



New Directions, June 2026 Newsletter



Liffey Region's Service Users have a clean sweep of amazing medals during the recent Special Olympics Ireland Games...

See more on page 11!



Las Granadas celebrated a Grand Opening recently. Read all about it on page 5.



Joe has been getting to know the horses at Airlie Stud thanks to his employment coach!



Evergreen Day Service have been very busy during this sunny spell, see their adventures inside...

This month we explore the sixth pillar which underpins New Directions, we look at **‘Support for Personal and Social Development.’**



Personal development is the lifelong, intentional process of improving your self-awareness, skills and mindset to maximise your potential. It encompasses deliberate activities like goal setting, learning, and mindfulness, this is designed to enhance your quality of life, boost confidence and help you achieve meaningful aspirations.

Social development is the lifelong process through which individuals acquire the skills, emotional awareness and behavioural patterns needed to interact successfully with others. On a more holistic level, it refers to efforts by educators to improve the overall well-being, equality and quality of life within communities and societies.



Support for Personal and Social Development

This month we are learning about the sixth pillar of New Directions.



What is personal development?

Personal development means learning new things. It helps you:



Learn new skills.



Feel more confident.



Make your own choices.



Reach your goals.



Become more independent.



Personal development happens throughout your life.



What is social development?

Social development means learning how to get along with other people. It helps you:



Make friends.



Talk to people.



Work with others.



Understand your feelings.



Respect other people.



Be part of your community.



Social development also happens throughout your life.

What do people need to live a good life?

Everyone has different needs.

These are some of the things people need:



Basic needs



Food



Water



A place to live



Sleep



Good health



Feeling safe



Being safe at home and in the community



Having people who support you



Feeling protected



Love and belonging



Family



Friends



Relationships



Being part of groups and your community



Confidence and respect



Feeling proud of yourself



Learning new skills



Being treated with respect



Being listened to



Reaching your full potential



Doing the things you enjoy



Learning throughout your life



Achieving your goals



Becoming the best you can be



Remember



Everyone can learn and grow.



Everyone should have opportunities to develop new skills.



Everyone should be supported to take part in their community and live the life they choose.

st John of God
Community Services

Liffey

Meet the Staff Member

Donna Hughes (Yes, Me)



A couple of men and women recently said to me, “Why not cover a story on yourself in the ‘Meet the Staff Member’ section of your newsletter, so lo and behold... Here it goes 😊

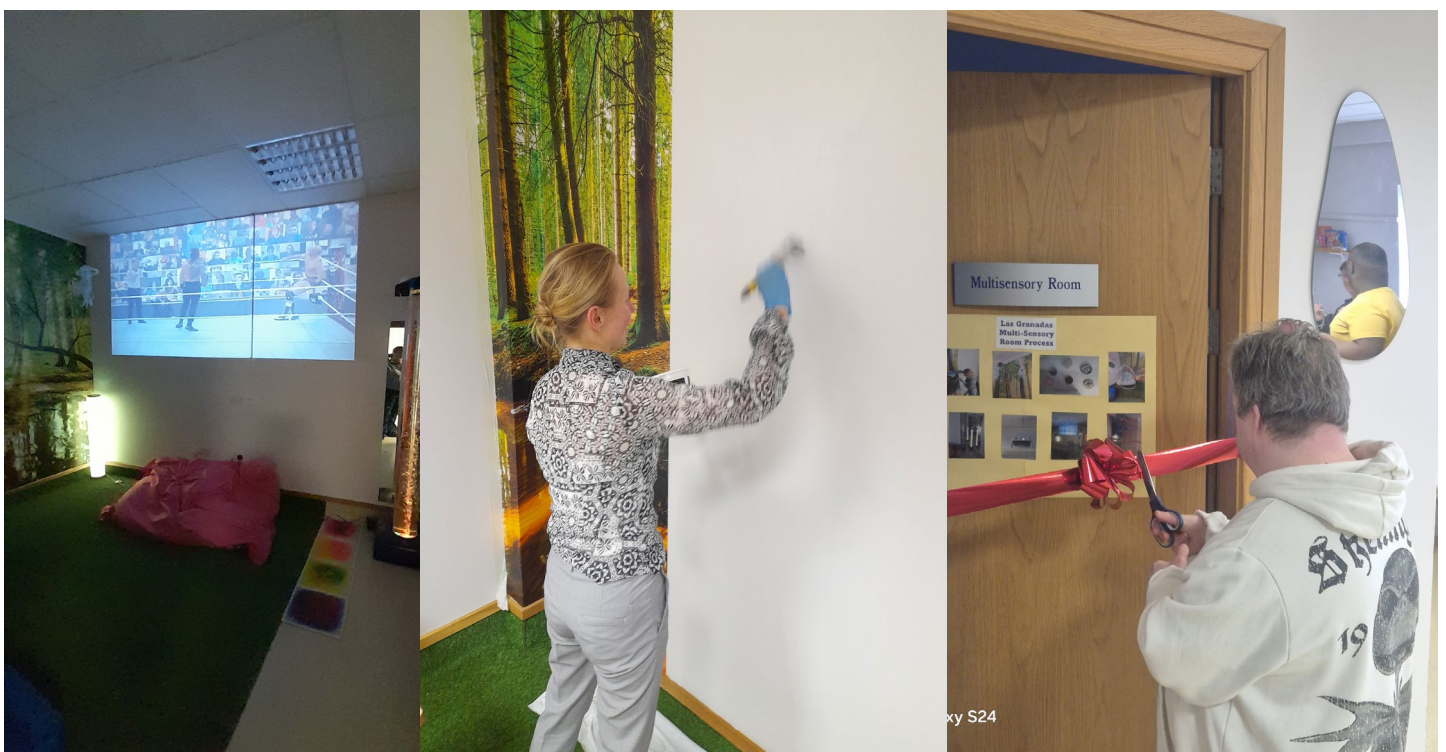
Hi everyone, my name is Donna, and I have worked with SJOG Liffey Region since September 2022, so coming up on four years now. My title is New Directions Guidance and Training Officer (thanks, Daniel), but my role spans many areas of expertise, supporting our 33 Day Services across Dublin and Kildare. My favourite part of the job is meeting so many different people each day; no two days are ever the same. Monday I could be in Maynooth, Tuesday in Tallaght, Wednesday in Celbridge and so on.

I live in Kimmage with my husband Paddy, my son Bear, who is 9, my daughter Tovee, who is 4 and our rescue cat named Twix (like the chocolate bar). In my spare time, I love to hang out with my friends at gigs or music festivals. This is a huge part of my life as I grew up with a dad who worked at Glastonbury all during the 1980s and 1990s. I live at the gym, 5 times a week and have a keen Interest in vintage cars. Thank you for reading 😊

Las Granadas Day Service

Las Granadas Day Service had the grand opening of their new multi-sensory room at the end of April. Last Summer, the Day Service held a raffle to raise funds. The team wishes to thank all the men, women, staff, parents, and friends who bought raffle tickets. They raised €501, which helped buy items such as an egg chair swing, artificial grass for the floor, wooden circle-shaped panels for the men and women to glue stones, feathers, etc. onto and liquid sensory floor tiles. Thank you to SJOG for funding the projector and goodies for the big day. A big thank you to the men, women, supervisor Dorota and staff who put the multi-sensory room together (Dorota's DIY skills came in very handy) ha ha!

On Tuesday, April 28th, the men, women and staff of Las Granadas, parents, management, staff, and men and women from other centres came together to celebrate the grand opening of the new multi-sensory room. After some tea, coffee, soft drinks and treats, John King of Las Granadas, cut the ribbon for the new addition to the centre. Everyone got a chance to try out the egg chair, projector, sensory blocks etc. A big thank you to everyone for their support!



Avila Day Service

On Friday, 12th June 2026, the Digi Coaches visited Avila Day Service to deliver their first workshop. The session introduced service users and staff to a range of accessible online games and provided hands-on support with TD Snap.

It was a very enjoyable morning, with great enthusiasm and participation from everyone involved. The high level of engagement highlighted the value of accessible digital tools in supporting communication, learning, and fun within the service. Thank you to all the wonderful Digi Coaches for their time and support, and all in Avila look forward to continuing this positive work in future sessions.



Ash Tree Day Service



Staff from Ash Tree have organised a Football Training session every Monday at Bluebell Astro Pitch from 1pm until 1.45pm. Simon and the crew have gotten Coaches from St Pats Athletics to come along and coach all the Service Users. This is an amazing opportunity and for anyone who is interested or would like further information then please email Simon Coyle at [**Simon.coyle@sjog.ie**](mailto:Simon.coyle@sjog.ie)



Pathways Day Service



All staff and Service Users who attend Pathways in Maynooth wanted to say a huge well done to Michael Adams and Conor Begley for taking part in the Ireland Special Olympics Games playing Bocce. Thank you to staff member Claire Earley for the wonderful photos, Michael and Conor look extremely proud and this ties in so well with our theme for the month of June around Personal and Social development.

As humans, we express ourselves in so many different ways which gives us an opportunity to grow and evolve. Some express themselves through dance or art and for others its through sport and competition. Well done guys!



Understanding Bed Sores



[Listen to this Health Advice](#)



Understanding Bed Sores

Bed sores are also called **pressure sores** or **pressure ulcers**.

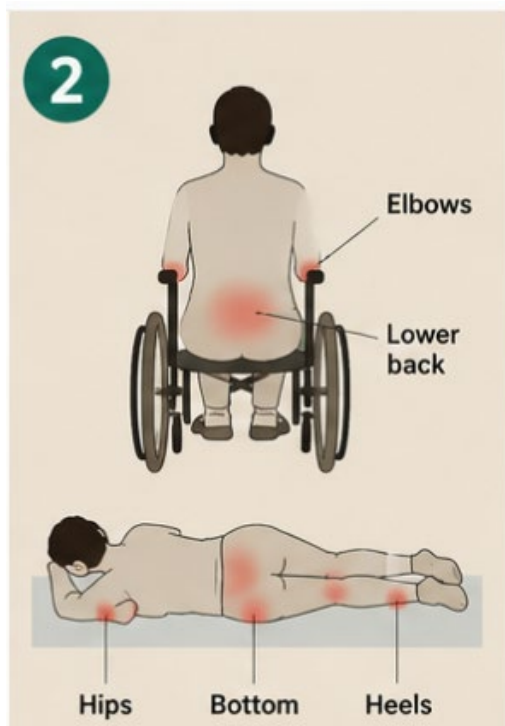
A bed sore is damage to your skin.
A bed sore can happen if you stay in one position for too long.
Bed sores can be painful.



Where can you get a bed sore?

A bed sore can happen anywhere on your body.

They can happen to your heels
They can happen on your hips
They can happen on your bottom
They can happen on your back
They can happen on your elbows



<https://on.soundcloud.com/663U8UHpnrSQPubVXZ>

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

3



Keep moving

Move your body often.

Change your position if you sit for a long time.

Change your position if you lie in bed for a long time.

Ask someone to help you move if you need help.

4



Check your skin every day

Look at your skin every day.

Ask someone to help you if you cannot see your skin.

Tell someone if you see:

- red skin
- sore skin
- blisters
- broken skin



Tell someone if your skin hurts

Tell a staff member.

Tell a nurse.

Tell your family.



Tell someone straight away if:

Your skin is sore

Your skin is red

Your skin hurts



Protect your skin

Use your special cushion
if you have one.

Use your special mattress
if you have one.



Protect your skin

Wear clothes that fit well.

Wear shoes that fit well.

Keep your skin clean.

Keep your skin dry.



Eat healthy food

Eat healthy food every day.

Healthy food helps your skin stay healthy.

Drink water

Drink lots of water.

Water helps keep your skin healthy.

10



You can help prevent bed sores

Looking after your skin every day can help stop bed sores from happening.

You are not alone.

Staff, nurses and your family can help you.

Stay Healthy

Remember



Move often.



Check your skin every day.



Eat healthy food.



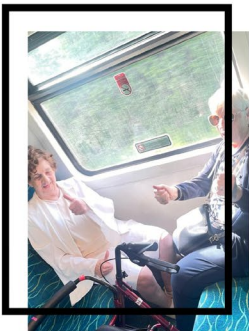
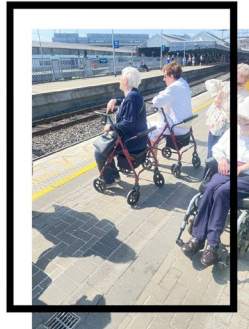
Drink plenty of water.



Tell someone if your skin is sore.



Uaisle Day Service



The ladies and gents from Uaisle Day Service recently had an amazing adventure out to Howth by train. The group travelled by DART from Maynooth to Connolly and then onto Howth. This route worked well for mobility needs, with minimal walking, and Maynooth station is very accessible. Irish Rail provided ramps throughout the journey, and the journey felt safe and easy. The group even had a light-hearted moment saying hello to the Gardaí at the local station. They had lunch at the pier but would not recommend Kish, as they were unable to accommodate modified meals despite prior contact. The group returned by train without any issues. Everyone was tired but had a great day.

Uaisle recently celebrated a big retirement for Conor Dwyer! His retirement party was a celebration to remember. Conor had a fantastic day celebrating with his friends and family and was presented with a plaque and presentation certificate in recognition of his achievements. A huge Good Luck to Conor with your next Chapter!



Special Olympics Ireland Games

A note from our very own Shelly Breslin:

Congratulations to all our athletes from SJOG Liffey Services who took part in the Special Olympics Ireland Games 2026. It was a wonderful 4 days of excitement, rewarded with medals and ribbons. I want to thank my supportive chaperones Hayley Brazil, Martina Edelman and Claire Earley who were so valuable to myself and the athletes.





In Golf, John Monaghan won 4th place.

In the Motor Activities Training Programme, Eoin O' Finneadha won an amazing Achievement Award.

In Equestrian, David Brophy won a staggering silver and 2 bronze medals.

In Basketball, Peter Walsh won Bronze.

In Bocce, David Kelly, Sean Squires, Paddy McNally, Claire Savage, Joe Gannon, Conor Begley and Michael Adams won gold. Paddy McNally, Joe Gannon and David Kelly won Bronze. Stephen Pwajok and Claire Savage won ribbons.

Unfortunately Pappy Herterich got injured and could not compete in his equestrian competition but we are all so proud of him.

Shelly and all in Liffey Region are so so proud of all the above achievements and want to wish each individual the best of luck in the selection for the World Games next year.

Evergreen Day Service

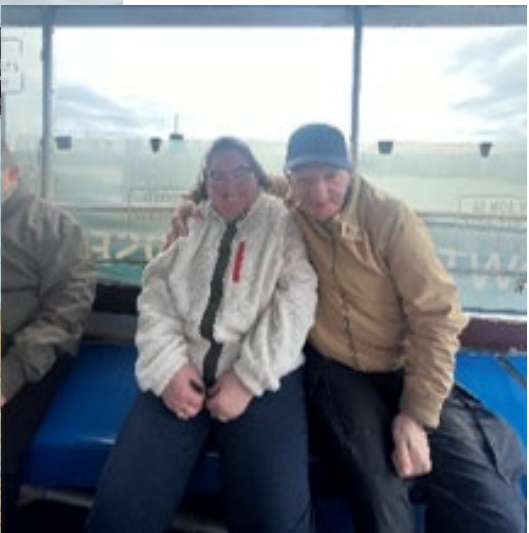
Summer is in full swing at Evergreen Day Service and what a fantastic season it has been so far! The men and women have been making the most of the sunny days by planning and enjoying a wide range of exciting outings.

Over the past few weeks, there have been some wonderful trips, including a visit to the zoo where everyone enjoyed seeing the animals up close, and a memorable boat trip to Ireland's Eye, which offered beautiful views and a real sense of adventure. The group also spent time in Bray, taking in the fresh sea air and scenic surroundings, and had a fun-filled visit to Kildare Farm, where there were plenty of animals and activities to enjoy.

A big part of what makes these outings so special is the involvement of the individuals themselves. The men and women are actively involved in choosing destinations, planning trips, and looking forward to each day out together. There has been a great sense of excitement, independence, and community spirit throughout all the summer activities.

With many more outings planned in the coming weeks, there is plenty to look forward too, from seaside trips to new local attractions, the focus continues to be on fun, social connection, and creating lasting memories. It has been wonderful to see everyone enjoying their time, trying new experiences, and sharing so many smiles along the way. The Evergreen team are excited to see what the rest of the summer will bring! A huge thank you to staff member Aine for the photos which you can see on the next slide...





Elvira Day Service



Last week Karl Brady and Josh Kearney from Elvira Day Service attended the Green Isle Hotel in Clondalkin to receive their Certificates from Greenhills College. Staff from Elvira attended to support the Men and cheer them on!

There was a food reception after the ceremony and the event lasted 2 hours. Karl's family attended his Graduation and he was over the moon receiving his certificate. Both Men looked extremely smart in their Cap and Gown. All the Elvira team are looking forward to seeing Karl and Josh go further with their education journey with Greenhills College.

Josh's family also attended the event, it was lovely to see such a great turn out of support. Staff Shane Cusack, Catherine Farell and Carly Wilson attended the Graduation and are very proud of the Graduates. A huge well done to both.

On Tuesday the 16th of June, Niamh Jordan started her work experience in Tallaght Library. Niamh was made to feel very welcome and received a Tote Bag from the Senior Librarian.

The previous Friday Niamh was introduced to the staff and given a tour of the Library. While Niamh was there, her times and days for work experience were decided collaboratively. Niamh's first main task is to do the returns and scan the books in boxes ready for return to various Libraries in Ireland.

Niamh will be given her own desk in Tallaght Library in a quiet area to complete her tasks. Niamh will also be involved in various Sensory Workshops in the library and supporting groups of school children.



The staff breaks and work ethic ensure this is a focused placement, as Niamh starts before 10.30 and works for 2 hours and then enjoys her lunch in Tallaght. Niamh will receive a name badge mentioned she might start to read more during her work experience.

The library was very generous and gifted Niamh two books last Friday during her Induction and she read both over the weekend. Niamh's placement is running until the end of the Summer and due to finish the end of August so staff in Elvira will keep us all updated on her skills learned and employment duties whilst in Tallaght Library.

KDS Supported Employment



Paula Green from Employment Services recently took Supervisor Seodhna out to meet one of the employees, Joe Gannon. Joe has been working out in Airlie Stud, just outside Maynooth, since 2001. Joe is highly valued on the stud and takes pride in all the horses he works with!

Since Seodhna commenced her position as supervisor with Employment Services, Joe has been keen to invite Seodhna up to his proud place of work to show her what he does and introduce her to the many beautiful horses that live there!

Airlie Stud is a premier Irish thoroughbred breeding farm that lies on 360 acres of land and Joe was proud to show Seodhna around and introduce her to some of the beautiful horses.



An update from Sports Coach Sharon Conway

Leinster Rugby 🏉 We have been back every Wednesday at 11am with our coach Mick!

Wheelchair football ⚽ A new activity added to the timetable this month was wheelchair football started by Chris from the FAI. Sharon has continued it on every second Tuesday at 11am in islandbridge.

Boxing 🥊 **with Ed** We have boxing every second Tuesday at 11am in Lucan Esker boxing club.

Golf Ireland 🏌️ Golf Ireland came to Islandbridge and gave a lovely taster session in driving, chipping, putting and lots of games, we are currently looking to get into a golf-4-all club where they will take us out on the course and give us lessons in chipping and putting! Keep your eyes peeled for more info on this...

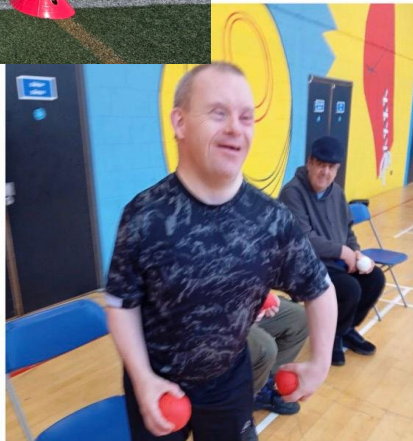
Fingal DCC interseries soccer blitz ⚽ Once per month our men and women compete in a soccer blitz representing SJOG against services all over Dublin.

DCC Boccia blitz 🟡 🔵

Once per month our men and women compete in a boccia blitz representing SJOG against services all over Dublin.

For more information on any of the above then please contact Sharon via email at [**Sharon.Conway@sjog.ie**](mailto:Sharon.Conway@sjog.ie)





DigiCoaches Learn and Connect

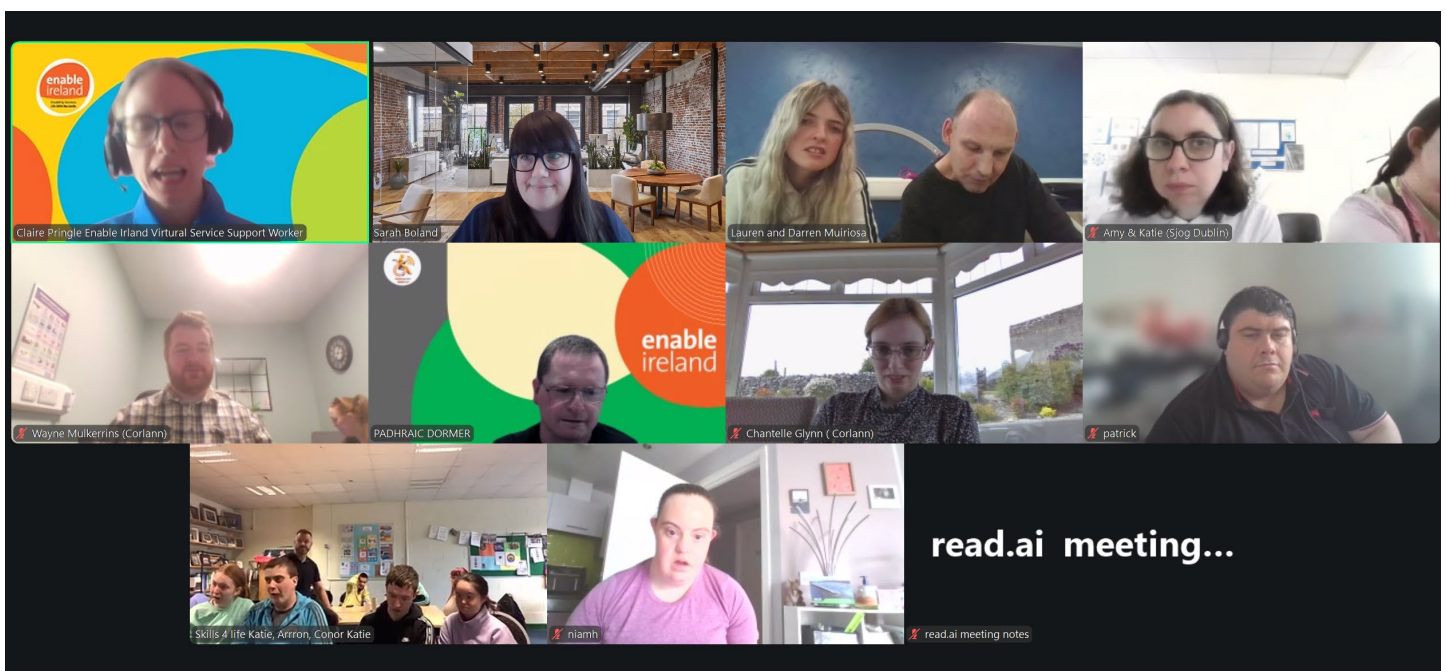


Fifteen DigiCoaches have now been hired by Community Services and recently took part in a two-day induction as part of the CREATE DigiCoach project.

The DigiCoaches are people with lived experience of disability from five different organisations across Ireland. They will use their own experiences and digital skills to help other people learn about digital accessibility and assistive technology.

During the two days, the DigiCoaches learned about their new role and how to support others with confidence. They practised communication skills, active listening and coaching techniques. They also explored how technology can help people communicate, understand information and be more independent. The group learned about speech-to-text, text-to-speech and the accessibility features built into phones, tablets and computers. They also explored how artificial intelligence (AI) can make digital technology more accessible and inclusive.

There was plenty of time to work together, share ideas and learn from each other. Because the induction was held online, DigiCoaches from different parts of the country were able to take part, build new friendships and begin their journey together.



DigiCoaches meet in Galway @ CHAT

On 3rd June, many of the DigiCoaches had the opportunity to meet in person at the CHAT Community Hub event in Galway. The CHAT event was held at Galway University and provided an opportunity for the DigiCoaches to learn about new Assistive Technology support for Sport and recreation. The group met representatives from SJOG Kerry and Corlann, and were delighted to hear from Emma Smith from the World Health Organisation. Emma shared insights into the importance of assistive technology and digital inclusion worldwide and encouraged the DigiCoaches to continue leading change in their communities. The Galway event was a fantastic opportunity to make new connections, share experiences, and strengthen the growing DigiCoach network across Ireland.



Communication Workshop for Auditors



Recently, DigiCoaches Niamh and Patrick delivered training for the HSE and NDA to a group of auditors with lived experience of disability. The training helped the auditors prepare for their important role in conducting quality and inclusion audits.

The session looked at how people communicate in different ways. Niamh and Patrick talked about why it is important to help people feel comfortable, listened to and respected during conversations and interviews.

The group also learned about Appreciative Inquiry. This is a positive way of asking questions that focuses on what is working well and what could be even better. The auditors practised asking open questions that encourage people to share their experiences, ideas and opinions.

Another part of the session focused on assistive technology. Niamh and Patrick demonstrated tools that can help people communicate and understand information. These included speech-to-text, text-to-speech, voice typing, accessibility features on phones and computers, and AI tools that can help create Easy Read documents and images.

The training showed that everyone communicates differently and that technology can help more people participate and have their voices heard. The auditors enjoyed the session and shared ideas about how they will use these skills in their future audits.

The session was an example of people with lived experience leading training, sharing their knowledge and helping to build more inclusive services for everyone.

Our Songs - EU Project

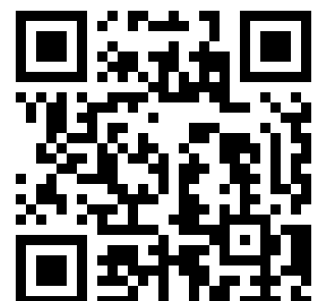
The SONGS group in Ireland continues to meet every Friday. Together, the group writes songs, shares ideas and learns new music skills. Everyone enjoys working together and being part of the project. A big thank you to Colm Egan for helping organise a visit to The Mill Studio in Celbridge. The group met Kevin, the studio engineer and producer, who gave everyone a tour of the studio. He showed us how songs are recorded and produced. It was a fantastic experience, and we are looking forward to recording our own music there over the coming months.

The project also travelled to Brussels for a Creative Europe event. We met people from many arts and culture projects across Europe and learned about the exciting work they are doing. We are very proud that SONGS was the only Irish project to receive funding in this round. It was a very competitive process, with only 7% of projects being successful, making this a wonderful achievement for everyone involved.

Project partners also met for an international meeting where we had the chance to meet some of the musicians taking part in the project online and hear about the inspiring work happening in other countries. You can support the SONGS project by following us on Instagram and Facebook. Every like, comment and share helps more people discover our music and follow our journey.



[instagram.com/oursongs.eu/](https://www.instagram.com/oursongs.eu/)



PPI Workshop Brings Community Together

Patrick recently led a workshop as part of the PPI Ignite programme at TU Dublin. The workshop looked at an important question:

How can we better support Patient and Public Involvement (PPI) in research?

The workshop brought together 8 of the 10 community partners who will work with TU Dublin over the next five years. It was a great opportunity for everyone to meet, get to know each other, and share ideas on how people with lived experience can be involved in research.

The group talked about what good involvement looks like and how to make research easier to understand, more inclusive and welcoming for everyone. The aim is to make sure people with lived experience are equal partners in research and help shape future projects.

The workshop also celebrated Patrick Fitzgerald's new role as Co-Lead for Patient and Public Involvement at TU Dublin. Patrick shared his experience as a co-researcher and spoke about why it is so important to have people with lived experience leading and taking part in research.



The group were also delighted to welcome the St. John of God Research Foundation as a new national partner in the PPI Ignite programme. This partnership will create exciting opportunities for co-design, collaboration and inclusive research.

Everyone also met Nora, the new PPI Lead from the Research Foundation, and Jonathan, a new postdoctoral researcher who will work closely with Patrick and the Liffey team on an AI for people with intellectual disabilities. The workshop was a fantastic start to an exciting five-year partnership. Together, the community partners and researchers will work to make research more inclusive and ensure that lived experience helps shape better research for everyone.

Co-Designing a Tenancy Guide

Co-designers Lisa McEvoy and Patrick recently took on the role and challenge of creating a more accessible version of the Tenancy Guide for the Housing Association. Working alongside staff, they reviewed the guide and shared their ideas on how to make the information easier for people to read, understand, and use. The project focused on three key principles of Easy Read:

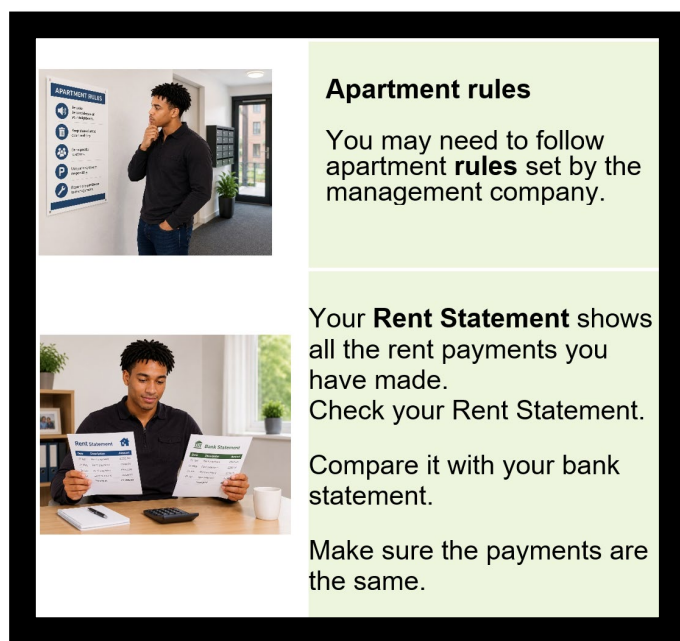
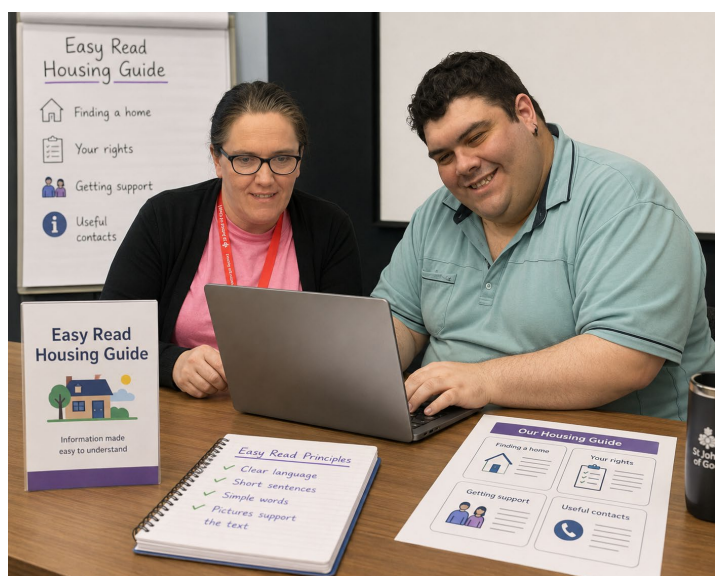
Use plain language and short sentences.

Use clear photos or images to support the words.

Involve people with lived experience in reviewing the information.

The work highlighted that accessible communication is everyone's responsibility. When information is presented in a clear and accessible way, more people can understand it, make informed decisions, and know their rights and responsibilities.

Lisa and Patrick also explored how photos, symbols, and artificial intelligence (AI) can help improve accessibility. AI tools can support the creation of Easy Read content and generate images that make information easier to understand.



Another important recommendation was to provide an audio version of the handbook. This gives people the option to listen to the information as well as read it, supporting different communication and learning styles.

By combining co-design, plain language, visual supports, and technology, the project is helping to make information more accessible for everyone.



Our Place Tour
Wednesday and Friday
10 am - 3 pm
July - December 2026
Cookstown, Tallaght



**Please book your group by scan the
QR Code or go to
Your can book 6 people on
Wednesday or Friday
10 - 3pm
The tour is for 1 Hour
<https://bit.ly/4uYhOgv>**

Thank You for Reading...

One final word, the New Directions Online Engage sessions are now pre-recorded and the link to watch the June 2026 recording, filmed in Ash Tree Day Service after their recent big win, is here;

[June Online Engage](#)



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

Get in touch

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This newsletter about New Directions information was made by Donna Hughes.