

New Directions, March 2026 Newsletter



Our Men's Event in Tessa House on March 24th was a huge success, over 40 men from the Dublin area of SJOG Liffey Region were in attendance, find out more about the day on Page 8...



Grace from Glencommeragh in Celbridge has been busy testing different modes of transport...



Carmel from Elvira has secured a job at Mr Price on the Kylemore Road, Congrats!



Ash Tree had an important awards night recently, turn to page 13 to see the amazing winners...

Meet the Staff Member

Orla McNelis

Hello, my name is Orla Mc Nelis, and I joined SJOG, Rise in Maynooth as an Instructor in January 2026. Previously, I worked as a Training Instructor in National Learning Network (Rehab Group) delivering both Rehabilitative and Vocational Training Courses to young adults with diverse needs, which was a great learning experience for me, as I was transitioning into this sector. I also spent many years working in various Engineering and Project Management roles in US Multinationals in both Ireland and the USA. I am very grateful for this valuable experience also.



Years ago, I remember my father would say to us all as a family, that if we ever wanted to donate to a charity, we should consider SJOG for the 'wonderful work they do', so I feel it is a positive sign for me to be working here now. In my spare time, I love going for walks and spending time in nature, whether that's just an obliging forest or field, a beach or the majestic grandeur of Yosemite National Park or the Himalayas. While trekking with a Sherpa Guide in the Khumbu Valley, Nepal (Mt. Everest Region), I visited some Buddhist temples and was introduced to the beautiful sounds of the singing bowls and gongs used in meditation for the first time. Many years later, I completed a Diploma in Sound Healing Therapy in Tara, Co. Meath and continue to use these healing sounds for relaxation and meditative purposes. I look forward to continuing my journey with SJOG and to see where it might take me next!

Islandbridge Day Service

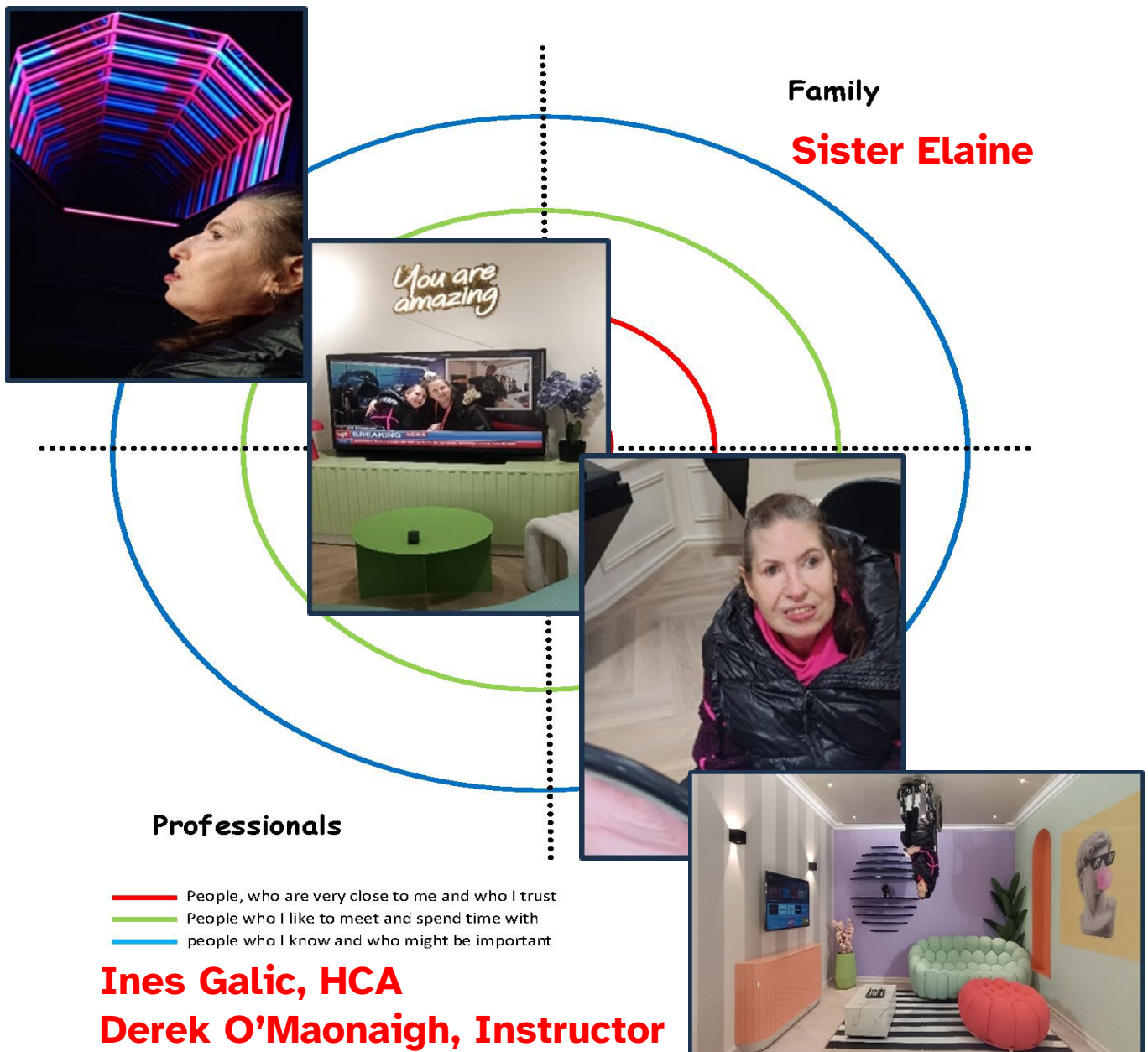
Love is in the air at Islandbridge Day Service. Coral (who is new to the location) attended a Disco and Party in Greenhills Community Centre after receiving an invitation from her boyfriend (and former classmate) Luke. They exchanged gifts and had a beautiful evening out in the community, this ties in so well with the theme for this month's newsletter. Coral got the invitation at her music session where she met her previous classmate. Luke's keyworker told Coral that he has been looking for her since they separated from school, and he finally found her in Bluebell. What an amazing support system both individuals have around them to facilitate this connection happening, the power of a Keyworker 😊



Ines Galic who works in Islandbridge was creating some pictorial activities with Martina Campbell and both were amazed at how the images turned out. "I think everyone would enjoy them and maybe get inspired to do more fun stuff, as I take inspiration from others" Ines commented. "I complete these posters with Martina and her sister and we regularly send them home so she can have an album to reminiscence". Martina's family were sending thank you notes and chocolates that all the staff shared.

Martina's Social Goals; World of Illusions, Dublin

Important people in my life



Realising Potential and Possibilities with Assistive Technology



Scan the QR
Code to
listen to this
story.

Christina Cannon, Patrick Fitzgerald, and Sarah Boland were invited to present at the Gathering, attended by Board Members and Directors from St. John of God services across Ireland, the UK, and Malawi. They were the only presenters from Community Services on the day.

Their presentation focused on the role of assistive technology in supporting people in everyday life.

They shared a clear message: assistive technology is not an add-on. It should be part of essential service delivery.

They showed how assistive technology can help people to:

- Understand information
- Communicate in ways that suit them
- Make choices
- Live more independently

Real examples from practice highlighted how small changes can make a big difference.

They also spoke about the importance of leadership, co-design, and listening to people with lived experience.

The presentation encouraged leaders to think about the future and to ensure services are inclusive, accessible, and ready for a digital world.

Assistive technology is not just about tech

It is about inclusion, opportunity, and supporting people to reach their full potential.

It is everyone's responsibility to support AT.

Aistear Nua Day Service



Part of Pat's outcomes is to travel using public transport, he just unlocked this in March by travelling on the Luas into the City Centre, he had such a fantastic experience. Well done to Pat, keep up the good work.

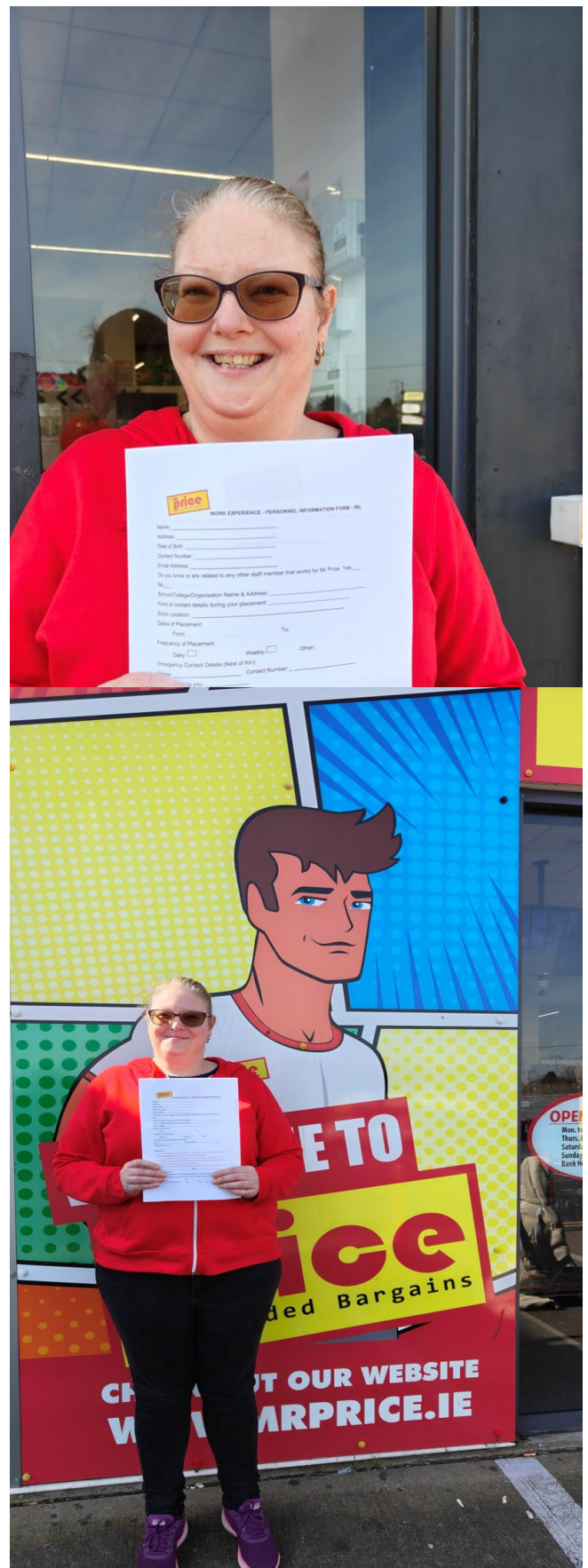


Elvira Day Service

Carmel Lynch from Elvira Day Service recently expressed that one of her goals is to live independently and get a job to support herself in having a more fulfilling life.

Part of Carmel's journey to an independent life is gaining skills within the workplace. Carmel has previously worked in a Swimming Pool, encouraging kids to learn how to swim. She also completed a work placement at Costa Coffee and previously had a job at McDonald's. Carmel's exciting new venture is a 12-week work experience block at Mr Price. Starting Monday, the 23rd March and finishing on Wednesday, the 10th June.

Carmel will begin her first day at 9.30am and complete 3 hours of work experience under the supervision of a staff member in Elvira. The team in Elvira have promised to keep us posted on Carmel's progress and do a write-up upon completion of her Mr Price journey to employment. As you can see by the images, Carmel is absolutely over the moon, and what a gorgeous sunny day to receive such fantastic news. We all wish Carmel the very best of luck in her New Venture.



Influencing Policy at the Accessibility in Action Conference



On March 13th, Patrick and Sarah were invited to attend the National Disability Authority (NDA) “Accessibility in Action” Conference. This national event brought together leaders, policy makers, and professionals from across Ireland to share good practice in accessibility and inclusion.

The day focused on how public services can be made more accessible to everyone. It included presentations, panel discussions, and real-life examples of what works well.

Key topics included:

- Universal design in public services
- The importance of lived experience
- Monitoring progress under the Disability Act
- New guidance to support accessibility



The event highlighted that accessibility is not just about policy, it is about real change in everyday services.

There was a strong focus on listening to people and making sure services are designed to meet real needs.

This reflects New Directions’ values of inclusion, participation, and independence.

Accessibility must be part of everything we do, from planning to delivery.

Men's Event Tessa House

On Tuesday 24th March, SJOG Liffey Region's Development Team facilitated a Men's Event in Tessa House. The event was kindly sponsored by Off Beat Donuts at The Square in Tallaght who donated 50 fresh donuts for all in attendance.

On the day we had Brent Pope in to give a talk on men's mental health and opening up with someone we know and trust when we feel we may need support. Next up was Laura from the Marie Keating Foundation, who spoke about prostate and testicular cancer and how to check your body, as well as leading a healthy lifestyle. Our final presentation was from our very own Patrick Fitzgerald, supported by Maxwell and Joseph. Patrick chatted about the Men's Group in Dublin and the upcoming outings/plans they have. Thank you to all involved, it was an amazing day!



Maple Walk Day Service

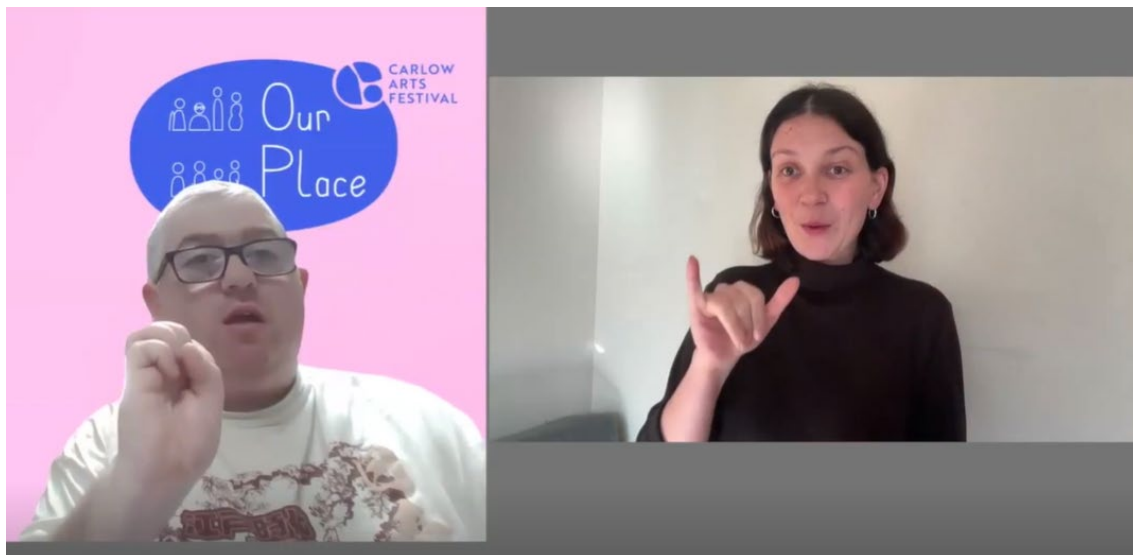


Service User's from Maple Walk Day Service in Walkinstown have been busy working up a sweat recently at their local gym, taking part in all sorts of exercises, including boxing.

Regular physical exercise is vital for maintaining a healthy weight, strengthening bones and muscles, and preventing chronic illnesses like heart disease, type 2 diabetes, and cancer. It significantly boosts mental health by reducing stress, anxiety, and depression while improving sleep and increasing energy levels.



Making the Arts More Inclusive



On March 6th, **Tony Davis** and **Patrick** together with **Carlow Arts Festival** as part of the **Disrupt Festival**, hosted a cross-sector discussion on making the arts more inclusive.

Over **100 people joined online** from across; The arts sector, Disability services, Community organisations and people with disabilities.

The discussion focused on the real challenges people face in making the arts accessible for everyone.

1. Fair pay for artists
2. Insurance barriers
3. Who owns creative work
4. The need for accessible spaces
5. The time needed to do inclusion properly



The conversation was open and honest. People shared their experiences and ideas for change. One clear message came through.

Inclusion takes time, planning, and commitment.

It cannot be rushed or treated as an add-on.

Events like this are important. They bring people together, build understanding, and support real change across sectors.

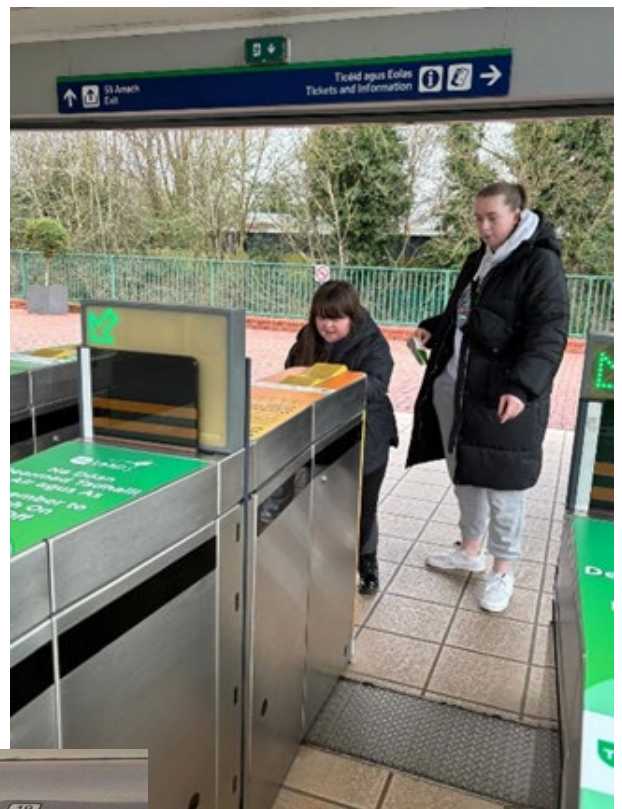
The discussion is part of a growing movement to make the arts more inclusive, so that everyone has the chance to take part, express themselves, and be valued.

Everyone should have the opportunity to take part in the arts.

<https://www.disruptfestival.ie/event/cross-sector-event-strengthening-inclusion-for-artists-with-intellectual-disability/>

Glencommeragh Day Service

On 18/03/2026, Grace was supported to go to Dublin by train in line with her goals to travel on different modes of transport. Grace set off for the 10:44 train to Dublin, supported by Glencommeragh staff, Natasha and Soujanya. As you can see from the photos, Grace had an amazing day. Grace usually chooses to wear music headphones while out in the community; she did not look for these and was completely in the moment, enjoying the experience. Grace returned to Hazel Hatch train station at 1 pm after enjoying a few hours in THE BIG SMOKE. Well done, Grace, we are all super proud of how far you have come.



Sharing our Project Stories



On March 19th, Amy Walsh and Tony took part in a storytelling day with ReThink Ireland.

They represented both the Our Place Project and the DigiCoach Project, alongside 14 other funded projects from across Ireland. Amy and Tony were the only presenters with lived experience, apart from two autism projects. This made their contribution especially important.

During the workshop, they delivered a 5-minute presentation about their work.

They received very positive feedback from other groups and facilitators.

With support from Sam, the media and storytelling coach, they learned:

- How to share their story clearly
- How to build confidence when speaking
- How to create a message people will remember
- The importance of ethical storytelling

The experience helped them reflect on their work and how to improve their presentation for the future.

ReThink Ireland has supported both projects for the past three years, helping to grow leadership and opportunity.

When people tell their own stories, it creates real understanding and impact.

Uaisle Day Service

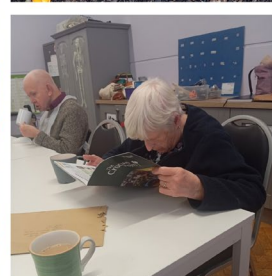
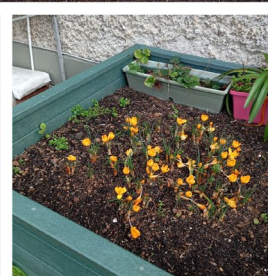
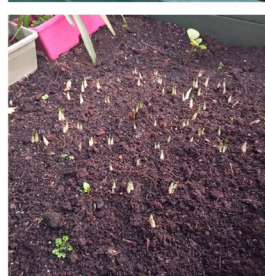
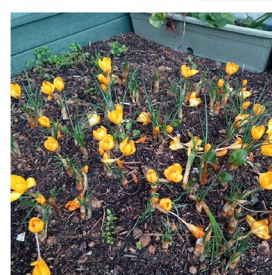


All staff and Service Users in Uaisle would like to wish David Garland a very happy 74th birthday! He celebrated with his bingo friends in the Day Service and enjoyed a delicious homemade cheesecake made by his keyworker, Gina.

Although a little late this year, due to the poor weather in Ballyfermot, our crocuses have finally come into bloom.

Ann Nolan and her friends in Uaisle took part in the Crocus Project, in memory of all those who were killed during the Holocaust not only because they were Jewish, but also older adults, people with disabilities, and others who were targeted.

This project has resonated deeply with our ladies and gents, especially Ann, who felt a strong connection to its message of remembrance, dignity, and respect for every human life.



Ash Tree Day Service



The Service Users from Ash Tree Day Centre in Tallaght recently attended an Awards night for their contribution to Sports. Alex won an award for Basketball, Morgan won an award for bowling and Jonathan won a Bravery award. A huge well done to all involved, the sky is the limit...

An invite from Daniel Moses

Below please see an invitation from Daniel Moses for April 1st in Cookstown. Daniel attends Ash Tree Day Service, he has been in college studying illustration and would like to invite everyone to his very own Art Exhibition. Here he will have some of his work available for purchase and will also be offering portraits for just €5.



Las Granadas Day Service

Niall Bannerman and Thomas Barry from Las Granadas would like to share with everybody that on the March 24th they visited a recording studio in Bluebell. They recorded themselves singing and playing guitar to the song "I have a dream". Las Granadas staff member's Paul, Hannah and Dave supported them to fulfil their dream. I cannot wait to hear the finished result, well done to you both and all the team.



Leading Change Through DigiCoaching

Proud to share Patrick's recent interview with Silicon Republic, showcasing his work as a DigiCoach and his role in advancing digital accessibility and inclusion.

Patrick and the 15 other DigiCoaches are helping to change how people think about assistive technology.

As a **DigiCoach with St John of God Community Services Liffey**.

Patrick uses his lived experience to help others understand and use digital tools in their everyday lives.

Patrick uses assistive technology, such as screen readers, apps, and AI tools, to communicate, work, and connect with others. He knows first-hand how important these tools are.

“Looking back, it was very hard for me to communicate without technology,” Patrick says. “Now I want to show other people what’s possible.”

Today, Patrick works with students, staff, and organisations to build confidence in using technology. He helps people to:

- Understand information
- Communicate better
- Take part in decisions
- Become more independent

Patrick also works with developers and students to co-design websites and apps, ensuring accessibility is built in from the start.

His work highlights an important message:

Access to technology is not enough. People also need **support, training, and confidence** to use it.

Patrick is not just using technology, he is helping others to use it, understand it, and benefit from it every day.

DigiCoaching is about people leading change.

INNOVATION

Using lived experience to address the digital accessibility gap

by Suhasini Srinivasaragavan

14 MAR 2024 | 5 MIN READ

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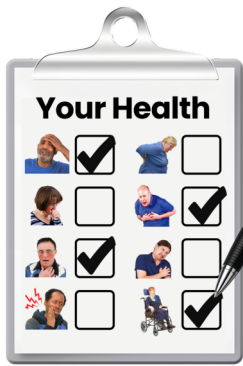
Patrick Fitzgerald bridges the often unaddressed gap in helping people adopt accessibility tools.

The Disrupt Disability Arts Festival was well underway by the time I reached Projects Arts Centre in Temple Bar. A sunny evening had added to the day's apparent success, with many milling about the building as a sold-out Spm theatre performance on life as a non-speaker begins.

LATEST NEWS

- 'There are many pathways to becoming an excellent engineer' | 20 MAR 2024
- Why shaping company culture needs a focus on opportunity, not fear | 20 MAR 2024
- Rofurbobod might go mainstream thanks to AI-led price hikes | 20 MAR 2024
- OpenAI reportedly taking on Anthropic with new 'superapp' | 20 MAR 2024





Look for changes in your health



Your body can show you when something is wrong.

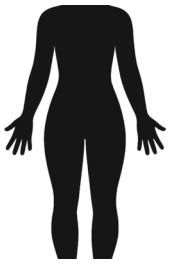


Pay attention to your body.



Get help early to stay healthy.

For more information, contact Rebecca Lynch,
Clinical Governance Auditor & Trainer.



Changes in your body



You lose weight without trying



You feel very tired a lot.



You have pain that does not go away.



You do not sleep well



Changes in your body



You eat much more than usual.



You drink much more than usual.



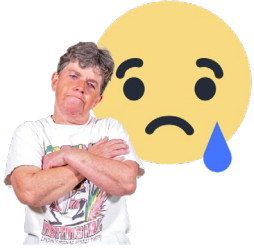
Your toilet habits change.



It is hard to breathe when doing everyday things.



Changes in how you feel



You feel sad.



You feel worried



You do not want to do things you usually do.



You feel confused.



You do not feel like yourself.



What you should do



Tell someone you trust.



This can be your family, staff, or your doctor



They can help you.



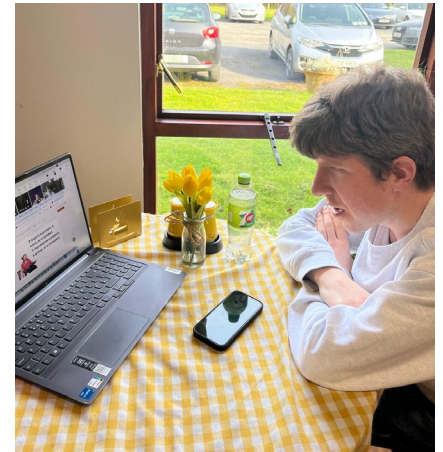
If something feels different or not right, tell someone.



It is OK to ask for help.

For more information, contact Rebecca Lynch,
Clinical Governance Auditor & Trainer.

Songs EU first workshop in Celbridge



On March 20th, the **New Songs EU Project** officially began with a kick-off meeting in Tearmann Mhuire.

A group of musicians from across Liffey Services came together to start the project. They also joined an online session with European partners to begin working together and co-designing ideas, including the project logo.

The group includes:

Gerry Donnelly – Tearmann Mhuire

Cuinn Stephens – Reach, Celbridge

Lesley Kelly – Griffin Rath Day Services

John Egan – Pathways Day Service, Maynooth

Jane Ryan – Pathways

Alex Kennedy – Ashtree

A key part of the day was a music workshop led by **Karen Power**, an award-winning composer who travelled from Cork to facilitate the session.

Karen created a welcoming and inclusive space. The workshop focused on **listening** to each other, to sounds, and to the group.

Participants explored how to:

- Listen and respond through music
- Play together
- Share ideas creatively

This is the first step in creating an original song with EU partners.

This project is about creating music together and making sure everyone is heard.



Thank You for Reading...

Just a final word, I wish to remind you all that the monthly 'What is New Directions?' Online Engage sessions are now pre-recorded and the link to watch the March edition, where Patrick Fitzgerald and I discuss ADM, is here; <https://vimeo.com/1175832842?>



Could everyone please continue to send all your good news stories into me, we love to celebrate all the successes happening across Liffey Region's Day Services.

Get in touch

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**st John
of God** 
Community Services

Liffey

This easy read booklet about New Directions information was made by Donna Hughes.