



New Directions, October 2025 Newsletter



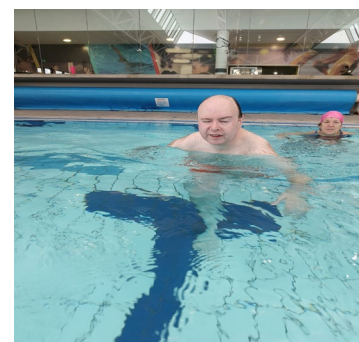
Brian McHugh, who attends Pathways Day Service in Maynooth, fulfils a lifelong dream, turn to page 6 to find out more...



The gang from Windmill in Crumlin visited Cherry Orchard Equestrian Centre



Re Nua Day Service recently celebrated Positive Aging Week, see more on page 6.



Las Granadas have been making a splash in Tallaght Leisure Centre

This month we focus on a hugely important support which underpins New Directions, we look at **‘Support for Personal Expression and Creativity’**.

Personal expression and creativity are intertwined, as creating art, music, or writing is a way to communicate your unique thoughts and emotions, which promotes emotional well-being, strengthens social connections, and fosters innovation. These outlets provide a way to process feelings, solve problems, and achieve a state of "flow," which can be a source of personal growth and resilience.



I get it, thinking about creative expression can feel a bit overwhelming or abstract, especially if you're not sure where to begin. But here's the good news: you don't have to dive into a massive project right away. You don't need to head into the forest for three days with nothing but a paintbrush and hope to find yourself. Start small, and make creativity a part of your daily routine. Whether it's doodling for a few minutes, jotting down your thoughts in a journal, or experimenting with new recipes in the kitchen, every little bit counts. Creativity is like a muscle; the more you use it, the stronger it gets.

Meet the Staff Member!

This is Agatha Chukwunenye



Hi, my name is Agatha, I have worked in SJOG for many years, but I am presently working in Supported Living Services.

I have a lot of interests, in particular I like the VHI womens Mini marathon. I have been participating in the Marathon for fun for many years.

However, next year I plan to participate and to raise funds which I can donate to SJOG. I enjoy supporting individuals that are suffering due to adversity or misfortune. I also like to support individuals who are underrepresented, advocating for and championing them in all that they do. Thank you for reading.

Meet Our Team

LEARN ABOUT OUR STAFF

St John
of God
Community Services

Liffey

Las Granadas Day Service

On Friday 10th October, Las Granadas Day Service established a new group of swimmers; “Dolphins”. Is it recreational, therapeutic and a very social event. The group hope to achieve better fitness and confidence. We will meet in Tallaght Leisure Centre every Friday from now on and just wanted to share this information with other service users. Please email Izabela.McDonnell@sjog.ie for more information.



Some of the Las Granadas Staff and Service Users had an educative and informative experience at Collins Barracks and the Dead Zoo Museum. Exploring Ireland's evolving culture, military history collection, reliving the moment by dressing up, learning about the 1916 Easter Rising and Botanical collections featuring a vast array of taxidermy animals, fossils and other scientific specimens.

Those that attended are: Ciaran Kelly, Thomas Barry, Jonathan Kiernan, Paul Farrell, Ciaran Galvin, Dara Norton. Staff: Jessica, Pamela, Suzanne, Doreen and the team's ever-ready bus driver Derek. This looks like a wonderful daytrip, and certainly underpins the theme of this month's newsletter around personal expression and creativity.



Sharing Impact @ReThink Ireland



Two of our paid Co-Designers from the DigiCoach and Our Place projects, both funded by Rethink Ireland, took part in a one-day Impact Measurement workshop. They were joined by Orlaith Tracy from Carlow Arts Festival and Declan Meenagh from Fighting Blindness. The workshop brought together all the Rethink Ireland Awardees to share experiences and ideas. Our Co-Designers spoke about the impact on their own lives, their peers, the organisation, and the wider community. They showed how projects like DigiCoach and Our Place build confidence, skills, and leadership.

The group also learned about other innovative projects from around the country. They explored new ways to show the positive impact of their work and how to gather feedback to keep improving.

One of the creative tasks was to imagine a future newspaper headline. The DigiCoach team looked ahead five years and proudly shared: "Record Number of Businesses Started by People with Disabilities." The day was a reminder that by listening, learning, and working together, projects can grow stronger and create lasting change.



Re Nua Day Service Positive Aging Week



The Re Nua team is overjoyed to share the wonderful memories from our Positive Ageing Week celebration — a week filled with joy, creativity, reflection, and togetherness. Our Service Users embraced every moment with enthusiasm, and their smiles lit up the entire centre.

We extend our deepest gratitude to all the supervisors, fellow staff, from both Day Services and Residential, higher management, friends who visited and mostly to the men and women who joined the activities with such spirit and joy. Your presence made the celebration truly special.

A special thank you from Tina to the dedicated Re Nua staff whose commitment and hard work made everything possible; Deirdre Farrell, and Deirdre Macken Belhout, Christine Rosney, Yvonne Slaughter — your thoughtful preparation and loving care created a day that will be remembered by all.



We also wish to thank Brother Terence, Geraldine, Val, Fran, Emer, Drury, Shelley, Louise B, Louise G, Eileen A, Fr. Ubaldo, and Mike A., for your support, presence, and contributions to the celebration.

Together, we created a week that honoured the beauty of ageing, the joy of community, and the power of shared memories. Here's to many more celebrations filled with love, laughter, and connection.



Pathways Day Service



Brian McHugh is fulfilling a long-held dream of his. Once a week, Brian travels to Naas to learn mechanical skills in a well known car-garage. The owner, Gary, kindly agreed to show Brian how to use the tools and everything there is to know about cars. Also working in the garage is Gary's friend Ian, who also teaches Brian many skills and is a great man to have a laugh with.

Professionally kitted out with overalls and steel-toe boots, Brian is happily topping up engine oil and screenwash, taking turbo chargers apart, changing lightbulbs, pumping tyres, charging batteries and carrying out all sorts of other tasks a mechanic does. Brian learns quickly – and he loves it! He can't wait for Thursdays to head down to the lads and have the craic. This ties in so well with our newsletter theme this month, personal expression and creativity. A huge well done Brian!



Green Gables New Direction's Group Create an Amazing Poem.

The wonderful Service Users in Green Gables created a beautiful poem as part of their weekly New Directions sessions. Staff member Amy facilitated a poetry workshop as part of the theme on the right to 'creativity and self-expression'. The staff are all blown away by how successful it was, the guys got REALLY into it and the entire poem is written in their own words. You can view their poem on the following page.

Amy supported the group to write down the ideas and put it all in order, but the Service users even had ownership of the order of each word and line. Green Gables staff feel that this is a workshop they could offer in other day service locations around SJOG, and ultimately create a book of poetry as a collaborative piece of work across day services on different themes and potentially publish that book, entirely co-created by the men and women of the service and in line with New Directions themes. Illustrations, graphic design, poem order, etc, could all be done by the Individuals whom we support.

Supervisor Aine Clarke said she would be willing to release staff member Amy every so often to facilitate the workshop with one of the Green Gables service users acting as a co-facilitator. I think this idea by the team in Green Gables is absolutely wonderful and offers Service Users a voice through poetry, how fantastic. If you or your day service location would like to get involved, please email amy.dalton@sjog.ie
Now I invite you all to turn the page to read the amazing poem.

Leaves fall at Halloween

The sky is blue, but there's a cold chill,
seeing the leaves fall from my seat on the school bus,
red, orange and brown,
pinecones on the trees
birds leave, leaf's fall.

I'm happy, leaves falling on my shoulders,
kicking them in front of me is fun,
Walking on them, a nice crunch.
Sweeping them up, trees left bare.

A breeze is coming, a deep breath, I smell rain.
The leaves remind me of my Granny, composting them,
help the flowers grow.

In her back garden, then a cuppa tea,
and biscuits, four of them, Jammy Dodgers.
Mucky shoes, wet socks, warm fires,
It's real nostalgic, now you're back to reality.

It smells like flames and comes out of the dark,
Fireworks in the middle of the night, too loud.

Kids laughing, in costume.
Knick knocking your neighbour's door,
Kick the can,
Tricking is the treat!
I'll be Superman.

Dark nights under orange streetlights,
Kids jumping in the leaves,
Monkey nut shells,
Ladybird on the trees,
Snails on the wall
"Agh here, leaf it out!"
The winter's coming, warm jackets,
The end of a season.



Glencomeragh Day Service

🎉 **October was party season in Glencomeragh!** The Service Users and Staff celebrated birthdays for Amy, Charlie, and Keith! A huge happy birthday to you all! 🥳 The month was packed with parties, dancing, singing, and of course... mountains of cake! 🍰 Everyone had an amazing time making memories together.



Crossroads Day Service

In July this year, Laura Hickey from Crossroads, took part in Ablefest 2025, Ireland's first ever inclusive Music and Arts Festival, which has been running for 8 years now. Laura sang on stage in the competition and won in her category.

Around 2,500 people attended the festival and had a very enjoyable day, with well-known acts performing and fun, creative activities to take part in, side attractions and workshops.

Ablefest is a festival that is accessible for all, the organisers hope it will impact how festivals are run in Ireland in the future, and starting last year, there is now a quiet zone in the College Green area during the St Patrick's Day Parade.



Elvira Day Service

On Monday 14th of October, Eliza Howe from Elvira started work experience in Koffee and Gossip, a coffee shop near Bluebell. Eliza has always wanted to gain work experience in a Coffee Shop and Eliza and her family are over the moon.



On Eliza's first day the Manager Marta asked Eliza to re stock the condiments for each table and clean the tables down. Eliza really enjoyed her work experience and was treated to a Pot of Tea and a Croissant after her first shift. Some of Eliza's friends in Saint John of Gods spotted Eliza enjoying a well deserved break after her shift and cheered her on while passing the window. Eliza will be finished her work experience in 7 weeks and we wish her the best of luck!

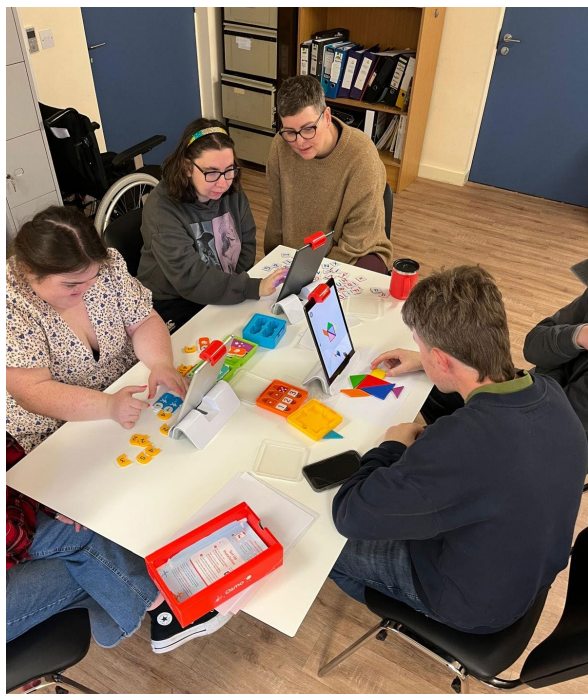
On a cool October Wednesday morning, 15 of our finest Curler's from across three Day Service locations based in Crumlin, Walkinstown and Bluebell, all competed against each other in an intense curling competition!



There was a fantastic atmosphere at Bluebell Community Centre and it was lovely to see all 3 locations coming together in sport. There was a discussion amongst staff in Bluebell around hosting another Tournament soon.

1st Place went to Hugh Walsh, 2nd Place went to Sean Crossan, 3rd Place went to David Carter! Well done to all who took part 😊

Sharing Skills- DigiCoach



The DigiCoaches are preparing to start working with children next month, using inclusive digital education tools to support creativity. To get ready, Alex, Amy, Katie, and Patrick have been practising through role play. These sessions help them think about what might happen in real classrooms and how they can respond. They are learning that listening carefully to each other and to the children is very important. By working together as a team, they are building confidence and discovering new creative ideas. This preparation will help them support children to explore and enjoy learning in fun and inclusive ways.

Our DigiCoaches and the Fighting Blindness DigiCoaches joined forces and showcased some of the technology they are using in their coaching on Monday, 13th of October in TUDublin as part of the Accessibility in Action Festival.



Reach Day Service



On Friday 26th September, a group of Service Users from Reach in Celbridge travelled to Tallaght Stadium for the Shamrock Rovers V Bohemians game. All who attended really had a blast. The group had a meal at the Old Mill Pub and restaurant in Tallaght before going to the match. Tallaght Stadium has a sensory room, which one of our guys needed. The Stewards were very empathetic and the sensory room has a full view of the pitch. Finally, Rovers won the game against their biggest rivals 2-1.



Sharing Talent Carlow Arts Festival



On Wednesday, 15th, Tony, Patrick, Mikey, and Simon were up early to catch the train to Carlow for their first workshop with the Delta Services co-artists. It was the first time meeting the group in person. They were joined by Alan, the artist behind Our Place, and Orlaith from Carlow Arts Festival.

The workshop was all about learning how to facilitate creative art sessions and supporting others to express themselves. Patrick and Tony led the workshop, while Mikey and Simon helped guide group discussions. We felt proud of our presentation, and we think we smashed it! Meeting the group was great. They are friendly and skilled. We saw lots of independent talent in the room.

We learned that we need longer breaks to help everyone stay focused. We need to be clearer in our presentation will make it easier to follow. Not everyone wants to be in photos or videos, and that's OK. We also agreed on a later start time, 10:30 am, which works better for the group.

This first workshop showed how co-designers can lead and support creative projects, helping others share their ideas, voices, and creativity.



The Fabulous Pharmacist's Book Launch

As she launches a book about women's bodies, Instagrammer, podcaster and author Laura Dowling – aka the Fabulous Pharmacist – advocates how she wants to talk about women's health and taboo topics in a way that's relatable, funny and stigma-free and she does this with her brand new book, which is now available at book stores nationwide.

Following a very successful Menopause and Women's wellness event held in Tessa House in June, and after Laura presented and met some of our amazing Service Users and staff, we were blown away to be offered 20 spaces to attend her recent Book Launch in the National Concert Hall on Sep 23rd, where the theme was Pink!



Please keep an eye out for information on our most recent MOJO Menopause event which was held this week in the Springfield Hotel in Leixlip, I will cover an article about this in my November newsletter...

Aistear Nua Day Service

Patrick Ward celebrated his 66th birthday recently in Aistear Nua, the big day was on October 14th with a theme: “Karaoke day”. Pat was joined by the staff and all the service users in Aistear Nua.



Windmill Day Service



The men and women from Windmill in Crumlin, got to spend a morning visiting Cherry Orchard Equestrian Centre. They met the different horses and heard their stories from the staff who care for them. They got to hear about all their different personalities.

They also got to see some of the animals in action at the riding centre, during a class.

Ashling, Lee, Ken and Emma loved their visit, and thoroughly enjoyed meeting both the staff and the beautiful horses."



Introducing Solas Day Service

The Solas Day Service team are delighted to announce that Solas in Tallaght is officially open!

As of October 6th, the doors to this new day service location are now open to five service users, two of whom are recent school leavers and new to SJOG. Three more service users are transitioning from Green Gables to Solas, which is only a stone's throw away.

The service users are busy sampling new activities in the community and making the space comfortable and inviting, hosting weekly dance classes, music sessions, and wellbeing mornings. Solas is supervised by Aine Clarke and staffed by Celine Troy, Eoin Reardon, and Stephanie Hannan, and the Solas group are planning a "House Warming Party" to welcome you all for a visit in the coming weeks. We hope to see you there!



Sharing our VOICE @RCSI



In October, the DAT team took part in the PPI Ignite Conference over two days at the Royal College of Surgeons in Dublin. This was a very exciting event, because it gave us the chance to share our ideas about inclusive research with people from across the country.

Patrick, one of the key presenters at the conference. He spoke about his own journey as a Co-Researcher and what it means to work together with researchers. Patrick explained how important it is to learn from each other and to make sure that research is open and accessible for everyone.

After his talk, many people came up to Patrick to ask questions. They wanted to learn more about how they can make their own research projects easier to understand and more welcoming for people with intellectual disabilities. Patrick's presentation made a big impact, and it showed the value of personal expression and creativity in research. Four co-designers and support staff from Ashtree also supported the event.



Sharing our Expertise



At the PPI Ignite Conference in the Royal College of Surgeons, Patrick and five Co-Designers from St John of God ran a workshop. They used their Co-Design Tools to show researchers how to include people with disabilities in research. Each Co-Designer led their own small group. This gave researchers the chance to listen, learn, and ask questions about how to make research more inclusive. The feedback was very positive. Researchers said they enjoyed hearing directly from the Co-Designers. Many said they now understand more about accessibility and will use the tools in their own work.



This event showed that when people are given the chance to share their ideas and creativity, research becomes stronger and more inclusive.

Why This Matters

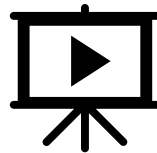
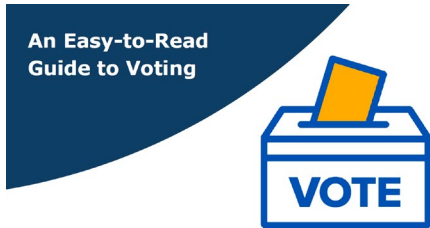
At St John of God Liffey Services, we believe everyone's voice is important. When people with lived experience take part in research, it becomes more real, useful, and fair. Supporting personal expression and creativity helps make research easier to understand and open to all.



Liffey Voice Update

We are moving the time of the Liffey Voices to 1 – 2 pm because not a lot of people can attend at 11-12.

You will find the video we have made about VOTING on our Website LiffeyVoices.ie



The next meeting will take place on 30th October 2025.

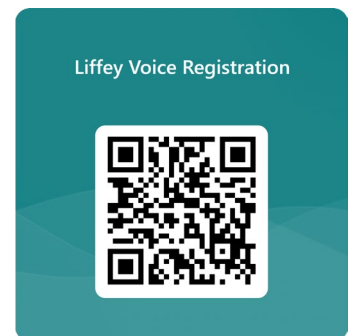
- 30th October – Online and in-person Cookstown and Celbridge
- 27th November – Online and in-person
- 18th December – Celbridge – All together



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



Thank You for Reading...

On a final note, I would like to let everyone know that my 'What is New Directions?' Online Engage sessions will be happening at the later date of Thursday 13th November at 10am and again 1.30pm. I look forward to catching up with some of you then, where we will explore the topic "Support for having Meaningful Roles", a subject I am very passionate about 😊



Please continue to send all your good news stories to me, we like to celebrate the successes happening across all of Liffey Region's Day Services.

Get in touch

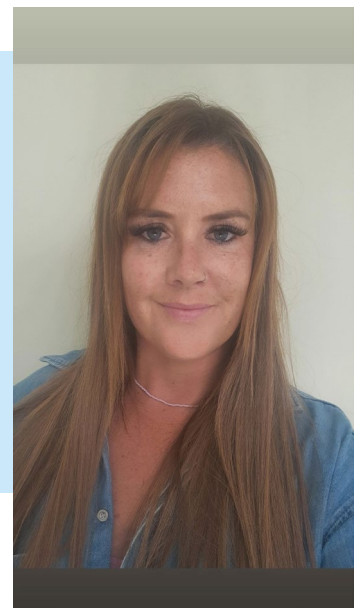
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