



New Directions, November 2025 Newsletter



Our hugely successful Menopause MOJO event took place at the Springfield Hotel in Leixlip at the end of October. Turn to page 6 to see some of our highlights...



We take a look inside Solas Day Service's new Sensory Room on page 8.



The men and women in Elvira have been very busy lately... See more inside!



Shelly and David from Rise Day Service went to see Friends the musical...

This month we explore the eleventh pillar which underpins New Directions, we look at **‘Support for Having Meaningful Roles’**.



Meaningful roles are positions or activities that feel personally significant to an individual, providing a sense of purpose, fulfilment, and alignment with their values. These roles are often viewed as worthwhile and valuable, contributing to a larger purpose beyond the individual, such as helping others or the community. Key characteristics include a personal connection to the work, a sense of autonomy, opportunities for growth, and a clear understanding of the impact of one's contributions. Many people supported by Liffey Services are actively involved in holding meaningful and highly valued roles within their lives.

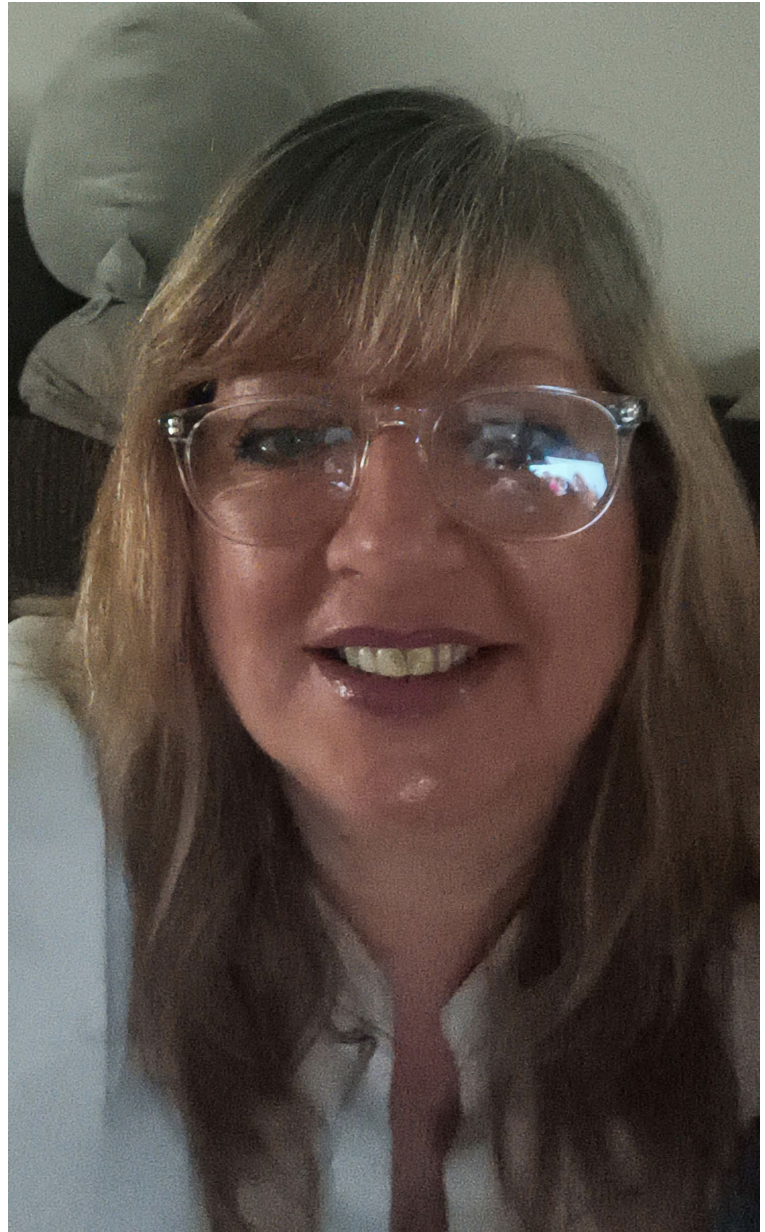
Meet the Staff Member

Hi, my name is Rona Pears, and I have worked in SJOG for 19.5 years. I have seen many changes throughout the years.

My first unit was Tearmann Mhuire, which is off campus. I had the privilege of getting to know 19 residents, most of which, I still see every now and again and would chat with them.

I then moved to Dun Greg at the beginning of 2008 and had the privilege of working in 3 different community houses for the next 8 years and built lasting relationships with the residents who lived there at the time.

In 2016, I moved to Balfe Gardens and have been here ever since. Once again, I have forged new relationships with the residents and have had the privilege of supporting them over the years.



During my off time, I love to visit my family, socialise with friends. I enjoy meeting up with friends for coffee or something else like a lovely meal. Going to see a movie in the cinema with friends. Or even just stay at home and watch a movie on my own after a few shifts at work. I am a bit of a social butterfly, who loves to keep in touch with good friends as well as family, whether that be in person or by phone/text.



Elvira Day Service



On Monday the 17th of November, Elvira opened their door to all the Service User's families and invited them into the centre for a Christmas Coffee Morning. This ran between 10am - 12pm, with all proceeds going to Irish Therapy Dogs.

Ahead of the event, those who attend Elvira had been extremely busy and working hard to create beautiful handmade cards to sell on the day.

It was a real team effort for everyone who got involved, from collecting the fundraising buckets, to purchasing biscuits, treats and creating handcrafted items to sell.

Elvira are hoping to maintain a positive connection with Irish Therapy Dogs in the future. Brenda Rickard, CEO of Irish Therapy Dogs, said they already have their animals visit some of SJOG Services and this is their way to give back!





The Square and Nutgrove Shopping Centre were extremely generous in donating raffle prizes as well as the Bluebell Pharmacy and the local Centra. Elvira wish to say thank you to all the stores who donated to the event, including Off Beat Donuts, Mannings Bakery and Ma's Kitchen in Kildare.

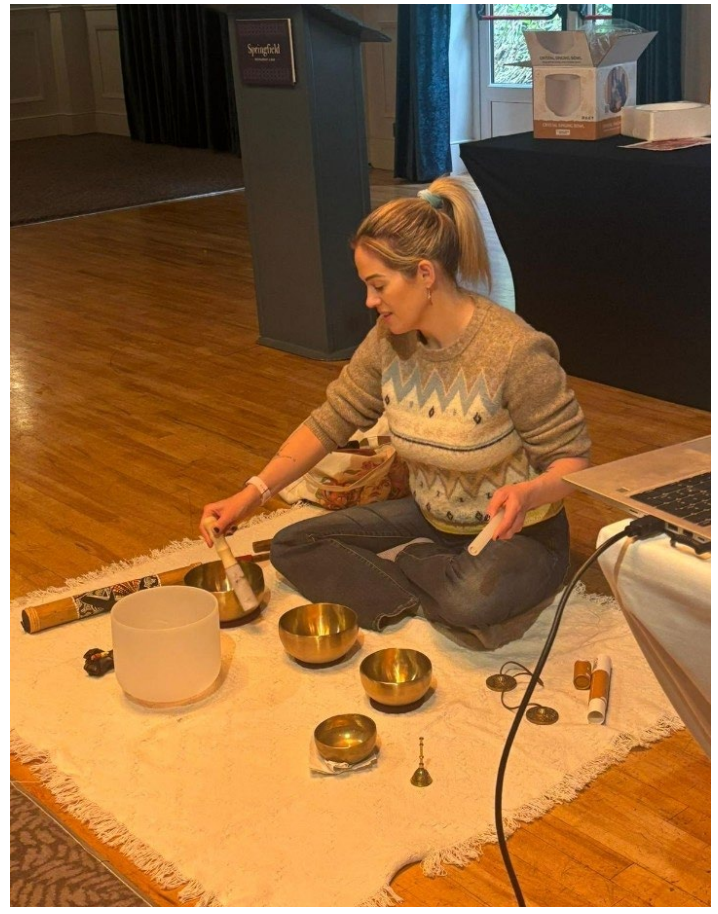
Thank you to all the staff and also to the families who attended and met the new staff members in Elvira, it really was a fantastic feel good day. The group also had a visitor from Ash Tree who attended the fundraiser so a massive thank you again. A shout out to Erika Harris in Elvira for the write up and photos.



Menopause MOJO in Kildare

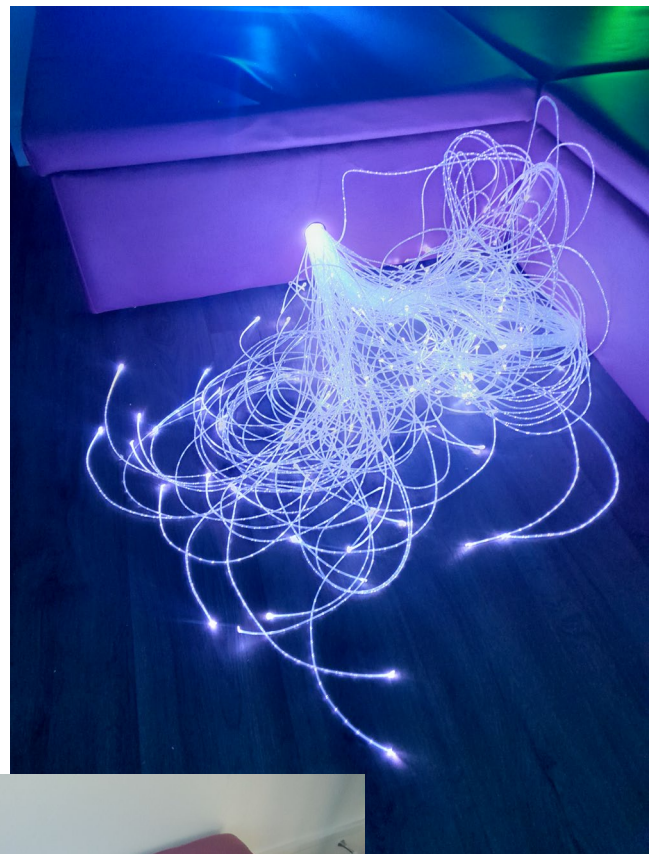


On Tues 22nd October, a gathering of more than 50 females, made up of staff and Service Users, attended a Menopause Mojo event at the Springfield Hotel in Leixlip. The day, which was organised by Fiona Forde, Lynn Galligan Tully, Louise Buckley and myself was a huge success and just the beginning of many more informative events to come for women of perimenopause and menopausal age. We kicked off with Shelly Breslin who facilitated a seated movement workshop and then had Christine facilitating a wonderful sound bath. After a break, where attendees enjoyed tea, coffee, freshly baked cookies and fruit, Carol from Breastcheck Ireland popped in to talk all things breast awareness, with her mannequin torso. We finished with a wonderful presentation from Research Assistant Stephanie Corrigan who chatted about general women's health, women's health in I.D and menopause. Please keep your eyes peeled for the next event in the new year, you will not want to miss it!



Solas Sensory Room

On Thursday 20th of November, I had a tour of Solas Day Service and got an inside look at their new Sensory Room which is absolutely stunning. Supervisor Aine Clark introduced me to some familiar faces and I also got to meet Sam, who showed me all the fantastic additions to the Sensory Room. See Sam in the photo below chilling out on his favourite seat, he enjoys resting there after dancing to Bollywood music on the big screen, thanks for having me over!



RISE - Engage Research

Patrick, our paid Co-Researcher with the Digital Accessibility Team in Liffey Services, has been selected to complete the RISE Engage Research Training Programme, an inclusive programme designed to support meaningful involvement in research. The course is delivered through a mix of online and In-person workshops that allow Patrick to learn in different ways and participate at his own pace. The training focuses on building skills, confidence, and understanding of research, while making sure people with lived experience are valued as equal partners in research teams.

Patrick will be supported throughout the programme by Fatima Badmos, who works closely with him on the Digital Accessibility Team in Liffey, and by Paula, the new Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) Co-ordinator with the SJOG Research Foundation. They will help Patrick reflect on what he is learning and how he can use these skills in his ongoing research work. This training is a crucial step in strengthening Patrick's role and supporting his ongoing development as a more skilled and confident co-researcher in the future.

RISE: Engaging Research in the Social Economy



Rise Day Service

Shelly and David from Rise in Maynooth, recently travelled to the Bord Gais theatre to see Friends the Musical. Shelly is big fan and knows everything there is to know about the show, especially all the characters.

It was an amazing night, full of dancing and singing but the most special moment was when both were leaving and passed by the stage door.

In that moment, one of the actors from the show came outside. Edward Leigh, who plays a few roles in show; Gunther, Tom Selleck and Paolo came over to chat and was pleased to have a photo with Shelly and David.

Edward also has roles in We Will Rock You, Shrek the Musical and has a career on BBC radio station. The guys made an amazing memory for life.





Service Users from Rise recently spent a day in Northern Ireland, visiting an American Folk Park. They visited a replica of the Mountjoy Presbyterian Church from the 1700s. This Presbyterian Church or “Meeting House” is a replica based on the church at Mountjoy, County Tyrone. Meeting Houses were the focal point of the Ulster Presbyterian community. Ulster emigrants took this idea of community with them to the areas they settled in when they got to America. The Presbyterian Church was very important in 1700s-1800s eastern America. The group felt the spirit of history, tasted food, and discovered how Irish people left their country to seek the opportunity of a better life in America, traveling to Derry and from Derry boarding a boat for 9 weeks to cross the Atlantic and get to America.



Green Gables Poetry

Sunset and romance

Watching the sunset,
holding hands, nervously.
Swinging back and forth,
giddy, shy and feeling scared.
Red cheeks, embarrassed.
Say a prayer.

Friendship,
boyfriend & girlfriends.
Feeling vulnerable,
holding hands,
a form of human connection.
Romance, reassurance, pinky
promise.

Celebration, a victory.

Meet Derek from Reach Day Service



My name is Derek McSweeney, I attend Reach Day Service in Celbridge. I am working towards my dream of becoming a famous actor.

I went to the 70th Cork International Film Festival on the 12th of November. I am part of the cast of the short film “Mary is missing” by Run of the Mill. The film is set in a Day Service and was nominated for an award.

This is my first film with Run of the Mill, I usually act on stage. I had to learn different techniques for working on a film, for example when you are on a stage you need to make your acting big but for the camera you need to make it small and subtle.

Thank you so much to Aisling Byrne, my Director, Killian Coyle my Producer and Caoimhe Whelan the Company Producer.



I was interviewed by the Irish Examiner and at the festival, I was part of a panel where I was asked lots of questions about my performance. It was a great experience, and I was so excited to take part in it. The film won the Academy Award qualifying Grand Prix Irish Short Award and we were all delighted! We went out to dinner to celebrate.



We are inviting 5 people to be a part of a New Music project Songs EU for the next two years.

We will create a song with people from St John of God across Europe.

If you can play an instrument and want to join the group, follow the steps below.

1

The project will be on Friday's in Celbridge starting in 2026.
Can you get there?
Do you have staff support if you need it?

2

Are you willing to do the project over two years and work with different people?

3

Fill out this form
<https://forms.office.com/e/f8FvUYTnGe>



Avila Day Service



On Sunday, November 9th, Keith from Avila Day Service participated in The Liberties 5km run. He has recently joined the running club and has been actively involved by attending weekly training sessions. When he learned about the upcoming 5K run, he sought support from both his family and fellow group members to participate.

Keith was thrilled to complete the 5K run and proudly showed off his medal. We are all so proud of his achievements. Well done Keith, this story ties in so well with the theme of this month's newsletter around having a meaningful role, Great Job!



The Avila group had an absolute ball celebrating Halloween in their day centre and out in the community! From spooky decorations to creative costumes and lots of laughter, the spirit of the season was alive and well! Thank you to Liz for the photos.



DigiCoaches working in Schools

Our DigiCoach programme is growing, and there is excellent news from Kerry, Dublin, and our partners. In Kerry, the four DigiCoaches have completed four weeks of work in a local primary school. They helped children learn with iPads, games, and simple coding. Teachers said the DigiCoaches were calm, friendly, and made technology fun for everyone. In Dublin, the five DigiCoach team has started working in a primary school in Walkinstown. They are helping children with early reading, communication tools, and accessible digital learning tools. Our partnership with Fighting Blindness is also going very well. Six DigiCoaches are now doing one-to-one coaching with 25 adults. They also hosted a webinar last week discussing Meta Glasses, which attracted 170 attendees. People are learning skills like reading online, staying safe, using communication apps, and using technology more independently. The support is at each person's own pace. This highlights the importance of having people with disabilities as leaders who teach digital skills. We also have a DigiCoach Upskilling Event this Friday. Anyone is welcome to attend and try out new digital tools, learn about accessibility features, and meet the DigiCoaches. It will be a friendly, hands-on event for anyone looking to enhance their digital skills. [DigiCoach.ie](https://www.digicoach.ie)



Aistear Nua Day Service



Aistear Nua recently had a Drumming Workshop with Edel and judging by these photos, we have some Travis Barker's amongst us... Well done to all.





Aistear Nua also hosted an amazing Halloween Party, the staff dressed up also and there was a pumpkin competition with Avoca Day Service. It looks like a brilliant time was had by all.



Choices Day Service



Some of the men who attend Choices went to see the show 'A Christmas Carol' in The Gate Theatre, Dublin on 19/11/25. Joe Collins, Joe Gannon and Paddy McNally had dinner out before walking down Moore Street where Mrs Brown's Boys was filmed, they saw the Christmas lights on Henry Street and enjoyed Arnott's Christmas windows before heading to The Gate for the show, which everyone really enjoyed.



CoDesign Workshops



Every Thursday from 11:00 AM to 12:30 PM, Tessa House comes alive as Co-Designers gather to explore technology, creativity, and inclusion. The weekly Co-Design workshops offer a supportive space where ideas are shared, discussed, and developed together. This year, over 30 participants are taking part from seven different Day services across Liffey Services, and the group has already identified eight app ideas they hope to co-design with TU Dublin students next year. These ideas are grounded in lived experience and focus on supporting independence, connection, and everyday decision-making.

We are delighted to be supported by staff teams from across the service and especially Klara Gyarmathy, who recently completed her degree with a thesis focused on co-design, and Fatima Badmos, who is completing her PhD with a strong emphasis on co-design. Their expertise helps ensure that participation is meaningful and inclusive.

A key focus of the workshops is supporting meaningful roles that feel purposeful and valued. Co-Design creates new opportunities for people to contribute as designers and decision-makers, supported by staff who help Co-Designers to understand and be understood. Together, we are building voice, choice, and inclusion through co-design.

Las Granadas Day Service



To celebrate the new President signing in, Pamela from Las Granadas and her colleague supported Kevin to visit Collins Barracks where they met the Garda and Army and were lucky enough to witness the 21 gun salute as the new President was signing the inaugurated declaration.

A group from Las Granada's attended the farewell concert of Tony Christy's on the 18th of November. Tony is famed for his song "Is this the way to Amarillo" and is an English musician.

The group went for dinner in Arcadia and took some pictures with the lovely Christmas decorations. They then went to Tallaght Civic Theatre to see the show. The three Service Users who attended really enjoyed the show and dinner with friends.



CREATE Workshop

Last week, Tony, a paid co-facilitator at Our Place, attended a Create Ireland workshop in Rialto, Dublin, alongside some of the Our Place artists. They also attended with Orlaith from the Carlow Arts Festival, who is Tony's manager. The event was a full-day workshop, running from morning to late afternoon, and brought together people from across Ireland who work in community arts, creativity, and social change.

During the day, participants shared their experiences, discussed what works well in their communities, and listened to speakers with strong experience in collaborative and socially engaged art. There were group discussions where everyone could speak, ask questions, and learn from each other. The workshop focused on collaboration, building trust, and ensuring that all voices are heard and valued.

Tony and the Our Place artists found the day inspiring and encouraging. It gave them time to reflect on their own creative work, build new connections, and bring fresh ideas and confidence back to Our Place and the wider community.

[Create, National Development Agency for Collaborative Arts - Create](#)



Our Place – Getting Ready

Behind the Scenes

The Our Place team at Liffey Services has been busy preparing the room in Cookstown for the **Our Place** open exhibition in the next few months. This work is about turning ideas into a real space that people can enjoy. The Co-Designers and artists Alan James Burns and Sinead Mc Cann, and support staff have been working together to prepare the room so it feels welcoming, comfortable, and meaningful.

Katie McCabe has been a great support with the co-design of the space. She supported deciding where the curtains should go and choosing the colours for the walls. She even measured all the curtains and pinned them so they can be altered for the room. Everyone took time to talk, share ideas, and make choices together so the room feels right.

Massive Thanks to Domic from Maintenance for supporting the transformation of the room. His help ensured the space was safe, practical, and ready for people to visit.

This work shows what *meaningful roles* look like in **St. John of God Liffey Services**.

A meaningful role is something that feels important to a person. It gives a sense of purpose and pride. People can make choices, learn new skills, and see that their contribution matters.

Many people supported by Liffey Services already have meaningful roles in their daily lives. Being involved in shaping Our Place is another excellent example of this.



Meaningful Roles in Action: Tony and Patrick Lead the Way at Carlow Arts Festival

This year, Tony and Patrick have taken on an exciting paid role with Carlow Arts Festival, and their impact is already being felt. They are working with Delta Services in Carlow to help create their own version of *Our Place*, ensuring that disabled people's voices, stories, and creativity shape the programme from the start. As co-facilitators, they lead workshops, attend planning meetings, and support Delta Services to imagine what *Our Place* could look like in their community.

Simon, an instructor from Ashtree Day Service, plays a key role in supporting them. As a job coach, he helps Tony and Patrick prepare for workshops, organise materials, build confidence, and problem-solve challenges as they arise. His approach focuses on empowering them to take the lead and advocate for change within the arts.

Together, Tony, Patrick, and Simon are demonstrating what meaningful roles look like: valued, purposeful, and creating real opportunities for inclusion and leadership.



Liffey Voice Update

We are moving the time of the Liffey Voices to 1 – 2 pm

The next meeting is on 27th November – Online and in-person

18th December – Celbridge – All together



LiffeyVoices.ie

Liffey Voices

Self Advocacy group from St John of
God Liffey Services

Engage with self-advocacy and empower yourself



Connect with advocates

Diverse advocacy content

Resource library

Engage with advocates

Register



LiffeyVoice Team

Diverse advocacy content

Resource library

Engage with advocates

Explore our Team



Campaign

Empowering advocacy sessions

Resource library

Connect with advocates

Our Campaign

Liffey Voice Registration



Thank You for Reading...

One last note, I just wanted to let you all know that my final 'What is New Directions?' Online Engage sessions of 2025, will be happening on Thursday 4th December at 10am and again at 1.30pm. We will be focusing on the New Directions pillar 'Support for Influencing Service Policy and Practice'. Thank you and I look forward to chatting to some of you then!



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

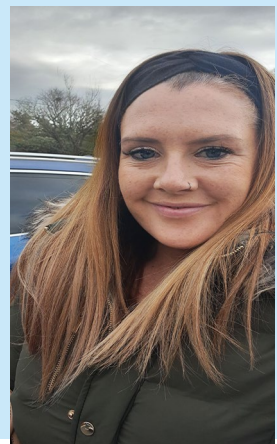
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Community Services

Liffey

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