

**Dougal Dorman,
Head Gardener
and Anja Rosler,
Horticultural
Therapist at
Colebrooke**



What a Year from Joan.

Welcome to our Christmas edition of the Brooke House Newsletter. Reflecting on the year: we commenced our Health services support as soon as Covid restrictions were lifted, still ensuring compliance. It has been lovely to give a warm welcome to so many of you to Brooke House and to the lovely outdoor space we are privileged to enjoy. This year has brought challenges and opportunities. We strived to deliver services

Why do you think this is a particularly effective form of therapy for veterans?

A – The practical aspect as they can get stuck in, physically, with a complete lack of judgement and they can take this into everyday life and replicate where they live. Simple yet powerful. **D –** The veterans are generally already comfortable being outside, and we can then bring in the `deeper stuff`. There is `buy in` through word of mouth from other veterans and safety in numbers. **There are lots of gardening projects being run, what do you think sets the DGS operating model apart?** **D –** It's for veterans, and the veterans have been heavily involved in its development, the brainstorming, listening, People, Place, Purpose (PPP). DGS lets the garden shine and trusts us to lead on our strengths. **A –** I particularly like the aftercare that is part of the DGS model. The manual is fantastic, it is flexible and shaped by feedback.

to meet the needs of all who came forward to seek support, including family members. Services within the Centre include psychological support delivered by a team of highly trained experienced counsellors to address problems of anxiety and difficulties with sleeping. Physiotherapy is available to deal with physical injuries and pain management. In addition we have provided Nature Based Therapy including a 10 week Horticultural programme, Fishing Courses with Competitions, Garden Workshops and Produce mornings alongside the Colebrooke garden team.

As a first, we provided a 10-week outdoor Nature based programme for carers and the bereaved and we hope to do this again in the Springtime. It was a delight within this programme for the group to plant hundreds of Spring bulbs on the estate which we will so much look forward to visiting as they blossom, to take wonderful photographs and to reflect on their beauty and to think about the benefits of the programme. What we offer is a Model of Recovery We HOPE we do .

And as part of this year's work, we undertook a Needs Analysis inviting you and many other organisations to come forward and reflect on what we do and more importantly what we can do. Thank you to all who participated, and I look forward to sharing this report before the New Year. **Seasons Greetings** 

A Confident Look Ahead with John .

After the disruption of the lockdown and the restructuring of Brooke House earlier this year, we have now settled down and are delivering a wide range of services. Referrals are increasing and we are providing tailored care for our clients, their families and carers.

We are fortunate that the Armed Forces Covenant Fund Trust has awarded us two grants which will secure our work with military veterans during the next financial year, and we are awaiting the outcome of a third application. Meanwhile we are working hard to source funding to support all of our other clients. We will also need to increase our capacity as the numbers of referrals rise and we are working with other funders so that we can meet rising demands. Our staff are our key asset and I am very grateful to them for their dedication and professionalism during turbulent times. We are looking forward to being able to recruit new members of the team in the Spring so that we can increase our capacity. 2022 is going to be exciting at Brooke House. I wish you all a Happy Christmas and a Healthy New Year. 

What do you think are the key elements that need to be present in a garden setting for you to deliver the best therapeutic intervention? **A -** Logistics are important, provision of all weather options (eg, Colebrooke has a lean to and a polytunnel), there are always different options. Also, the garden isn't perfect; it's not a show garden. **D –** It has to feel



real, not just for show. Authenticity is key and providing a safe and relaxed environment. **How do you evaluate whether the course has made a difference to them - do you see changes in the space of the 10-week course?** **D –** In week 10, there is a feedback session which is great, as it is practical and can be implemented, we can work on progression. We can see changes in their body language and visually they look more comfortable. **A –** One of our courses asked for a `What's App` group to be set up, which is great as it has sown the seed of friendship which will carry on beyond the actual course..



Fly-Fishing Project



The peaceful grounds around Brooke House are conducive to developing this popular sport with the benefit of improving the health and wellbeing of our clients. The project offers an opportunity to promote positive interactions in the great outdoors. The Fly-Fishing Project is a



5 week course delivered by a qualified advanced game angling Instructor (APGAI-Ireland). Tuition includes casting techniques, safety, assembly, presentation of flies and practical fishing at the lake. The fishing itself operates on a catch and release basis and barbless hooks are used so that minimal distress and damage is caused to the fish.

Looks a Bit Fishy to me



The course concludes with a BBQ/nutritional workshop using freshly caught fish and produce from the Walled Garden and prizes are presented. This enables like minded individuals, of all fishing levels,

both male and female, from similar backgrounds, to feel at ease in a safe and peaceful environment. The time outdoors spent in their small groups has given everyone the opportunity to share experiences, to comfortably engage in conversations and mental health has been steadily improving. A very important part of this project has been the ongoing warm welcome and the empathetic interaction the co-ordinator and the wellbeing worker have with the participants. Their support and encouragement for the participants, initially by telephone, continues throughout the project. The Clients have reported an improvement in their mental health and wellbeing.



Peace



Lifeline

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Christmas and New Year can be a difficult time for many struggling with loss. Not just bereavement, but loss of identity, creativity, meaning, purpose, hope. Emotional pain can be paralyzing. For those who have lost loved ones, **nurture those memories**. Keep them alive in your awareness and heart. Focus on those around you who could do with some attention and care. At Brooke House we aim to nurture our relationships with our growing community of clients. Feedback confirms our own purpose of facilitating the recovery process. We've found that is different for each individual. We're learning and growing too, but know for many the initial step starts with **peace**. Do something today that brings you peace and let us know how we can help you strengthen that connection.



Brooke House is closed from Friday 24th

December– Tuesday 4th January.



Nature based programme for Carers

Here at Brooke House and on the tranquil safe space of Colebrooke we use the natural environment on the estate to provide unique nature-based therapy interventions. *"the more we are actively engaged with nature the better our emotional and mental health"*

Carers are often forgotten and feel forgotten. The pressures and demands that can come with being a long-term carer often means that there is very little time left for self-care, hobbies or simply time-out for oneself, leading to physical exhaustion and negative impacts on mental health. We listened to the Carers and developed a pilot 10 week **Nature of Caring Programme** for those caring for a relative who may have suffered physically or been affected psychologically and those who have been bereaved having been a carer.

.Our programme is held in the lovely bell tent with its own stove and Kelly Kettle. Feedback tells us that there is a sense of safety which allows strong and long withheld emotions, such as grief, to be expressed and released. Participants have reported that the program is already affecting other areas of their lives positively. In particular they now see nature as a readily available resource to improve the mental wellbeing of the whole family. The mutual support within the group, even outside the weekly sessions, is strong and their friendship will be a living legacy. As will be the hundreds of spring flowering bulbs which were planted near the Eco home tent.



Christmas Holly Wreath Workshop from a Very Festive Stable



Colebrooke Lake



Programme of Events 2022

Keep up to date with the supportive projects being put in place at Brooke House, early next year, by viewing the up to date brochure at.....

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