



On the Street where I Live

Celebrating having the Key of
my own Front Door

by Siobhán Flynn, Rob Hopkins & Maureen Cahill



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We recognise the support of local communities in making people with special needs welcome in their neighbourhoods. We acknowledge public representatives and organisations like the Irish Council for Social Housing which has advocated on our behalf in our journey to provide much loved homes to people who could so easily be marginalised.

This Booklet celebrates that a great deal has been achieved, but there is still more work to be done to provide high quality accommodation for people who continue to live in unsuitable housing that does not meet their needs.

Let's keep up the good work, let's not get complacent, and let's continue to strive together to achieve ever-higher standards of accommodation to support people with special needs to become integrated and contributing members in our communities.

John Joe Higgins, May 2021

Series Editor: Patrick McGinley



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The Front Cover

With a garden area front and rear, Barry Halligan likes to sit and admire his lovely flowers in his much loved Waterford City bungalow that he describes as being close to everything and with lovely neighbours.

The Back Cover

The numbers on the map on the back cover refer to the page numbers in the text.



Foreword: Brother John O'Shea fc

As I read the stories in this booklet the first thing that strikes me is the sheer joy of the participants in having a space that they can call home. It is not primarily about the bricks and mortar, 'though a lick of paint in the right shade can have an uplifting effect. Having a place to call home means something slightly different for each one. Yet a common thread runs through the stories in the sense of giving each one a greater degree of independence and control over their own lives. When you have a place to call

home you can adapt it to reflect your needs and your personality, you have a place to share with your friends, you can decide the areas in which you need support and the new skills you have to learn in order to maximise your independence and choices.

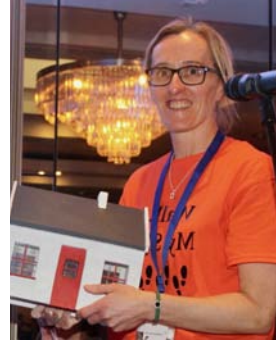
A second thing that strikes me is the pathway we travelled in order to get to this point for a significant number of people with disabilities. Not too long ago we waited anxiously each year for the budget to know how many people we could take off the 'waiting list' – how many people could we put any kind of a roof over their heads? When we first opened our adult centre in Bawnmore, Limerick in 1977 one of the significant achievements was that we were able to bring home to the Mid-West many adults with disability who, until we opened Bawnmore, had to travel to Dublin, Cork and Waterford to find a place that they might call home. This was at a time when transport wasn't of a standard to facilitate the possibility of regular visits by family and friends. Increasing localisation of services means that a person with a disability has a greater opportunity to have a home in their own locality where they have a family identity as someone's son, daughter, brother or sister. It is easier for them to establish their own niche in that community, should they wish to remain there. It is uplifting to see what is possible when family, friends, service providers and statutory bodies all work together to give the person with a disability the means and the support that they need in order to enjoy a place of nurture that they can call their own home.

Brother John O'Shea fc



Authors: Siobhán Flynn, Rob Hopkins & Maureen Cahill
Siobhán Flynn

Siobhán Flynn was born in Waterford City. In 1996 she moved to Dublin where she initially worked in St Luke's Hospital before embarking on a Community Care course with St. Michael's House. Siobhán spent nearly 10 years working in St Michael's House day services with adults with an intellectual disability. During this time she also graduated with an honours degree in Applied Social Studies with the Open Training College. In 2007 she moved back to her home county and has worked for The Brothers of Charity Services since 2008. Siobhán gained a Certificate in Training with the National University of Ireland Galway in 2010. Her current role is Learning, Development and Advocacy Officer. Her role as advocacy officer is to support the people within the Service to stand up for their rights both within the Services and in their everyday lives. Most recently she has returned to education and is studying for a Certificate in Management with the University of Limerick. She loves to travel, all kinds of sport and loves her county of Waterford.



Rob Hopkins

Rob earned his MSc degree having studied Inclusive Research Theory and Practice at the Norah Fry Research Institute, Bristol University, UK. Formerly West Clare Area Manager, currently Rob is Inclusive Research and Self Advocacy Officer, Brothers of Charity Services, Co Clare MidWest supporting self-advocacy and inclusive research locally, regionally and nationally. He co-ordinates the Clare Inclusive Research Group and is Clare support for the National Inclusive Research Network.





Maureen Cahill

A proud Cork woman from Bandon, Maureen completed her RNID professional nurse training in Moore Abbey, Monasterevin, Co Kildare. She has worked with people with disabilities for all of her career starting work with the Rosminian Fathers in St Patrick's, Upton and transferring to the Brothers of Charity in 2002. Maureen has held various positions during this time and is now a Sector Manager with responsibility for various residential houses, day services and a lovely coffee shop in

Chapel Gate, Ballincollig, Cork

Maureen has worked and continues to work with staff who are very supportive of the people with whom they support. Frontline staff and managers empower and advocate on behalf of the people they support and are very creative in thinking outside the box when it comes to helping people achieve their goals and wishes. Maureen is very proud of the three people from the Southern region whose story is told in *'On the Street where I Live'* and is thankful to them for sharing their lives with us. They have been very open and honest in sharing their life journey. Maureen lives in Macroom with her husband Sean, they have four sons and their pride and joy, Freddie, their first grandson.



Introduction - John Joe Higgins

‘Níl aon tinteán mar do thinteán féin’ ‘There is no hearth like your own hearth’ - a very well-known Irish saying...Perhaps because of our history Irish people have a great desire to enjoy the security of owning our own homes. Unfortunately, there’s a sector of society that will never achieve this without significant assistance from the state and voluntary organisations working together to support them to achieve this goal. Many people with an Intellectual Disability find it a real challenge to get *‘their own*

hearth.’ I’m happy to introduce twelve men and women who have been able to do just that... to find a home that they love and have their own key to their own front door.

For generations many people with intellectual disability who required services to meet their needs had to live in an institutional setting for part or all of their lives. These institutions were sometimes run by Religious orders with little financial support from the state in the early years. Like the accommodation provided in the state-run Mental Hospitals of the time many of these buildings were not fit for purpose. They were certainly not conducive to providing space, privacy or a homely atmosphere. Many were a distance from local community housing and some had high boundary walls that made any form of integration difficult if not impossible. Despite these and other challenges dedicated people, both lay and Religious, did tremendous work over many years to deliver appropriate services.

From its foundation by Canon Peter Triest in 1807 the Brothers of Charity has committed to a deep sense of respect for the personal dignity of every person. The organisation opened its first service in Ireland in Belmont Park, Waterford in 1883 by which time it had grown to become an established international organisation providing generic and specialist services to children and adults. In 1983 when it celebrated its Centenary in Ireland it was one of the largest organisations providing services to persons with intellectual disabilities here. While some of its services were provided from a number of institutional settings at that time, a plan to provide ordinary housing in the community had been established and was already underway in some parts of the country.



I commenced employment with the Brothers of Charity Services in January 1972 and I've had the privilege of being involved with the transformation of the Services over the past 50 years. There were a number of key milestones in the development of community based housing. In 1971 the first community house for adults was purchased and I recall two houses were purchased in Galway City in 1972 for a group of teenage boys attending the Special School.

In 1974 a village of 13 bungalows was built on the grounds of Kilcornan in Clarinbridge with up to ten residents in each of them. This was really innovative in its time and was followed in 1977 by the building of the Bawnmore village-style Service in Limerick. Meanwhile, in 1975 the first house opened in Castlerea, Co Roscommon to provide respite services and similar first steps in this direction were underway in Waterford and Cork. Over the next few years two residential facilities for children attending special schools in Galway and Cork were closed and the children were given the opportunity to enjoy living in ordinary houses in local communities.

Community based services for adults were developed in the 1980's in all the regions. In the early 1990's we saw the establishment of six Housing Associations to develop housing in each region with a new stream of funding known as the Capital Assistance Scheme (CAS). These Associations have made an immense contribution to the provision of high quality homes and tenancies giving people rights to their privacy and independence. These Housing Associations have received a number of national awards for their innovative projects. The development of partnerships with City and County Councils led to some people receiving tenancies directly with the Councils to facilitate their independent living. This work has made a significant contribution to the closure of the larger institutions around the country.

The progress made so far was brought about by a clear vision, strong leadership, training and a committed workforce especially the frontline staff, some of whom have spent all of their working lives with the Services. Strong advocacy especially by Brother Alfred Hassett who worked as an adviser to the Department of Health in the 1980's went some way to ensure that the required funding was in place.



Change was not always easy for the families, some of whom found it difficult to overcome their anxieties at having a loved one moving from an institution to the community. Thankfully, the majority of families welcomed the change and some families and family groups have contributed to the funding of housing. As for the residents themselves, it has been a joy for me and my colleagues to witness their happiness when moving into their new homes and being welcomed by them to join in their celebrations. Quality housing is undoubtedly one of the important bedrocks of human services.

We recognise the support of local communities in making people with special needs welcome in their neighbourhoods. We acknowledge public representatives and organisations like the Irish Council for Social Housing which has advocated on our behalf in our journey to provide much loved homes to people who could so easily be marginalised. This Booklet celebrates that a great deal has been achieved, but there is still more work to be done to provide high quality accommodation for people who continue to live in unsuitable housing that does not meet their needs.

Let's keep up the good work, let's not get complacent, and let's continue to strive together to achieve ever-higher standards of accommodation to support people with special needs to become integrated and contributing members in our communities.

John Joe Higgins, May 2021



Laura Ryan

I've worked with Barry for about four years now and I really enjoy it. We have done many different things during my time with Barry. He will usually have a plan of what he would like support with on every given day. Barry is a real character with a great sense of humour so we have a lot of laughter together. I feel we work really well together and have learned a lot from each other over the years.

Barry Halligan

My name is Barry and I live in Waterford. I'm a 42-year-old independent man. I used to live in a residential house with four other people.

I wanted more privacy and to be more independent so staff helped me to find somewhere else to live. The first house I moved to was a bit far from everything but I moved again and now I have my own home in Waterford city centre. I'm living here over two years and I love it because I feel safe here. My home is close to everything I need and the people in the community know me. The bus stop is close to my house and I can easily visit my family. I don't live too far from them and I am very happy about this.



My home is a bungalow attached to other houses. I have lovely neighbours. I have my own big bedroom, a bathroom, kitchen, sitting room and a hallway. I have an attic to store things that I'm not using. I have a garden area out the front and another smaller garden out the back. I have seats and a table out front too and I like to sit out in the summer and drink my coffee in the sunshine. There's a buzzer on the front gate so I give permission to people that I know to come in if they buzz my house. This makes me feel extra safe and secure.



Heather Brophy

I'm Heather Brophy, Stephanie Young's Supported Living Coordinator. I really enjoy supporting Stephanie to live independently. It is very rewarding to see people living the life they choose and to design and provide individual supports. Stephanie and I work well together in figuring out new ways to approach things and problem-solve situations and challenges as they arise. I learn so much from Steph and I am honored that she shares her experiences with me.

Stephanie Young

My name is Stephanie Young and I am soon to be 43 years Young. I live alone and enjoy an independent life where I am in charge of my own decisions and choices. In the past I have lived in a number of shared residential settings both in the country and close to town.



I love my home in Waterford and I love living alone because this suits me. I like to have my own space and to plan my own days. When I moved out on my own I had to learn and improve various skills such as planning my weekly shop, cooking and how to have a routine for cleaning. I also had to learn more about managing money and budgeting. I am independent and I choose what supports I need to help me to live well. My favourite place in my house is my sofa and TV area. This is because I really enjoy watching sports. I recently got Broadband and Netflix, these are so important to me in '*Covid times*.' I enjoy being a lady of leisure at weekends with no disturbances.

My lovely house is in a nice area. It is a two story house with a nice back garden. I love having a garden and I love having an ensuite. I live close to town and my house is on a bus route. This is important because I use buses to get around. Because I live near a bus route I can be much more independent. I keep my house clean and tidy. I can decorate it with pictures and however I want.



Orla Barrett

I've worked to support Michael since 2017 and it has always been a pleasure to work with him. Since the first day I met him he has had me smiling and laughing, always cracking a joke no matter what the situation. He has a great store of tales from the old days when he was a '*wild child*' as he calls himself, or talking about some of the antics in his day programme.

Michael O'Shea

I was born in Co Tipperary and brought up by my grandparents in the countryside there. I was moved into the Brothers of Charity and I remember the Brothers. There's no Brothers here now but the staff they employ are great. I lived for a time in St Michael's in Ferrybank but I didn't like the strict up-early, bed-early timetables there - nor the know-it-all '*wise guys*'.

I've been living in The Crescent now for the past ten years. It's completely different. For a start I love living alone, I really appreciate the peace and quiet. It's great to be able to get up when I like and go to bed when it suits me. I enjoy going up to Horticulture every day from about 10 until 3 and it's very close by, only five minutes away. I really enjoy the garden.

I'm lucky to have a good neighbour called Mary Somers and she is a kind person. She makes lovely scones and tarts, and makes them for me sometimes. Apple tart is my favourite. ALDI is nearby and I like shopping there. I get microwave dinners in Aldi for my lunch. One of the staff makes my evening dinner, my favourite is sausage rolls and beans or a fry-up. On Sundays I get a takeaway lunch from a local pub, the Rhu Glenn or from The Granville.

In the evenings I like to sit back and watch the telly. I watch the News every night and all the sports programmes especially soccer, rugby.



Michael O'Shea, Waterford



Maureen Cahill

Patrick White lives in a Brothers of Charity house near Glanmire, Co Cork. Originally from north Cork, Patrick is what we like to say in Cork... a character! He loves the chats with staff and enjoys a very active and fulfilled life. Patrick loves his food, the odd pint and is a great guy for going on walks. The house he lives in is a large, spacious dormer bungalow set well off the road and surrounded by mature trees and shrubs.

Pat O'Brien

Patrick has a great personality and we both love a sing-song especially in the mornings. He has an extensive knowledge of pop songs and his favourites are from the 80's and 90's... same as mine. The house is roomy and easy to get around and the gardens and garage are fantastic amenities to have at our disposal. The five men we support all mix well and Patrick often looks out for the others. He's a 'rogue' and I can easily identify with him through jokes and songs and we've always just 'clicked'. While maintaining a professional relationship I tend to regard Patrick as a buddy rather than as a Supported Person as we say to each other regularly... 'We're brothers from another mother.'

Patrick White

My name is Patrick White, I live in a lovely house near Glanmire, Co Cork with four other supported men, and I consider my housemates my friends and extended family. We get along most of the time but I suppose we all have our moments! I really like watching TV and listening to music and in my house I have the choice of two sitting rooms where I can look at and listen to whatever I choose. I like to have the remote controls in my hand and that suits the other lads so I'm really happy about that!

I really love the house I have been living in for the last eleven years after moving in here from the main campus in Lota. There is much more room here for me and the best of all is that I have my own large bedroom where I can keep all of my personal belongings. I have a large garden at the front, side and rear where I can go for even more space and I am lucky and glad that we also have a big garage that has been converted into an arts and crafts space where I can paint and do craft activities.



Patrick White in Glanmire, Co Cork



Valerie O'Connor

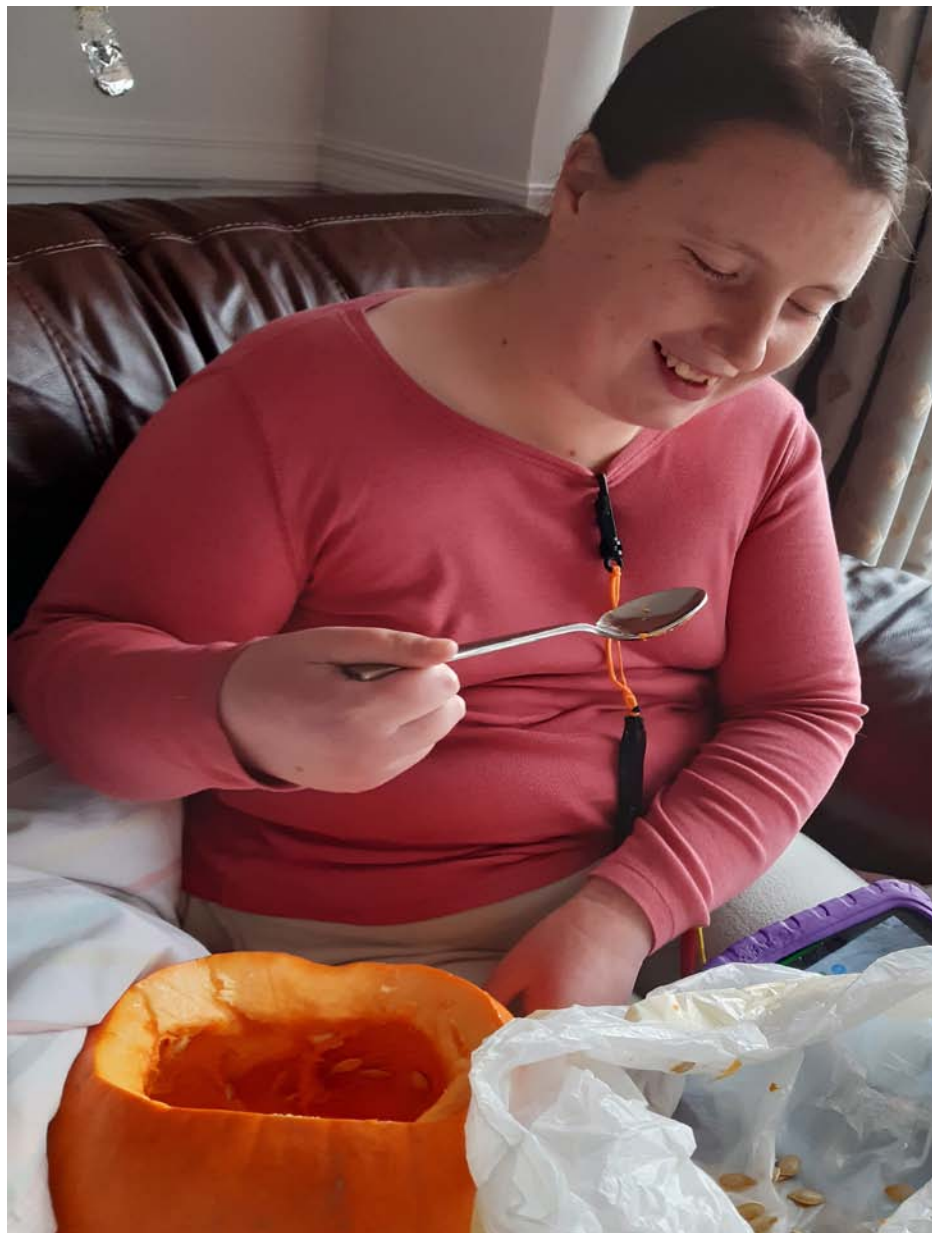
Valerie O'Connor supports Sarah O'Brien

Sarah is a young fun-loving, spirited young woman. She has a moderate Intellectual Disability, Autism and a history of behaviours that challenge. She currently lives in a one-bedroom bungalow supported by two staff. Sarah previously shared with two other residents. Living with others challenged Sarah and did not honour her preferred residential needs. Sarah's home represents her personality. Bright, colourful and nurturing it has

lots of her colourful comforting cushions and blankets, and pictures of family members and fond memories. Her favourite books, games and toys are available and provide Sarah with a sense of safety and security.

Sarah shares meals with staff at the kitchen table, a room where howls of laughter are regularly heard. Sarah relaxes in her newly renovated bathroom and loves to splash in the bubbles of her king-size bath while listening to *Ed Sheeran* blast out her favourite tunes. Sarah's bedroom is her safe haven, she loves looking at herself in her mirror or sitting at her vanity table while staff blow-dry her hair or paint her nails. She likes to visit her neighbours especially when she knows the kettle is on. Sarah's favourite place is stretched out on her 3 seater couch surrounded by her cushions and blankets watching her TV or playing on her iPad. Seaview is a home away from home for Sarah. Her supporters take professional and personal pride ensuring that her home represents her personality and honours her needs.

Sarah's home is bright and spacious and allows Sarah and staff the time and space they need to fulfil their duties in a nurturing safe space. Sarah and staff enjoy having the company of neighbours and the grounds of Lota to explore. Exploring includes meeting other residents and staff, watching the rabbits jump around and Sarah checks in on the hens every day! The things that evoke a sense of home in Sarah are the colour pink; the taste of chocolate biscuits; her favourite dinner, lasagne; the smell of lavender, the sound of water filling her evening bath; and music. Music permeates Sarah's home and in Ed Sheeran's words Sarah's home is her '*Castle on the hill*'.



Sarah O'Brien, Cork



Zybnek Mac Tire

Is é teach Micí a bhaile. Is é Rí an Chaisleáin é!
Is áis iontach é do Mhicí, ag cónaí sa nGaeltacht,
agus é ag comhrá lena chuid comharsan trína
theanga dhúchais. Feileann an teach seo Micí mar
go bhfuil sé suite in aice na farraige. Tá a chistin
fhéin aige, áit atá sé in ann a chuid béilí a réiteach le
cúnamh más gá. Tá seomra suite aige, áit atá sé in
ann breathnú ar an teilifís nó éisteacht le
YouTube – ceol go gealach!

Tá seomra codalta aige ina bhfuil seomra folctha ann, rud a fheileann dhá
chuid riachtanais. Is bónas é freisin go bhfuil sé in ann úsáid a bhaint as an
ngaoidín chun a chuid spóirt a chleachtadh, go sábháilte. Bainim féin sult
as tacaíocht a thabhairt do Mhicí mar go dtuigeann sé na leaganacha cainte
Gaelacha agus bíonn píosa gáire againn. Is pléisiúr ann fhéin é tacaíocht
a thabhairt do Mhicí mar go dtaitníonn leis a bheith amuigh faoin aer. Tá
Micí an-bhródúil as a bhaile. Baineann sé sult as ceannacht agus ag díol
carranna don fhoireann! Is iontach an rud é go bhfuil seirbhís ann a
thugann aird ar riachtanais Mhicí agus a thugann an deis dhó a shaol a
chaitheamh go rathúil.

Micí Welby

Micí is ainm dom agus tá cónaí orm i nGaeltacht Chonamara.

Tá an chuid is mó de mo shaol caite agam sa nGaeltacht, is í an Ghaeilge
mo chéad theanga. Bhí mé i mo chónaí sa mbaile le linn m'óige agus ansin
chuaigh mé chuig an chathair le dul chun na scoile.

Tháinig mé chuig Bruach na Mara chun freastal ar na seirbhísí lae ar dtús,
agus anois tá mé lonnaithe ann go lán-téarmach le m'áit féin – faoi dheire-
adh!

Tá árasán bunurláir agam dom féin, agus tá an t-ádh liom go bhfuil mé i mo
chónaí san áit atá, mar go bhfuilim in ann leas a bhaint as an bpobal thart
orm. Tá mé in ann dul ar siúlóidí laethúil cois cladaigh, tá aithne agam ar
formhór na bhfeirmeoirí atá thart orm agus ar mo chuid comharsan.



Tá halla iontrála, seomra foirne agus stórais i mo theachsa. Péinteáladh mo spás cónaithe anuraidh agus fuair mé teilifís nua agus urláir nua, tá cistin agam freisin. Críochnaíodh mo ghairdín, tá raoin ann atá feiliúnach don Go-Kart nó cleachtadh a dhéanamh ar mo chuid reatha.

Bainim sult as a bheith ag éisteacht le ceol, ceoltóirí áitiúla ag canadh i nGaeilge go háirithe.

Cuireann m'árasán an baile i gcuimhne dom, ach seo'd é mo bhaile anois, is maith liom é go mór mór mar go bhfuil sé in aice na farraige.



Radharc aoibheann ar áit chónaithe Mhicí Welby i gCois Fharraige



Emily Raftery

I really enjoy my role supporting Triona. Triona advocated on her own and others behalf through the Service Users Council to make this dream apartment a reality. Triona has practised independent living skills over time which has led to her making a success of living in her apartment. I enjoy helping Triona further develop and refine her independent living skills and supporting her to make her own decisions.

Triona Larkin

My name is Triona Larkin. I live in a lovely apartment convenient to Main Street in Ballinasloe, Co Galway. I used to live in a shared house with three other individuals. I now live in a two-bedroom apartment provided by the council, which I share with my friend who lived with me in my previous house. I get on great with her, she is my best friend. We both enjoy going to various clubs such as the VIP Friendship Club discos in Gullane's Hotel, and Ballinasloe Social Club - and we meet up in local pubs such as Auld Sod and Ballinasloe Tennis Club. We enjoy watching soaps together in the evenings, our favourites are Fair City and Coronation Street.

Living in this apartment is a dream come true for me. I have so much more privacy, independence and quiet time. I love cooking healthy dinners such as fish pie or chicken curry and making desserts - white chocolate and raspberry cheesecake is my favourite.

I also enjoy sitting out on our balcony having a cuppa and planting flowers there. My favourite flowers are sunflowers. We buy our plants from Ward's Garden Centre. I like living in the town close to all the shops and amenities and especially being able to walk to my job in Tope Printing and the offices that I clean. I like to use the Shearwater Hotel Leisure Centre independently and this is close by.

My apartment is cosy and homely, it has 2 double bedrooms, 2 bathrooms, kitchen, lounge & diner and a balcony. As it's in an apartment block I have lots of good neighbours and it's situated really close to the town centre.



Triona Larkin, Ballinasloe, Co Galway



Declan Hayes

Declan Hayes and supporter Maria Higgins

Declan doesn't use words to communicate to express his obvious enthusiasms but the sounds he makes, his smiles and his facial expressions show clearly how he feels and what he wants. I'm Maria Higgins and I've been working with Declan for the past 13 years. I have a great affection for Declan and through my work I've developed a sensitivity to his feelings and his needs. I am keenly aware of my role in supporting him to have a very good quality of life and a happy living environment.

Born in London 50 years ago, he moved to Co Limerick and at age four began his association with the Brothers of Charity, at first in Foynes, Co Limerick and then moving to a campus bungalow of seven residents in Bawnmore, Limerick. Throughout his life he has maintained regular close contact with his family attending family gatherings and being included in the all his family's important events. Since moving to a semi-detached house in Castletroy, Limerick, 15 years ago, he has continued to value time at his family home going home every fortnight on a Sunday to spend the afternoon with his mam Eileen and his brothers, sisters or extended family who might drop by. Declan's dad (RIP) was very devoted to him and visited him every week in Bawnmore.

He enjoys life at his home in Castletroy with his own bright and sunny, ensuite bedroom. He loves the kitchen with the hustle and bustle of food preparation and lovely cooking smells, especially the Saturday morning fry-up! He enjoys his bright, airy sitting room. At night we put on side lights and sit around the cosy Optiflame fire. We've a spacious back garden with lawn, flower and vegetable beds, a picnic table and a 2-seater swing. Declan enjoys sitting out with picnic blankets on warm days.

I feel honoured to come to work each day. Declan is a real gem with a mischievous sense of humour and obvious delight in the things he loves and the activities he takes part in. I believe Declan enjoys his life here in Castletroy, amongst people he has known and who have known him for many years. He has a lovely sense of place and he is truly at home.



Declan Hayes, Castletroy, Limerick



Anna Lillis

Pauline and Mary chose this bright, airy, three-bedroom bungalow overlooking Kilrush Marina, as their ideal home ten years ago having lived at another house on the same road. The open-plan sitting room with its cosy, gas fire opens through to a kitchen-dining room with an adjoining utility room. There's a substantial lawn to the rear with rose bushes and a garden shed.

I've been supporting Pauline and Mary since 2008 and was with them when they decided on this bungalow, choosing the decor and ensuring it was kitted out with all conveniences. A comfortable, welcoming home it has a lovely atmosphere and the kettle is always on! It's a great place to work in and both ladies have a lovely relationship with support staff.

Pauline Skehan

My name is Pauline Skehan. I'm from Kilkee, just a stone's throw from the beach. I have wonderful memories of family life there, magical Christmases. I took care of my mam in her final years. My home town so inspiring that I began to write my own verse and I've received a writing certificate. I host a show, *'Pauline's Poems'* on RCB.iecommunity radio which had won with a Craol Community Broadcasting Award in 2018. These are recorded on Zoom now through my tablet. That's now how I attend advocacy meetings, the research group, tea party singalongs... everything's on Zoom

I moved to Fort Road, Kilrush in 2005. Mary Madigan and I were friends and I visited her one day and suggested we might be housemates. Since then we have become great friends. The thing I love most about the house is that our friendship is strong. We can tell each other anything. We support each other and I also get support from the Brothers of Charity who have a base here. I've been an advocate and researcher for them for many years now. I like helping people, speaking up about issues and listening to people's stories. I got great training under Professor Edurne Garcia at Trinity College and Dr Nancy Salmon at Limerick University through the Inclusive Research Network.



Pauline Skehan, Kilrush, Co Clare

When I moved into Fort Road I chose the pink for my bedroom. It's cheerful and bright, a place where I can relax and compose my poems in perfect peace and tranquility. The sitting room is spacious and well ventilated, I sit here with Mary, listen to the radio and knit scarves, mostly in my favourite colours, pink and black. Out in the garden I grow lettuce, onions and carrots. I get a great sense of accomplishment seeing something I've grown on my plate! Beside the vegetable patch is a meadow lawn. Mary and I often sit beside it on the patio on sunny days. A pan of

sizzling mackerel on the hob with a fine feed of slughorn and spuds! The sea breeze drifts gently up from the mighty Shannon down the road, a seagull relinquishes a sigh. I am content, heaven sent.

My supporter, Anna, has a great sense of humour. She's always cracking jokes. We exchange funny videos and make each other laugh. My two sisters are just a short drive away and with Anna's help I snapchat them, a great way to keep in touch. But I can't wait 'til lockdown ends so we can hit the road again, see my sisters and visit beautiful Kilkee for coffee and cakes.



Trish Halvey

Suzanne's house is ideal being in the centre of the Castlerea and near all the shops, the church and the local park - and her day service is just up the road. It's the perfect size for her as it's easily cleaned and heated. She has decorated it to her own taste and really made it her own. It has been such a privilege to support Suzanne on this journey. She knew exactly what she wanted so my job was just to support her to make it a reality. I feel grateful for the opportunity to work

within the Brothers of Charity. They are committed to supporting people like Suzanne to live inclusive lives in their communities in a real and meaningful way. Suzanne is creating a real community presence in Castlerea. With her determination and positive attitude she has certainly made her dream come true.

Suzanne Burchill

My name is Suzanne Burchill. I live in Castlerea, Co Roscommon having moved here from Ballyfermot, Dublin in 2008. I lived with my brother and family for a time but I dreamed of having my own home. I needed help to look for it and my key-worker Trish and my sister-in-law helped me. I found the perfect place, off the main street. I can walk to anywhere I want to go and I can have my sister-in-law over for a cup of tea. I like to live on my own. I can close my door and have peace and quiet.

I have a diary so I know what I'm doing every day. Like online cookery classes, my exercise class, meditation, music and drama. I make my own food, porridge for breakfast. I like making pancakes and salmon and scrambled egg and weight watcher's dinners cooked in the microwave, 6 minutes then stir then 6 more minutes.

I've got my TV and I love the soaps, Coronation Street and Emmerdale.

I get some help from 'StepIn', a supported living network which helps me with my shopping, bills, cooking and snacks. They help me meet people in 'StepIn' network, like Christopher. Two of my brothers come and see me now and again. Whispies, a pound store, is next door, and nearby, my favourite shop Lidl, very good for T-shirts and runners and nice food. I love having my own house. Its my dream come true.



Suzanne Burchill, Castlerea, Co Roscommon



Patricia McCarthy

My name is Patricia McCarthy. I have worked with Nuala Coughlan for many years and we know each other very well. Presently I co-ordinate her residential/day service. I'm part of a core team of three or four staff who support Nuala. Supporting Nuala is never boring. One staff put it well, '*Supporting Nuala is entertaining. Every day is different.*' Being with her on her trips around town is like being with royalty! She's so well known. She salutes everyone, and everyone

salutes Nuala.

There's mutual respect between her and her staff. We admire her spirit, her tenacity and her love of life. We admire the way she's adapted so well to sharing an apartment and supports with Mary. We're glad to have journeyed with her, to see at first-hand how far she's come.

She's enjoying her semi-independent lifestyle. We're all very proud of her, proud as well that we listened to her, believed in her, advocated with her and supported her to fulfil her dreams. Nuala has shown others what's possible. She's raised the bar for those who support her and for others supported by the service.

Nuala Coughlan

My name is Nuala Coughlan. I am in my late fifties but much younger at heart! I'm from Clarecastle, Co Clare. I went to St Claire's Special School in Ennis where I made a lot of friends. Forty-two years ago in 1979 I went to live in Bawnmore Residential Campus in Limerick. I was there about 10 years before I moved back to Ennis.

I had great craic in Bawnmore. I could tell ye stories about the things we got up to, jumping out of windows, raiding the kitchen... Group homes back then were very different. We often shared a bedroom with other people. We had to go to bed and get up at certain fixed times. We ate what was cooked for us; some staff might ask what we liked, others might not, depending on who was on duty. We didn't have a lot of choice, but that was the same for everyone back then.



Nuala Coughlin, Ennis, Co Clare



We did everything in groups, with staff; like going out socially, going for a walk or going to the cinema. I never liked being told what to do! I always wanted more independence for myself. I told my staff I wanted my own place and finally it happened.

I've my own independence now, in my beautiful apartment with my flatmate Mary. I lived there on my own for a few years before Mary joined me. But this is great, now. I have company and someone to share the chores and the bills.

We're in a two-bedroom apartment in a quiet area, very close to Ennis town centre. There's an open plan kitchen / living room, a main bathroom and one en-suite. Another spare room is now a second living room. We've a long term lease with Clare Co Council. Mary and I get on great most of the time, we have the odd '*barney*' but we always make up. We have a few hours support each day... for shopping, cooking, cleaning and going to medical appointments.

We're very lucky with the lovely staff we have. My life has really improved. I want to stay living this way... sharing with Mary. We have great fun. I enjoy her old ways. It works well for us. We're together when we want, but we have two sitting rooms so we can do our own thing too. I like the company. I'm not lonely. We look out for each other and help each other out. We've lots of friends.

Before Covid-19 I used to work in The Rowan Tree Hostel in Ennis in the summer months when it was busy. I loved working there. I hope to go back when it opens again. I often meet the management and staff up town. I love to chat and catch up with them. Working there has given me more confidence and it has widened my circle of friends. I get included in their outings, go for meals with them and we exchange gifts at Christmas.

I absolutely love music. It's a big part of my life. I really love 80's music. Elvis is my Number 1. I love going to concerts and listening to CD's. I've a record player and vinyl records.



I love that my apartment is so central. I can walk into and around Ennis on my own. I enjoy swimming and keeping fit. I do aqua-aerobics and go to the gym and I can walk there and back from home. I love meeting people. I'm well known around town. I'm very sociable. I love going out for coffee... or maybe something stronger, now and again! I'm looking forward to the bars and hotels opening soon, having a good old singsong and a session!

I'm still in contact with old friends from Limerick like Pat and Kathleen. I must have left a good impression. One lovely retired staff from Bawnmore, Una, has always kept contact with me, visiting me. It means a lot.

I'm grateful to the staff from the Brothers of Charity who've supported my independent way of life. I'm proud of what I've achieved. I kept pushing myself to be more independent.

I'm lucky to be part of how the Brothers of Charity Services have changed over the years. Having my own choices, living my own life not having to do what everyone else was doing like before. I've a much better life now. I'm happier in myself.

I often say, '*Nuala will always be Nuala, take me or leave me but you won't change me!*' There is one staff who has known me for nearly thirty years. She's working with me still. She always says '*I could write a book about you!*' I'm really glad she's writing this story with me, now!



Bernie Brennan

It's a privilege for me to support Paddy to live as independently as possible. I like to ensure that he is supported to grow in confidence and to walk taller. He is a member of the Great Escapes Arch Club where he has made some good friends. Prior to Covid, Paddy went on weekend breaks and even foreign holidays with the group.

Paddy Ryan

My name is Paddy Ryan from Co Tipperary. I live in a lovely, homely house in Bandon, Co Cork with 3 other people. I get on well with my housemates. It's a dormer in an older part of Bandon where all the neighbours know everyone and they look out for us. Every year they join together to clean up the green area and have a party.

I do my own laundry and cleaning my room and I share the other household jobs. I get my own breakfast and lunch. I really enjoy going to the Killmichael Bar on Sunday nights with my housemates to have a pint and listen to music without staff. I like listening to my radio and watching TV. I really like to watch the mass on TV as due to Covid restrictions I can't go to mass on Sundays. I especially enjoy watching Nationwide, Animal programmes and rugby matches and I sometimes go to a game with my nephew. And I look forward to visiting my home place in Tipperary a fair bit.

I love living in Avondale as it is my home. I like having my own cat called Robbie which I have taken care of since he was a kitten and I feed him every day. I love being able to go down town by myself to feed the ducks, and I know where to feed them in Kinsale and Cloonakilty as well. I love being able to go to SuperValue and Farrell's shop, restaurants, the library, the barber, the gym and so on by myself. I like walking, swimming and bowling, and I'm a member of the Special Olympics bowling club

I travel to Kinsale by bus on Wednesdays where I work in the OECD, and enjoy cleaning the yachts. After work I go to Acton's Leisure Centre for a swim and then have my lunch there. Roast Lamb and Bacon & Cabbage are my favourite lunches.



Paddy Ryan, Brandon, Co Cork



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Siobhán Flynn, Rob Hopkins and Maureen Cahill
May 2021

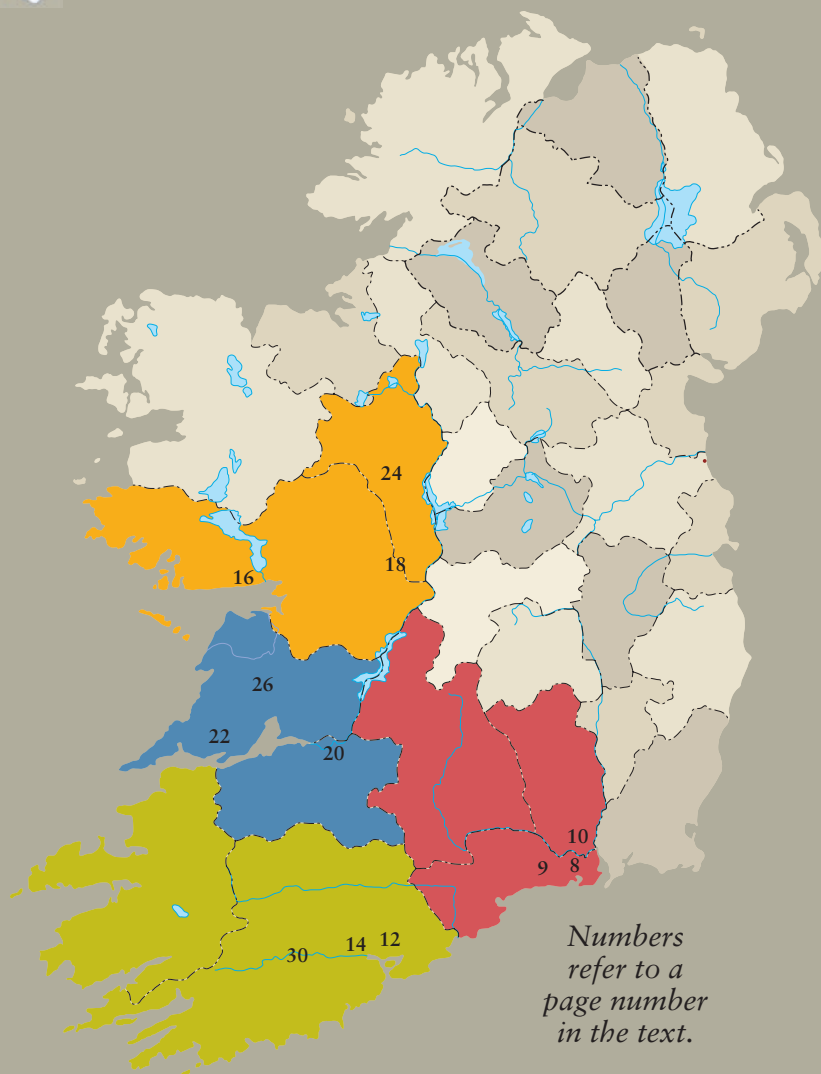


While fully recognising the need for continuous Service improvement, this Series celebrates the achievements of people supported by the Brothers of Charity Services Ireland. It recognises, respects and applauds the tremendous commitment of every member of staff who - working individually and as team members in cooperation with the people we support, and with families, volunteers and local communities - achieve wonderful, sometimes amazing, outcomes. We are happy to celebrate the level of success achieved in implementing the Mission of the Brothers of Charity *'Providing quality services to support people who are in danger of being marginalised ... and creating opportunities and choices that develop and maintain connected lives where all are cherished as valued and equal citizens in our communities.'*

Patrick McGinley, Series Editor

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Over 8,400 men, women and children received support from the Brothers of Charity Services Ireland in 2020, with over 4,300 employees (about 3,500 wte) making it the largest provider of support services for people with intellectual disability in Ireland.