

## The MARC Project Report 2011

This has been an exciting year in The MARC Project. We have seen a number of new initiatives begin and develop, an increase in service-user involvement and a number of new people join our team.

### Floating support

Our Floating Support programme has continued to provide regular support to individuals, mainly in their own homes and dealing with issues that could impact their ability to maintain their homes. We have worked with 21 people throughout the year, and are currently working with 18 people, with one on our waiting list and one in the process of applying for support. Issues have included finding a home, dealing with debt, home maintenance, family issues, emotional and mental well-being.

### Drop-in

*"It's really hard to explain...except to say that it's like a big family."*

The words of one of our drop-in volunteers at an awards ceremony as The MARC Project received a certificate for involving volunteers.

The past 12 months have seen real growth in the drop-in, with everyone getting involved in the day to day chores needed to keep things going. Our menus have continued to improve, and we continue to link in with other projects dealing with health issues.

Our average numbers have remained steady at about 12 in each session, but many days are much busier.

Our evening drop-in has continued to alternate with our bowls evening, and those who come along in evenings have been enjoying craft activities as well as the chat.

### Social Activities

We have continued with our activities in the drop-in, including tournaments and craft sessions. We have also had regular Out Of Centre Activities including a trip to Balmoral

Show, a visit to Bangor Museum and Ten-Pin Bowling.

Our regular bowling evenings (on alternate Wednesdays) are also very popular.

### BCPP

Our Building the Community Pharmacy Partnership Project has taken on a physical health focus this year, and Patricia continues to be a very valuable resource. We have been overjoyed to see Patricia (our Community Pharmacist) receive a number of awards for her work in the community (including her work with us). We have been linking our BCPP project with our new Fit Futures Project.



**Members of the MARC group attend a health check event run by our community pharmacist.**

### Fit Futures

Operating alongside our BCPP Project, our Fit Futures project has been a great tool for getting our group involved in physical activities including Boxercise, Boccia, golf and swimming.

Our plans for Fit Futures next year include growing some fruit and vegetables in our garden and doing Cook It courses.



**Golf at Bradshaw's Brae**

### **Family & Friends Activities**

We have seen a real benefit to our Family and Friends activities during this year, with positive relationships built between supportive family members and members of our team. Activities included a trip to Belfast Zoo and a couple of barbecues – the highlight being our attendance at The Link’s Summer Barbecue at Crawfordsburn.

### **Befriending**

We were delighted this year to receive an award for our befriending project, recognising the vital role our small team of befrienders play in facilitating change in the lives of our client group. We are very fortunate to have very dedicated befrienders, but would very much like to grow our team over the next few years.

### **Training**

Throughout this period, we have had clients and staff completing training in Drug Awareness OCN level 1, Dealing with Violence and Aggression and First Aid and are currently undergoing training in Substance Misuse Awareness and Employability.

### **Crisis Management**

This year saw the start of our Out Of Hours phone support service. Currently 17 of our most vulnerable clients receive phone calls on any day that the centre is not open. This has allowed us to maintain contact with those who are most at risk at times when services are limited. This has certainly been a positive development, allowing for more stability and continuity in our support.

### **Women’s Group**

Our women’s group have undertaken a number of projects including a women’s health course and a craft stall in the Saturday Market. They continue to meet and encourage each other on a monthly basis.



*Women’s group at a craft exhibition.*

### **MARC Service User Involvement**

Our committee continues, with a rolling membership. We had nominations for new members in November and now have 5 service users on the committee alongside 2 volunteers and a member of staff. Members of the committee have helped to carry out risk assessments and organise activities. They will also be involved in fund-raising and administering the funds they raise for drop-in equipment.

### **The Future**

During the next year, we would like to be able to extend our Crisis Management to include training in areas like debt management and basic DIY skills as well as forming work co-operatives to allow those who have practical needs to work together. One of our very exciting plans for the next year is our trip to Hungary alongside Project 23. A small group of clients, volunteers and staff will be working with older people in the village of Telkibanya, and also hopefully spending some time in a children’s home in Slovakia.