

Narcotics Anonymous - A brief history

This is a short synopsis of how Narcotics Anonymous began in Ireland. This is not an official document but as none exists it may serve as a useful guide for anyone interested in the history of our fellowship.

The first steps

Before we examine how Narcotics Anonymous began in Ireland it may be useful to take a look at the beginnings of the fellowship.

The NA fellowship as it is known today was founded in Sun Valley in the Los Angeles area of California in July 1953. Its principles had been first applied to drug addiction at the US Public Health Service Hospital in Lexington, Kentucky in 1947. The following year, in 1948, meetings were organised in New York City by an ex-addict familiar with the Lexington programme but these groups did not last.

The present NA fellowship was formed by a group of addicts who had been attending regular AA meetings in Sun Valley. They had seen the benefits of the AA programme to recovering alcoholics and decided to set up a similar group for addicts. The first meetings were fairly sporadic and were mainly restricted to California. Over the next few years NA grew very slowly. In the 1980s there was an explosive growth in NA meetings world-wide. There are currently estimated to be 25,000 NA meetings in 65 countries.

NA in Ireland

Narcotics Anonymous in Ireland began in a very similar fashion to the world-wide fellowship. NA in Ireland can be traced back to 1978 when a group of addicts in Dublin who were attending AA decided to start their own meetings for people suffering from drug addiction.

These pioneers had no information about Narcotics Anonymous and so their first meeting, which was held in The Rutland Centre, Clondalkin, went under the improvised title of Drugs Anonymous.

These meetings ended after a few months but another group picked up where they left off and held the first Narcotics Anonymous meeting at the same venue on October 7, 1979. Soon after some literature arrived from World Service Office and so began the fellowship as we know it today.

Although the fellowship remained quite small for its first five years in existence, Dublin addicts were at last being given an opportunity of finding recovery and getting clean through the NA programme.

No more than five meetings existed during this time but in 1983 an Area Service Committee (ASC) was set up to carry the message to the still suffering addict and the fellowship began to blossom.

This ASC was the forerunner of today's Eastern Area Service Committee (EASC) but the Irish fellowship has spread its wings and now comprises of four area committees and a regional committee serving around 125 regular meetings as well as 20 meetings in various institutions (jails, hospitals, treatment centres etc.)

The Regional Service Committee of Ireland is responsible to the four areas, Eastern, Northern, Western and Southern who are in return responsible to the individual groups and its members. NA Ireland has phonelines in operation in all areas.