

WHO WE ARE ...

We are, first and foremost a community – a group of people of different ages, creeds, capacities and social & ethnic backgrounds who share life and are inspired and empowered by the belief that everyone, irrespective of their life circumstances, can make a difference and has the capacity to change the world.



Together we are working to build a world that recognises the unique value of every person and our need for one another and the lifestyle and activities of the community are focused on bringing the gifts of fragile humanity, often hidden in the margins of life, into the centre.

At the heart of the community there are people who have ‘learning disabilities’ often referred to as ‘*Core Members*’. Because of their simple and authentic way of being in the world and their dependence on others in the ordinary activities of daily life they have much to teach us about welcome, hospitality, our shared humanity and our need for one another. They invite us into relationships that are about interdependence and that transform our hearts. In this way the community is a ‘school for the heart’ and through mutually transformative relationships we are moved into new and more meaningful ways of belonging in the world - as family, friends, neighbours and citizens.

"L'Arche is about changing the world one heart at a time." Jean Vanier, Founder of L'Arche

The dream that brought us together ...

“a world ... where people,
whatever their race,
religion, culture, abilities
or disabilities can find a
place and reveal their
gifts”

- JeanVanier, Founder of L'Arche -



When a dream takes hold of
you ... follow it.

*“Creating a Soft Spaces in busy
places and a world that we can truly
call our home”.*

We believe that together we can be ‘a soft space’ in our fast paced world - a natural space where things grow organically, where time moves more slowly, and where people are welcome to come just as they are – free to be weak and free to be strong, to laugh or to cry, to succeed or to fail - free to be fully present, fully human and fully alive.



Cultivating Community in our own neighbourhood.

To realize the dream of being 'a soft space' at the heart of Belfast we need 'a place'. In this place we will create an environment where we can offer hospitality to all who come and invite people into simple relationships that will transform their lives. It will be a place where people can come to discover their gifts, reconnect with their creativity and engage with one another using their hands, hearts and minds to create something together that they could not create alone. We will cultivate community in our gathering spaces, craft studios, garden, kitchen and around our tables as we share food, fun, faith and friendship with one another. In this place we will honour the gifts of simple presence and friendship and strangers will be welcomed as friends yet to be discovered. Everyone's contribution will be valued and we will welcome and celebrate our humanity in the activities and events that we offer.

We have witnessed people who have learning disabilities offering their gifts of universal welcome and hospitality and inviting people into simple relationships that transform their lives.

Now we want to create opportunities for them to take up their place in the world, to offer their gifts, realize their potential and be enabled to make an active contribution to society.



The Proposal

We will acquire 'a space' where we can:

- welcome everyone who comes
- connect with one another
- become friends
- create community
- make a difference through our heads, hearts and hands...



In this 'Space' we will:

1. Grow in an organic way.
2. Model a way of life that is founded on 'gifts and diversity' rather than 'deficit or disability'.
3. Be together in a way that challenges the culturally predominant social care roles and identities of 'client', 'service user', 'agent' and 'provider'.
4. Create opportunities for everyone to experience their creativity and to offer their gifts in service of one another and of the public.
5. Provide 'an oasis' for those who need it.

With a little faith ...

The Parable of the Mustard Seed

"He said therefore, "What is the kingdom of God like? And to what shall I compare it? It is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in the garden; it grew and became a tree, and the birds of the air made nests in its branches." (Luke 13:18-19)

