrow some funds for it I never would have done this in active addiction and have saved the last amount required now to finish the treatment which was something I never could have done whilst drinking. "I have been getting on so much better with family. I have made contacts within AA that I know that I can call, even just to chat, not to mention if my head wobbles or I have a tricky decision or situation to deal with.

"I've reconnected with my family. Along with Coolmine I am so grateful to a lot of my family for all their support throughout everything. Some people never had or maybe lost this throughout their addiction or even recovery. The family know who they are without mentioning names!!"

LORRAINE'S STORY

The most interesting thing about my job is meeting and getting to know people from all walks of life and listening to the amazing stories that they have to tell. It is an honour to be invited on their journey with them.

"I tell people that addiction does not discriminate. Addiction does not see race, social class, education etc., it can affect people of all walks of life. People are not defined by their addiction. It is amazing to see people's true personalities shine through once they are free from all substances and start living a rewarding and happy sober life.

"I look forward to our groups that run daily in D15 CAT. The service comes alive with the best atmosphere when all the clients arrive for groups. To watch people attend the service where they feel safe and feel that they can

be themselves around like-minded people who are on similar journeys to themselves and allow that peer support to naturally form is truly amazing to watch.

"We all have a story. We are all on our own journey and we are constantly learning from each other. My clients teach me something new about myself each and every day that I am in this role. It forces me to continuously look inwards and to continue to work and strive to do better both personally and professionally.

"We are all addicted to something whether it be the gym, shopping, our coffee in the mornings that we can't live without. We never know when these minor addictions may escalate and get out of hand to a point where our lives become negatively impacted. Nobody is exempt. Working within this role for the last number of years has shown me that it is so important that people who are in addiction are

treated with the utmost dignity and respect. We are all equal and we are all on the same level. It is just one human helping another human when our way is just not working. Everyone on this planet is only one decision away from life becoming unmanageable.

"I am developing on a personal level everyday through my work with clients and I am gaining more insight and awareness in what I need to do for my own self care and taking care of me. If I don't look after me and "practice what I preach", I can't be there to support my clients on a daily basis.

"Coolmine are extremely supportive towards their staff and continuously provide ongoing training programmes to ensure that staff are always developing within their role and keeping up to date on legislation and different trends.

"I wish people knew and understood that addiction is a disease

like any other that needs continued treatment and support. Nobody's goal in life is to develop an addiction that causes destruction to both their lives and the lives of their loved ones. Substance use is not a choice it is a coping mechanism for something much bigger that is happening within the life of the individual. But unfortunately that particular coping mechanism brings about more negative consequences than positive for all involved."





PAUL'S STORY

"I was 26 when I went to Coolmine Lodge from Mountjoy Prison. I was destroyed from using heroin and other drugs and lived a life of crime. I was in trouble with the police all my life since the age of 7 or 8 I started using chemicals bottles of gas. That's

how I started and it just progressed from there. I spent 12 years in prison, in and out. And was using drugs all the time inside but the worst prison is in your mind. The way drugs leave you feeling at the end is the worst.

"I spent 3 years in Coolmine Lodge from 1998 to 2000 and it

was the best time of my life. I felt safe and happy while I was there. I loved the Lodge and the therapeutic community as method model of treatment and community spirit. I relapsed shortly after graduation because of unhealthy relationships and trauma that I didn't deal with while I was there.

"I went back to crime and drugs for next 8 years which was miserable when I look back. I was destroyed from using heroin and crack and benzos. And I was heading back to Mountjoy Prison because I had a number of charges. My turning point and rock bottom was when I ended up on my Aunt's toilet floor having had a seizure from the crack. I woke up on the toilet floor and didn't know how long I was gone for. I was in agony. I spent most of my life in toilets using drugs but I had never felt pain like this, it was like being in a fire pit in hell. I felt like God was punishing me for all the people that I

had robbed all my life – but it wasn't God.

"I was on the welcome programme for about 12 months at this time and Tony told me they were starting detoxification placements in Coolmine Lodge for Methadone which saved my life. I would be dead only for I went to Coolmine Lodge in June 2008. Detox was tough and the suffering and pain lasted for a long time. But I knew I couldn't walk out that gate no matter what, it was a matter of life and death.

"I had lost all my family and lots of friends because of drink and drugs and mental health and care homes. The only thing keeping me going was my daughter Chantelle and my other family who I was brought up with. My aunt Sue died when I was in lodge which added to the pain that I was in; she was my best friend and I loved her – she reared me.

"I learned in Coolmine about my behaviours and unhealthy relationships. I learned that if I got

honest I would stay clean. While using the tools, I worked on my behaviours.

"I am now a project worker in Ashleigh house since 2009. I started off in a Community Employment Scheme and worked my way up to become a project worker, which I never believed I could do. It helped me change my ways in early recovery and I love the job that we do.

"I have achieved a lot. I went to college and completed a Diploma in Addiction Studies which again I was nervous doing as I had missed a lot of school as a child. But I was delighted that I did it as I wanted to keep working in Ashleigh house. I have also been there for my daughter for the last 15 years in recovery.

"My health is a lot better since I'm off the drugs and I have less worries in life. I enjoy the simple things and I am no longer afraid or in fear as I was all my life growing up. I have peace of mind.

"I always tell the women in Ashleigh House and the men in Coolmine Lodge that addiction is just pain. It's a miserable hell that takes everything from you slowly and you lose everything in the end. But recovery is real life; with their families and children and there is lots of joy in recovery. And happiness. And peace.

"My life has changed so much. I haven't thought about committing a crime or taking drugs since 2008 when I went to Coolmine Lodge. Once I continue to use the tools that I have learned in Coolmine I know I will be okay. One day at a time. You alone can do it but you can't do it alone.

"A great concept of Coolmine is responsible love and concern – that's how I changed my life. People showed me love in my darkest times and cared for me when I couldn't care for myself, the staff and the lads in lodge, and that's why I'm doing great today."

ANITA'S STORY

"I came to Coolmine as a student in 2011 as part of a longitudinal research project that was examining service users' pathways through treatment. From the start, I was amazed at how open and welcome the Coolmine clients and staff were to research and how brave the management were to allow such a research project. It was the first time that an addiction service gave full access to external researchers over a three-year period.

"During this time of research, I became fascinated with the model and how it worked. It was different to any other treatment model I had come across and had method behind everything. During my time of research, I realised that the literature could not explain fully what a therapeutic community was, you had to see it in action to fully understand the model and what I seen I really liked and made complete sense to me.

"Throughout this time, I was also witness to so many people's recovery journeys through Coolmine and beyond and could see the effectiveness of the TC approach. The ethos and belief of Coolmine that everyone should have the opportunity to overcome addiction and lead a fulfilled and meaningful life was evidenced in the approach to treatment and client outcomes.

"These outcomes in addition to the responsive nature from the organisation's leadership, to the recommendations from the end report inspired me to veer in to the frontline work of Coolmine. I have had a number of roles in Coolmine since this time including Project Worker and Team Leader of Ashleigh House. I am currently the Residential Services Manager and I believe passionately in the Therapeutic Community model of treatment.

"Coolmine has many concepts but one concept always stood out for me

was "You alone can do it but you cannot do it alone". When I think of my own life and challenges I have had, I alone had to overcome them but can honestly say that without the support of family and friends that I would not have. With support, we are given the opportunity to overcome challenges and I believe this is true for everybody in life regardless of their circumstances. Many people have the same potential and capabilities but have very different outcomes. This is very evident in education settings. Two people with exact same academic capability but very different outcomes in terms of completion depending on levels of financial, practical and emotional support.

"Coolmine offers everybody that walks through its doors the exact same opportunity; a safe environment where everybody's basic needs are supported to give them the opportunity to recover. Coolmine also treats people as adults with decision making capability and not

patients nor dependents which aligns greatly with my own view of people with substance misuse problems. The people we work with are their own experts and treat themselves. We simply provide a safe environment, a structure and a support system to help them get there.

"Everybody's outcomes are different when leaving Coolmine. To me a successful outcome is a person leaves with a sense of care and belonging, healthy boundaries, the ability to stand on their own two feet and a belief in their own decision making. The best part of my job is bearing witness to recovery in motion. To witness a person who has lost the ability to speak or look people in the eye evolve into a strong, assertive and independent person. This is what makes working in Coolmine so rewarding.

"I am proud to be part of an organisation that remains true its mission statement and its values. Providing opportunity is not only

applicable to clients, opportunity for staff to progress throughout the organisation is open to all staff. I am also grateful to have been afforded the same ingredients that the clients receive when entering Coolmine to help me grow and develop both personally and professionally which included a sense of belonging, a voice, autonomy, decision

making capabilities and a support system that showed belief and trust in me.

"Regardless of who we are, all of us are people with the same needs and aspirations. I look forward to the 50-year celebrations and being part of something that has been there before me and will continue beyond me for many years to come."





GEMMA'S STORY

"I love seeing clients coming into the Kerry Hub for the first time and seeing them progress through Coolmine. We had 7 clients between The Lodge and Ashleigh House in December 2022 – a first for Kerry. Working in Drug and Alcohol services since 2011 it is great to have Pre-entry locally and an easier pathway for clients to access Coolmine

residential.

"People are often surprised to learn about the range of Coolmine services on offer across the Southwest and further afield nationally. In Kerry we offer assessments, keyworking, careplanning, case-management, groupwork which includes Here and Now groups, Pre-entry and Aftercare.

"Without hesitation I can say that I really look forward to the interactions

and connections with Coolmine staff both regionally and nationally each day. In my first week in the job I heard the expression "There is a general 'soundness' about Coolmine staff" – which speaks to the values of Coolmine and makes it a great place to work for staff! Clients receive unconditional positive regard and are treated with dignity and respect.

"Working in Coolmine has filled a void that existed in my work. The approach that is taken to addiction and recovery and the opportunities offered to clients make it an organisation that I am proud to be associated with.

"I want people to know that recovery is possible. I don't believe that addiction is a choice and I would love humanity to develop a greater compassion for addiction and realise that it is a response and attempt to cope with painful life experiences."

GARY'S STORY

Gary was a graduate of Coolmine whose memory lives on through his family's generous support of Coolmine. The beautiful words below have been provided by Gary's sister, Maria who has shown such kindness to those engaged with Coolmine's services.

"Before Gary went into Coolmine his life was a little chaotic to say the least. But by the time Coolmine came around he was totally ready to absorb himself in the treatment. I think the success for him was that he was at a point in his life where he wanted a total change and to be away from drugs.

"If he had any fears or apprehension about attending, he didn't let that stop him as he took to the programme like a duck to water. He had immense respect for the programme, and everyone involved in it. He learnt as much as he could and worked hard on himself.

"It was strange for us as a family when Gary came

home and started hugging us and telling us he loved us. We weren't that type of family. We didn't hug one another or tell one another how much we loved each other, but Gary got the ball rolling on that.

"He had a lot of demons to fight but he stuck with it and his life changed drastically. He was ready to take responsibility for his life and his actions. Being in Coolmine also sparked a desire in him to make a difference in other people's lives. He wanted to go back to Trinity College to study psychology and to help people who were in a similar situation like him to turn their life around.

"Unfortunately, the effects of drugs took their toll on Gary, and he died before he got the chance to realise his dreams of helping others just like him. But before he died, he found redemption for his life lived and died peacefully fully clean from all drugs and methadone. Something that we put down to his own strong will and determination, and the foundations to live a better life that Coolmine provided.

"We will be forever grateful as a family for the help Coolmine gave Gary and for the amazing work they do there."



PETER'S STORY

"My time spent working in Coolmine was the beginning of my career working with people through their recovery from addiction. Coolmine is a special place that I will always have love for. I worked there for five years, beginning in 2015.

"I began on an internship as a Medical Administrator and during my time in Coolmine, I had so many opportunities presented to me by the Nurse Manager, Julie Walsh, and other staff members. I gained experience working with groups and even facilitated the Alcohol Programme which was held in Blanchardstown library at the time. I received lots of training in Coolmine such as Dual Diagnosis, CRA and TC training which greatly enhanced my skills and perspective on addiction and recovery.

"My work in Coolmine helped me to grow on a personal level through talking with service users, hearing their

story, observing their journey, and witnessing them finding their own strengths to transform their lives. I continue to be inspired by the service users and staff of Coolmine.

"Coolmine was always like a second home to me. It was a place where I always felt like I belonged and still do. The staff were and still are like family to me. I continue to be surrounded by people who always want the best for me. I have made lifelong genuine friends who continue to guide me on a professional level.

"In Coolmine, I was directed to a Level 7 Diploma in Drugs and Alcohol Work in Urrus Ballymun/UCD. I completed this and progressed to a Level 8 (Honours) Degree in Social Science in UCD which I completed in 2020. During my studies, the staff in Coolmine were very supportive and I would have been at a loss without their support and reassurance. All the staff in Coolmine are well educated so I was able to

go to them if I was finding challenges in my studies. I will always be grateful for that support as I now have a Diploma and a Degree. I plan to do a Masters and hopefully a PhD someday.

"I am now working as a Case Manager in Chrysalis Community Drug Project in Manor Street, Dublin 7 where I get to continue the work that I have become so passionate about, with more great people with high levels of expertise and experience from whom I continue to learn from.

"As a result of my time in Coolmine, I learned that addiction is a matter of life and death. Some are lucky enough to get into a programme or a fellowship and find recovery. I have witnessed some people genuinely believe that they could use drugs or drink alcohol one more time successfully and then not make it back. Recovery has a lot to offer, and it has many rewards. One needs to only want it, put the work in, and do the right things and the right things will indeed happen."



PADDY'S STORY

"Before I went to Coolmine my life from a very young age was one of unhappiness, drugs and prison.

"I was in prison in 2012 for the seventh or eighth time and my children had been placed in care due to my drug use. I was willing to try anything to fix myself and become a better father and person. I started linking in with a drugs counsellor in Limerick Prison and she suggested Coolmine Lodge to me.

"When I first came to Coolmine everyone was welcoming and the grounds of the place looked lovely, but I was unsure as to whether I had made the right decision by going in there. After about three or four weeks I started to settle in and started to feel good about myself so I thought right I'm going to get stuck in. I learned a lot in there mainly about myself and what kind of a person I am. My whole mindset has changed;

how I view myself being the biggest change I would say.

"My life has changed completely. I have my children in my life. Coolmine equipped me with the knowledge and self-awareness and the ability to manage my emotions which in turn enabled me to go and get my children back and be the best father that I can be to them, and just be a responsible person.

"I have achieved so much in my recovery, but the fact that I managed to pull myself out of the absolute depths of despair and misery is without a doubt my biggest achievement. I've completed a Diploma in Addiction Studies and a Degree in Social Care. I also have run marathons and have done a good bit of fundraising for some local charities. I now have the ability to live right.

"Everything I have in my life now I never had, for the most part. I had three children who were in care before I went to Coolmine Lodge so I got them

back, but everything else I newly gained or never had before Coolmine and I will be forever grateful to Coolmine for that.

"It's really hard to put it in words because one sentence or even a paragraph would not do it justice, but I would like people to know that recovery is a million percent possible."



JOHN'S STORY

"I started using drugs at a young age, and like everybody my life just became unmanageable. I was constantly in and out of prison for years. All my relationships broke down. Everybody walked away from me and I was left on my own. I got an opportunity whilst in prison to go to Coolmine and I grabbed it with both hands. I had been years trying to get out of the prison system and get into residential treatment, but it wasn't happening for a long time. So when I got the chance I took it. And I've never looked back.

"When I first came into Coolmine in 2021 the greeting was very welcoming. I was greeted by my keyworker, Bernard. I was assigned a "Big Brother" and to this day we're still in contact. He was a lovely young fella, dealing with his own problems too. I received such a warm welcome in Coolmine.

"I can't thank all the staff enough for what they did

for me. They showed me how to live again. To look at my behaviours. I'll be eternally grateful to them for what they did for me. I learned that there is a solution to every problem, and I learned to give things time. That's what I learned in Coolmine.

"Being in recovery was a struggle at the start, but life has gotten a lot easier. The greatest thing I've found since coming into recovery is peace of mind. I don't have to worry about getting up in the morning and putting something into me so that I feel good. I get up in the morning, I jump out of bed and I go to the gym before I go to work. I meditate, I go to fellowship meetings. If I didn't have the fellowship after leaving Coolmine I don't know where I'd be. I've done a twelve-step programme, I have a sponsor in my life. I'm in a new relationship. I have a good job, I'm back on the road driving. Things are really taking off. I haven't got my own place just yet but that's in the pipeline.



"I'm so thankful to all the staff in Coolmine for all the work they did with me, and all the work I've been able to do for myself. For me, going to Coolmine was like winning the lotto, to be able to leave prison and not go back taking drugs again.

"You have to give yourself a chance. Take a chance on yourself or you'll never know what it's like to come out of the place where you were."

BALMAIN
PARIS



COOLMINE

OVERCOMING ADDICTION, SUPPORTING RECOVERY

*"Life in recovery is beyond my wildest dreams.
I am a good mother to my child, my family are a big part of my
life and I have amazing friends."*


With your help, mothers like Laura can feel safe knowing that while they are engaging with our programme, their child is being looked after in a safe, secure and nurturing environment.

BECOME A FRIEND OF COOLMINE



www.coolmine.ie/friends-of-coolmine

Please note: Laura's name has been changed and stock images used to protect her privacy.
Thank you for understanding.



We work with over 1,500 people each year to support them and their families as they commence their journey to overcome their addiction. By committing to make a regular gift to Coolmine you are helping us provide this support

€10

Your monthly gift of €10 will help provide a bed and treatment for someone who is staying in our residential treatment services.

€15

Your monthly gift of €15 will help us provide baby supplies and food for babies who are residing in our Mother & Child Programme at Ashleigh House.

€21

Your monthly gift of €21 will help us provide for our client's medical needs and help fund our detox programme.

Photographs by Barnett Gomez and Cathy McEvoy



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