

# New Directions, May 2026 Newsletter



Ash Tree win BIG at the Irish Healthcare Awards!!! Turn to page 8 for more amazing photos from a very glamorous evening with our 2026 Day Service of the year winners.



Doris Delaney took to the stage at a sold out show in Crumlin recently...



Pat got to know his community members in Celbridge, see more on page 10.



Tracy from Islandbridge has presented her Art pieces at IMMA!

# For the month of May, we explore the following pillar which underpins New Directions, **'Support for Maximising Independence'**.



Independence is the state of a person, nation or system exercising self-governance and freedom from the control or influence of others.

An independent person is self-reliant, making their own decisions and managing their life without relying on others for financial, emotional, or social validation. They are not easily influenced by others, possess a strong sense of self, and set firm boundaries. Such individuals are often direct and comfortable with solitude.

Independent living means that people with disabilities have the right to live as independently as they choose. If a person with a disability wants to ask for help, they can. But the kind of help they ask for and who they ask is up to them. This way of thinking is often described as "self-determination".

# Meet the Staff Member

## Leo Gordan

My name is Leo Gordon. I work in Day Services, in SJOG Liffey region as a Coordinator. I have worked in SJOG for over 26 years; having worked in both residential and day services. I enjoy my work and find it very rewarding, especially when I see others reach their goals and aspirations. After school I qualified and worked as an Engineer but realised that the job wasn't fulfilling, I retrained culminating in a Master's degree in applied Behaviour Analysis which is very useful in my current role. I enjoy working with people, where maintaining a work-life balance is important for me.



Outside of work my Family is central to all that I do. I am passionate about Sport and music. I am a qualified Tennis Coach, and my own goal is hopefully someday to represent Ireland at master's level. Many moons ago I was in a rock band, I have mellowed with age and I'm currently learning to play rock songs in classical style. I enjoy new challenges and one of my Mantra's is to "Live for today and plan for tomorrow". Next time when passing say hello, see you then.

# QQI Awards for KDS

On the 19<sup>th</sup> of March, the men and women in Kildare celebrated their QQI awards. They received QQI major awards, along with QQI certificates in Food Choice and Health, Personal Safety, Setting Goals and Personal Hygiene.

There were also 11 recognition awards that were received on the night, these included: delivering Lamh at Induction Training, two people retired from Employment Services, and others completed a cooking course in their community, secured a new job and tried new activities in their Day Service.

A huge well done to all who received their awards, keep up the good work and we look forward to celebrating more achievements next year!



# TUDublin Project Showcase

Over 100 student projects were displayed at the TU Dublin Project Showcase this year, including several co-design projects developed with St. John of God Liffey Services. The new President of TU Dublin Deirdre Illis, who has been a big supporter of the partnership between TU Dublin and SJOG, highlighted the value of co-design. Students and co-designers worked together to create accessible and inclusive technology solutions. The showcase celebrated creativity, teamwork, and innovation. It also showed how people with lived experience of disability can play an important role in shaping technology, education, and future services, as well as potential job opportunities for them as paid accessibility experts with lived experience.



# Patrick leads International Co-Design Workshop in Birmingham & launches PPI Ignite in RCSI

Patrick Fitzgerald, a paid PPI (Public and Patient Involvement) Co-Lead with TU Dublin, supported the delivery of an interactive co-design workshop at the Engage Summit in Birmingham. Patrick has been appointed to this important role with TU Dublin for the next five years. The workshop brought together university staff and participants from across the UK and Europe to explore social media and the role universities can play in creating more inclusive supports and solutions. Participants used co-design tools, including empathy maps, idea trees, and “I Like, I Wish, What If?” activities, to develop new ideas together.

On Monday 11th of May, I presented at the PPI Ignite Network launch at RCSI. It was a great day, and I really enjoyed being there. I spoke about how this role makes me feel. My voice matters. I am part of real decision-making. I work together with others as equals.

I feel proud to represent people and to help create positive change. I shared what I hope to see over the next five years : more paid roles for people with lived experience, more accessible communication, more leadership opportunities, and research that is designed *with* people, not just *for* them.



# An Teach Day Service



In April, Suki and staff member Linta in An Teach, who are both from India, wore their Sari (Saree) — a long piece of fabric wrapped around the body with a blouse to educate their peers about their culture in line with New Directions.

Both ladies also cooked a traditional butter chicken dish which was delicious! Everyone in An Teach enjoyed learning about Suki and Linta's Indian traditions and even learned how to perform a Bollywood dance!

I love to hear about how locations support an individual with Personal Expression... Great job Suki and Linta.



# Living with Epilepsy



[Listen to this Health Advice](#)



## What is Epilepsy?

Epilepsy is a health condition.



Epilepsy means you can have **seizures**.

A seizure is when your brain works differently for a short time.

This can affect:

- how you move
- how you feel
- how you respond

Epilepsy is different for each person.



Staff, nurses, doctors, and family can help support you. You are not alone.

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



A seizure is when your brain works differently for a short time.  
A seizure usually does not last long.



Some people feel different before a seizure.

You might:

- feel strange
- feel dizzy
- feel worried

Tell someone if this happens for you.



Some people may fall during a seizure.

Try to stay safe if you can.

Move away from danger if possible.



Some people shake or jerk during a seizure.

These movements cannot be controlled.

Staff or other people should:

- stay calm
- help keep you safe
- not hold you down



Some people stare and do not respond during a seizure. This can happen for a short time.



You might feel confused or tired after a seizure. Staff should stay with you until you feel better.



If you are having a seizure, staff or others should:

- stay with you
- help keep you safe
- time how long the seizure lasts
- not put anything in your mouth

You may need extra help if:

you get hurt  
it is your first seizure  
you do not feel back to normal afterwards



Take your medicine every day if prescribed.

Medicine can help control seizures.



A medical alert bracelet is something you wear on your wrist.

It tells people important information about your health. It can help staff or members of the public support you if you have a seizure.

It can speak for you if you cannot talk.

Staff or family can help you get one if you want one.



Lots of people live full and active lives with epilepsy.

You can:

- look after your health
- stay safe
- live an active life in your community

Support is available for you.



# How to Stay Healthy



Eat Healthy Food



Move your body every day.



Take your medicine.



Go to your health Appointments.

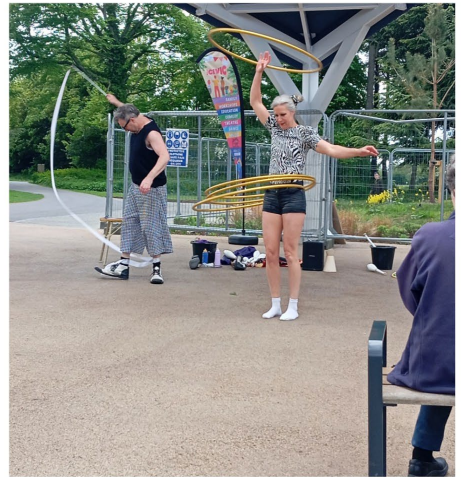
# Uaisle Day Service

John O'Connor from Uaisle Day Service recently celebrated his 80th birthday with a wonderful afternoon party at the centre, surrounded by both friends and staff. The room was filled with laughter, conversation, and a real sense of warmth as everyone came together to mark such a special occasion.

Guests enjoyed a delicious roast chicken dinner, followed by cake and a celebratory glass of champagne. Music played throughout the afternoon, adding to the cheerful atmosphere and encouraging plenty of smiles and good spirits.

John clearly had a fantastic time, spending the afternoon chatting, reminiscing, and enjoying the company of those around him. He was truly delighted with the celebration and it was a memorable day for everyone who attended. Happy Birthday John 😊





Some of the gentlemen who attend Uaisle, enjoyed a wonderful afternoon at a free outdoor circus performance in Corkagh Park, Clondalkin. Everyone loved the high energy entertainment and being out together.

The Civic presented Tumble Circus in association with Age & Opportunity as part of the Bealtaine Festival, kindly supported by South Dublin County Council. The performance took place in the outdoor space behind the Park House Café.

It was a lovely community event and thoroughly enjoyed by all.

# Ash Tree Day Service Winners



St John of God Liffey Region's Day Service ASH TREE in Tallaght had a huge win on Friday at the Irish Health Care Centre Awards 🏆

There were a staggering 16 Day Services shortlisted for the Best Day Service Award category, which is an achievement in itself. Each day, the hard work, heart, creativity, and commitment that go into supporting people to thrive and have real opportunities is clear to see in Ash Tree.

The team constantly step outside of their comfort zones, take positive risks, break barriers and focus on working *with* people, not *for* them. What makes this so amazing is the belief in realising potential and possibilities, creating spaces where leadership, inclusion, friendship, co-design, and creativity can genuinely thrive.

This award is so well deserved and reflects the incredible people supported, families, advocates, and staff who continue to push boundaries and show what person-centred support can truly look like in action. WELL DONE TO ALL, SO PROUD OF EVERYONE!



# Aistear Nua Day Service

Pat attended a community gathering recently in Celbridge, where he was delighted to meet new friends and old staff from SJOG. Pat is continuously supported to socialise and this is something so meaningful to him.

A poster for a community event titled 'SICAP Know Your Community Celbridge'. The poster features a colorful illustration of a community fair with people, tents, and balloons. The text on the poster includes:

**SICAP**  
**Know Your Community Celbridge**  
**Join us for a day of fun! Meet all the people offering services in your community**  
Meet Local Community Gardai, Library, KWETB, SEAI, ALONE, The Acre Project, RNLI and many more on the day

**21<sup>st</sup> of April 2026 in**  
**The Slip Hall in Celbridge**  
**W23 A6Y8**  
**10.00am until 2.30pm**  
Contact Rioana to book a stand  
[rioana@count-kildarelp.ie](mailto:rioana@count-kildarelp.ie)

**St John of God**  
Community Services

Liffey

Niall from Aistear Nua attended his Horse Therapy at Blackberry Stables in Maynooth. Niall has been grooming a horse named Bobby and has really enjoyed getting to know the horse and being more confident in the company of the horse. Niall was also presented with a Rosette for being so gentle and calm around Bobby. Niall also loves wearing his horse helmet.



# Islandbridge Day Service

Raymond, Suzie, Martina, Tracy and Bernie from Islandbridge would like to extend a heartfelt Thank You to everyone who visited their art exhibition at IMMA on May 6th.

The exhibition was presented in collaboration with NCAD students as part of the 'Culture Date with Dublin 8' Festival, creating a wonderful opportunity to share creativity and connect with the wider community.

Their project, *"Our Senses, Our Story,"* explored expression through sensory experiences. A particular highlight was the creation of a "please touch" sensory wall, designed to challenge the traditional "no touch" rule of museum spaces and invite visitors to engage more openly with art through touch and feeling. The group was delighted to welcome so many visitors and truly appreciated the support, curiosity, and enthusiasm shown on the day. A huge well done to all for being involved in such an amazing initiative and thank you to the support staff from Islandbridge too.



# Elvira Day Service

On Tuesday Morning the 28<sup>th</sup> of April 2026, a group of Ladies and one of our Gentlemen took part in a Spa Session at Elvira Day Service. Warm water foot spas and hand massages were available on request. Meditation music with dimmed lights and a salt lamp set the atmosphere for a magical spa morning.

The Himalayan salt lamp created a relaxed mood in the corner of the room where the pamper sessions were taking place. During the hand massages, meditation music played on a screen and warm water with lime was served at the end of the session which lasted 1.5 hours of pure wellbeing and relaxation.

Warm water and Epsom Salts were used in the foot Spas. The group said they would like to continue the Health and Wellbeing sessions on Tuesday mornings on site throughout the Summer.





In other Elvira news, Carmel decided to ask her Keyworker to help organise a Birthday celebration with her peers and close friends in the Day Service. On the 7<sup>th</sup> of May 2026 a group of 4 Ladies from Elvira and 1 from Ash Tree headed off to Liffey Valley to choose a lunch venue to celebrate. It was a week of Celebrations in Elvira as it was also Niamh Jordan's Birthday as well as Teresa Kavanagh.

After a full week of celebrations out and about in the community and on site, the ladies said they thoroughly enjoyed the experience. They said the food was very good and they would like to continue organising trips out and follow in Carmel's lead. This ties in very well with the New Directions theme of the month around 'Maximising Independence'. Great job everyone!

# Doris Delaney



Our very own Doris Delaney, who is a member of St. Agnes' Musical Society (part of the St. Agnes' CCMA in Crumlin, Dublin) recently performed in a sold out production of 'Into the Woods'. The group are a vibrant community theatre group. They host both junior and adult casts, performing classic and contemporary musicals alongside an in-house live orchestra

# Glencommeragh Day Service

There were outdoor adventures and musical moments with Oisín from Glencommeragh Day Service recently! Oisín spent lots of happy time outdoors, making the most of the fresh air and fun around the campus in Celbridge. He loved heading out on his bike and thoroughly enjoyed soaring back and forth on the new swing. Alongside his outdoor adventures, Oisín explored something new by trying out the guitar, adding music to his month of fun! He also loved singing and dancing, spreading smiles and showing off his moves. A month full of energy, creativity, and joy for Oisín!





More outdoor adventures and musical fun with Tallal from Glencommeragh! Tallal enjoyed some wonderful outdoor adventures this month, spending time walking through the beautiful Phoenix Park. He loved being out in nature and was especially delighted spotting the deer during his walks. Alongside his outdoor fun, Tallal also explored his musical side by trying out different instruments. One of his favourites was the guitar, as he enjoyed listening to and feeling the rhythm of the strumming. A month filled with fresh air, nature, and music for Tallal!

# Las Granadas Day Service



Some of the individual's whom attend Las Granadas successfully completed a QQI Healthy Living course. The graduation ceremony took place at the Hilton Hotel Kilmainham on 14<sup>th</sup> May and it was a great success; everyone received their certificates and enjoyed a lovely lunch of their choice afterwards. The recipients were Thomas Barry, Shane Lenard, Paul Farrell and Laura McKay. Well done to all!



# Cairde Day Service



Our gardening programme is thriving this month as everyone continues to come together to brighten our Cairde space. We've planted a wonderful variety of beautiful flowers, adding vibrant colour and life to the garden.

We have been working side by side digging, planting, watering, and enjoying the fresh air. The garden has become a place where people can chat and take pride in creating something lovely together. Thank you so much to staff member Ciara for the write-up and photos.

# WHO AT Report Launch



Pelumi, who attends Mountain View, and Tony Davis from Ashtree, along with Christina (SLT) and Blanca (Support Staff in Tallaght), were proud to be a part of the launch of the new World Health Organisation (WHO) Assistive Technology Assessment Report with the Irish Government. The report highlights the importance of assistive technology and accessible supports for people in Ireland.

Last year, Emma and Cathal from the WHO visited Liffey Services while they were writing their report, and Pelumi was asked to present at the launch of the report with the Minister for Disability. When they came last year, Tony shared the great work we are doing in co-design, digital inclusion, and listening to people with disabilities and creating leadership roles like the paid DigiCoaches. We also shared the challenges. It was great to see everything we talked about in the report. The launch of the Report is the first step toward the right support for Assistive Technology for everyone in Ireland. Tony was delighted when Emma used his quote in her Speech.

**“Assistive technology is a game-changer. Everyone should have access,” Tony Davis**



Exploring the Assistive Technology Assessment Report 2026

Thursday 21<sup>st</sup> May 2026  
12 - 1:30 pm



The CHAT Community Hub celebrated Global Accessibility Awareness Day with a special online event focused on digital accessibility and inclusion. The event brought together over 70 people to share their thoughts on the AT Report.

# GATHER Conference

## Assistive Technology Passport

Daniel Moses, Niamh Toland and Klara presented a session on the AT Passport at the GATHER Conference in May. The team continues to support awareness of the Assistive Technology Passport. The passport helps people explain the assistive technology and supports they use in education or work settings. It aims to make conversations about accessibility easier and more person-centred. They showed the new version of the AT Passport that gives people the choice to share their need and choose a solution that would work best for them. Assistive Technology is one of two things identified in the UNCRPD that supports independence, and it is everyone's responsibility to ensure that AT is expected across someone's life and not an add-on.

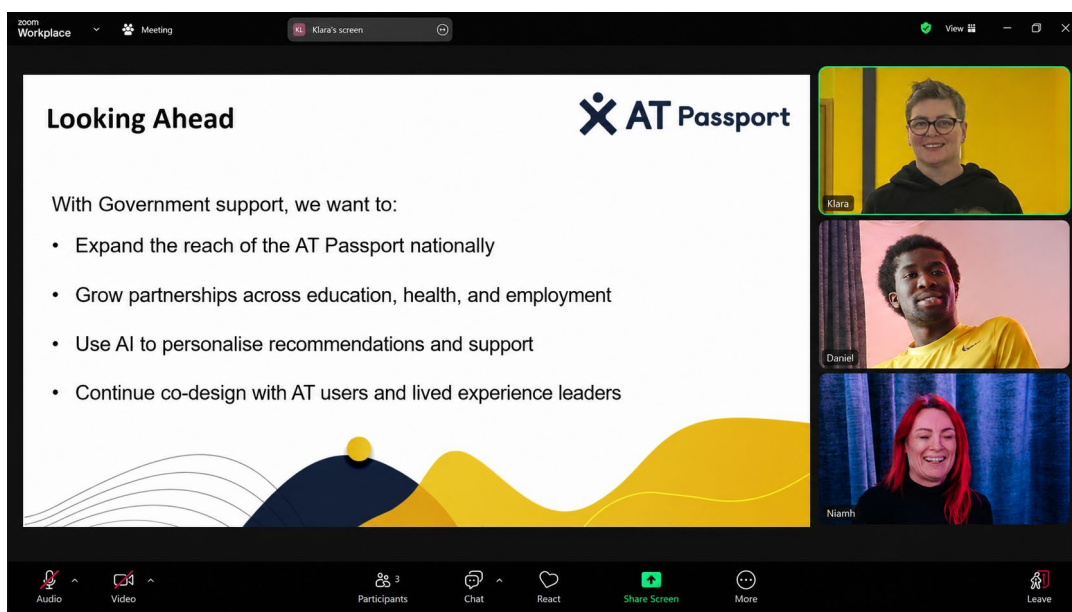


Image is AI generated to represent what Daniel, Niamh and Klara did at the conference



# 21 DigiCoaches Hired & EU Award

The DigiCoach project continues to grow across Ireland.

Our Dublin and Kerry DigiCoaches have now interviewed over 40 people for the new DigiCoach jobs. Through the CREATE Grant, 21 DigiCoaches with lived experience of disability are employed to support others in using technology and accessing digital services. The project focuses on peer support, leadership, and inclusion. DigiCoaches are helping people build confidence, learn new skills, independence and access opportunities in their communities. The project is creating meaningful paid roles while promoting digital inclusion for everyone.

Katie and Sophie travelled to Porto this month to collect the European Innovation Award for the DigiCoach project funded by the EASPD.

Katie had a great time in Portugal and demonstrated strong leadership, presenting to over 250 people and sharing the work the DigiCoaches are doing in Ireland.



# DigiCoaches Deliver

## Co-Design Workshop for HSE Virtual Services

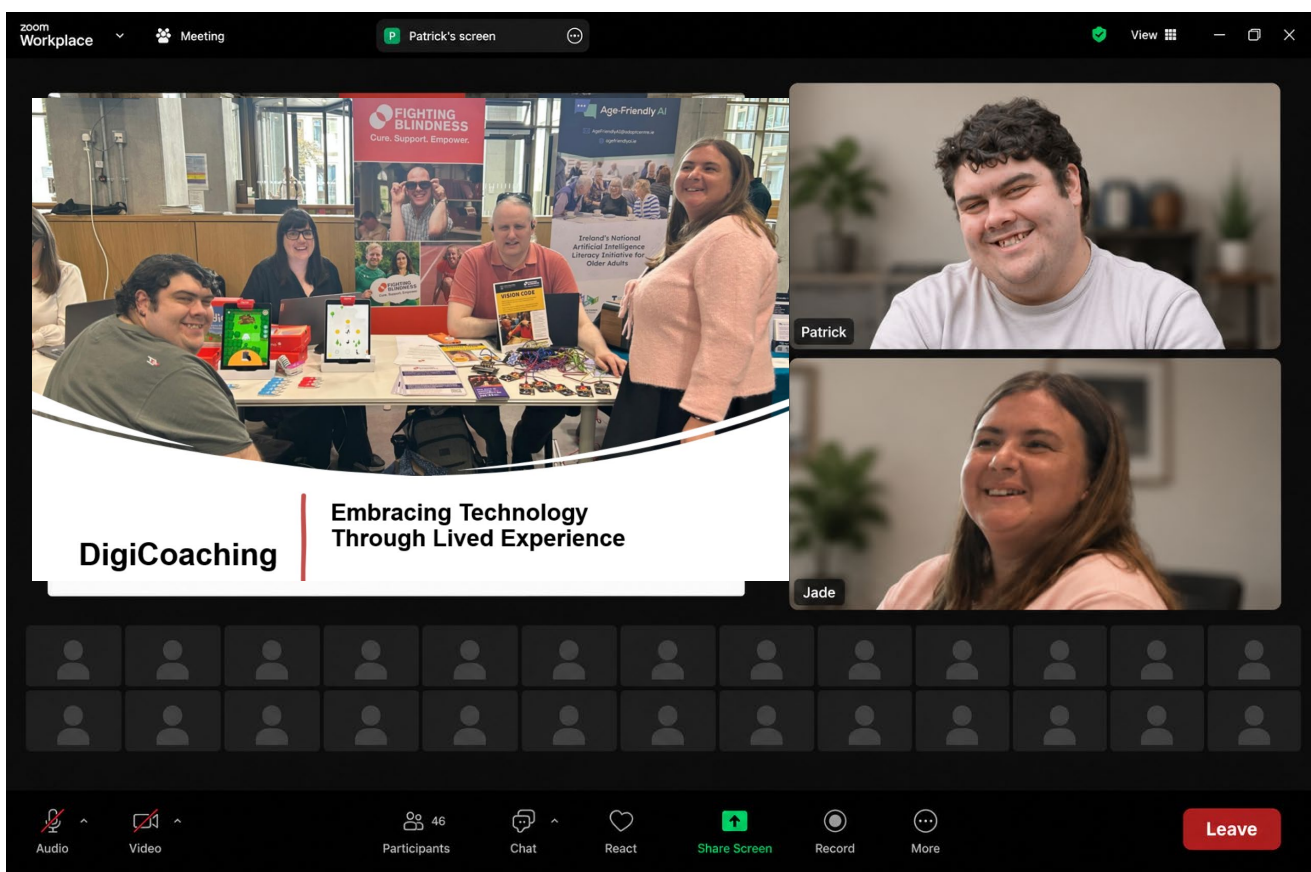
The DigiCoaches were paid to deliver a co-design workshop for six different organisations. The workshop focused on supporting organisations to learn more about co-design to improve their virtual and online services. DigiCoaches shared ideas about accessibility, communication, and inclusive design. They also spoke about the importance of involving people with lived experience in decision-making. The session gave organisations practical ideas to help make services easier to use for everyone. This was another important step in recognising the skills, leadership, and professional expertise of the DigiCoaches in the area of digital inclusion.



This is an AI-generated image showing what the workshop looked like, but it is not a real photo.

# DigiCoach at GATHER

The DigiCoaches were delighted to present at this year's GATHER conference with AHEAD to promote digital accessibility and inclusion. Jade and Patrick focused on sharing their lived experience as DigiCoaches and on raising awareness of assistive technology and digital coaching. Jade from Fighting Blindness spoke about the importance of peer support and the impact DigiCoaches are having on people's lives across the country. Patrick shared the advocacy and coaching that is happening in schools in Dublin and Kerry, developing inclusive opportunities for disabled people to be hired as DigiCoaches. The partnership between SJOG and Fighting Blindness highlights how lived experience leadership can help shape more accessible services and supports. The team looks forward to continuing to work with five new organisations this year that value inclusion, accessibility, and equal opportunities for everyone.



# DigiCoaches Supporting Mental Health Services

In May, the DigiCoaches began working with the Adult Intellectual Disability Mental Health Service to support digital inclusion and the provision of accessible resources. The project focuses on helping people understand and give feedback. The DigiCoaches have begun co-designing accessible digital tools that support communication, well-being, and independence. DigiCoaches are sharing their lived experience and helping staff learn more about accessibility and assistive technology. The partnership highlights the importance of peer support and co-design in mental health services. It also creates new opportunities for disabled people to take on leadership and paid roles within services and the community.



# Our Place Tour Launch Tallaght

The launch of the Our Place Tour celebrated creativity, storytelling, and inclusion. The project brings together art, lived experience, and community connection through an interactive and accessible experience. Co-artists and participants helped shape the project through workshops, recordings, and creative ideas. The launch gave people an opportunity to explore the installation and hear stories connected to identity, belonging, and place. The project highlights the importance of co-creation and ensuring disabled people are recognised as artists, contributors, and leaders within creative spaces.



*Laura with her Lamh video for Our place - Simon Lazewski photographer*

# Our Place Tour Launch Tallaght



Eddie from Avila with Laura – Communication Officer with Our Place  
*Simon Lazewski photographer*



Anne from Arts Council, along with Our Place artists, staff and Artist Alan James Burns, in the Sound Art Exhibition in Cookstown.  
*Simon Lazewski photographer*

# Our Place Tour Launch Tallaght



Daniel sharing how he created the Our Place artwork with Caroline Dench  
*Simon Lazewski photographer*

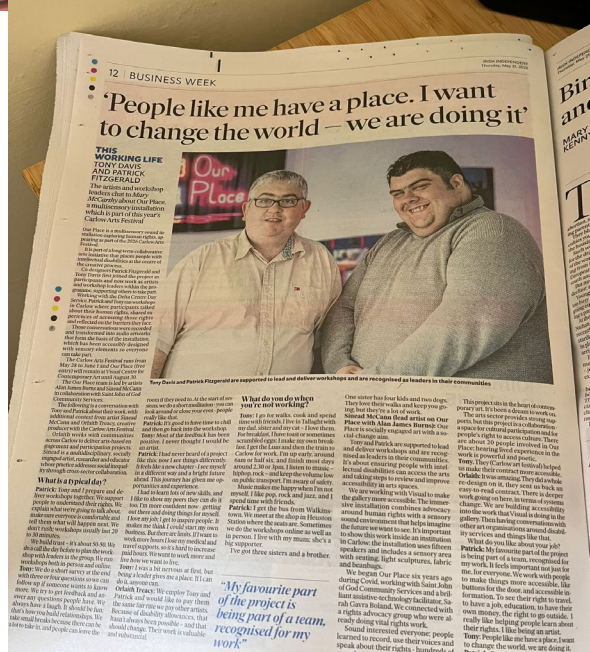


Eddie using the Meta glasses to support his independence to read the board.

*Simon Lazewski photographer*

# Accessibility Audit at Visual Carlow

Co-designers Tony and Patrick, hired by Carlow Arts Festival, worked with Simon (Ashtree support staff) to conduct an accessibility audit at the Visual Carlow Arts Gallery. The team explored ways to improve accessibility and inclusion for gallery visitors. They looked at communication, signage, sensory supports, physical access, and digital accessibility. The audit gave the co-designers an opportunity to share their lived experience and that of others with disabilities, and to provide practical feedback. The project highlighted the importance of including disabled people in the planning and evaluation of public events, arts spaces, and community activities and supporting paid roles for this expertise. They have also been busy with the Our Place launch at the end of May and doing a lot of Press to support the Exhibition



# Our Place Installation Workshops

The *Our Place* installation workshops brought people together to explore creativity, storytelling, and identity through art and technology. Tony and Patrick worked with artists and the Delta team to co-create ideas, sounds, recordings, and visual pieces for the installation. The workshops focused on inclusion, participation, and self-expression. Everyone involved had the opportunity to share their experiences and creative ideas in a supportive and creative environment. The project continues to highlight the value of accessible arts programmes and the importance of recognising disabled people as co-creators, artists, and leaders within the arts.

The workshops also supported people to build skills in communication, teamwork, confidence, problem-solving, creativity, and decision-making. Together, they got to transform a large white room into *Our Place*. These skills strengthen independence, increase confidence, and support people to develop a stronger sense of identity, belonging, and pride in being part of the arts community in Visual, the largest Arts space in Ireland.



The Songs EU project keeps growing and is delighted to share that Ross Goucher has joined the group. The group has started exploring how they can use technology to make music and record their sounds. We hope to start recording Gerry playing the whistle and harmonica, and Lesley's fantastic voice in the coming months. This project is funded by Creative Media Europe, and we are working with six St John of God services across Europe. We are working with composer Karen Power and have started exploring how we can make music on iPads and with Assistive Technology. Thanks to Hans, Holly and Colm for supporting the project and it builds on the success of the Friday Music Session in the Coachmans.



# Liffey Voice Update

## Cost of Disability Event

Patrick was invited to attend and contribute to discussions about the Cost of Disability. The event focused on the additional costs many disabled people experience in everyday life. Patrick shared the importance of listening to people with lived experience and ensuring disabled people are included in conversations that affect them. The event brought together organisations, advocates, and professionals to discuss barriers and possible solutions. Patrick's involvement highlighted the growing recognition of self-advocates and co-designers in shaping policy, accessibility, and inclusion across Ireland



# Liffey Voice Meeting May



28<sup>th</sup> May 2026

11am

Cookstown or Celbridge  
or on Zoom

Join Zoom Meeting

<https://us06web.zoom.us/j/474389762?pwd=S3JSaFNvY2RVVnpXSGY1ZjAxUjNzZz09>

Meeting ID: 474 389 762

Passcode: 054429

# Thank You for Reading...

On a final note, I would like to remind you all that the monthly 'What is New Directions?' Online Engage sessions are now pre-recorded and the link to watch the May edition, recorded at Rise Day Service in Maynooth with Shelley, is here; <https://vimeo.com/1191632787?fl=ip&fe=ec>



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

Donna Hughes,  
Unit 15,  
Block A,  
Gleann na hEorna,  
Tallaght,  
D24 AD62



087 1734186



[Donna.hughes@sjog.ie](mailto:Donna.hughes@sjog.ie)



**st John  
of God**   
Community Services

Liffey

This booklet about news stories linked to New Directions was made by Donna Hughes.