



LIVING MY LIFE

NEWSLETTER

WINTER
2025/2026

About Living My Life

Living My Life is a housing demonstration project seeking to enable people with an intellectual disability to live with support in their own homes and lead a life of their own choosing.

It is a collaborative pilot project between Proactive Carers & Guardians (PACG), the Brothers of Charity Services Ireland - West Region & Ability West.

The project supports 32 individuals in Galway City & Council in navigating the pathways to independent supported living, skills development, support for tenancy sustainment and community integration under five-year multi annual funding secured from the HSE.

The **Living My Life** Project is identified as a Priority Action in HSE National Service Plan 2022 - 2027 following the publication of the Disability Capacity Review to 2032.

Update

*"Through the **Living My Life Project** **16 participants** have secure accommodation, with supports provided by the **Living My Life Support and Multi-Disciplinary teams**.*

We are looking forward to continuing our work with participants and their families in 2026".

Olive Keane, Project Manager

Upcoming Events

December 2025 to February 2026

- Money Management Programme
- Fire Safety in the Home
- Personal Safety & Wellbeing
- Peers 4 (*Building Social Skills & Connections*)
- Monthly Social Groups

Where to Find Us:

Unit 5, Townpark Centre,
Townpark Centre, Tuam Road,
Galway
H91 CKC1



“I’m Ready for This!”

Joseph Faulkner talks about his journey to supported independent living

Joseph’s story is full of patience, grit, and the relief that comes when the right supports finally align. After years of moving between home share and respite, with the support of the **Living My Life** team and his family he’s stepping into his own place, on his terms, and the joy is unmistakable.

On the road since 2013

For more than a decade, Joseph lived between different homes, spending three or four days each month in various places. Ability West supported him well during that time, but the constant coming and going took a toll. Housing application hurdles made things feel impossible, and he eventually stopped pursuing it.

“I was tired of it, and felt that I couldn’t keep it up much longer.”

Finding the Living My Life Project

Two years ago, Joseph heard about the Living My Life Project and decided to try again. The team walked with him step-by-step, restarting his housing journey, navigating forms, and keeping up momentum when things got complex.

“The Living My Life Project team supported me over those two years to get a home and deal with all the paperwork.”

The Call that Changed Everything

On May 23, 2025 Joseph got the call - a ground-floor, one-bedroom apartment on the west side of Galway City was his to consider.

“I waited a long time to have my own home. When I got that call, I was overjoyed, so happy after waiting so many years.”

Getting His Home Ready

The weeks after the offer were busy, but Joseph was supported by the Living My Life team. He practiced living skills in his apartment, organised flooring, blinds and made other key fit-out decisions, all completed with guidance and support from the Living My Life team. He worked with the Living My Life occupational therapist on safety and the Living My Life social worker supported him with the financial and practical supports such as managing moving costs, applying for grants, and tackling “a lot of forms!!”.

Support from His Family

“I’m blessed to have a big family! I’m lucky to have them. They supported me in moving, like setting up a WhatsApp group and relatives helped get a bed, couches, table, and chairs.

The help I got made me very happy, took away the stress and anxiety - they took the stress off my shoulders”.

First Nights and Settling In!

Joseph practiced different routines in the apartment before staying overnight. With his family and the Living My Life OT’s and support worker’s input and a gradual approach, his confidence grew.

He’s now staying overnight and the feeling is clear - **“I’m going to be OK here!”**



What Joseph's journey with the support of the **Living My Life** team shows

Perseverance pays off: Long waits and setbacks can give way to real progress with the right team alongside.

Structured support matters: Clear pathways, practical help, and family collaboration turn a move into a sustainable transition.

Independence, with a safety net: Skills built in home share, plus tailored supports in his new place, means Joseph is ready and supported to thrive.



**Joseph Faulkner celebrating in his new home
with Shane Scanlon, Mike Walsh & Cara Regan
from the **Living My Life** team**

Ádh mór i do theach nua Joseph!





Focus on Collaboration: Galway City Council & the Living My Life Project



*Galway City Council's collaboration with the **Living My Life** Project is reshaping how housing supports are delivered for people with intellectual disability in Galway City. What began as a 2023 meeting between the Living My Life Project Manager, the Galway City Housing Department and its Social Work leader has evolved into a streamlined, accountable approach that prioritises tenant sustainability, transparent processes, and practical housing solutions that prevent crises before they arise.*

Catherine Fahy, Galway City Council Senior Social Worker has been central to building this collaboration and embedding disability awareness within housing supports. In this interview, Catherine talks about the collaboration and the changes it has brought for the City Council and the Living My Life Project Participants.

How did the collaboration start?

Early in 2023 a meeting was convened with the Living My Life Project Manager and leaders in the City Council Housing Department to explore a structured partnership. Collaboration began with the GCC Head of Housing and the Social Worker, widening to a cross-functional group that meets regularly to align on referrals, allocations, and support planning.

There is a shared ethos of problem-solving together with the Living My Life Project and by maintaining open lines of contact small tasks don't become big issues.

What difference has the collaboration between Galway City Council and the Living My Life Project made?

We used to do a lot of this work around disability in an ad hoc way. The regular communication with the Living My Life Project team ensures that proposals and updates between the Housing Department and the Living My Life Project are consistent and constructive. The Living My Life Project streamlines the work, makes it more transparent, and ensures people's needs are properly taken into consideration.

People don't always understand the system, it is complex. The collaboration with Living My Life brings clear referral and assessment pathways, accountability, and most importantly ongoing support plans that help tenants settle in and stay supported post-move. Communication is key in our collaboration through regular meetings. Also, the Living My Life Project Manager consistently presents proposals to the City Council Housing Department that are welcomed at senior management level, and where the value of the project's work is clearly recognised.

What's different nearly 3 years into this close collaboration?

The streamlined approach that has emerged with clear referral, assessment, and support planning pathways replacing previous less coherent practices. There is increased accountability too, transparent processes with defined roles ensuring follow-through and reducing confusion for the Living My Life tenants.

Also, the collaboration facilitates practical supports, like key handover, estate and technician walk-throughs of housing, and post-move contact helps Living My Life tenants settle and avoid early setbacks. Above all, Living My Life tenants and potential tenants always remain on the agenda at subgroup meetings, keeping supports and opportunities for allocations active and responsive.

The collaboration with Living My Life ensures that a tailored support plan developed with the tenant before and after the move as well as the ongoing check-ins make sure that things are going well and any issues emerging are addressed early.

The Living My Life Project brings solutions, not just problems and the support plans and consistency that the Living My Life support workers bring avoids crises down the line. A real change facilitated by the Living My Life Project is that the tenants have no fear in contacting City Council's estate management and this strong relationships mean practical fixes (like door issues or keys) happen quickly.

What is the future vision for this collaboration with the Living My Life Project?

We know that for the Living My Life participants that location matters. Choosing the right location, an accessible home, and an inclusive community are essential, we're not looking to go back to the way things were. This is front and centre of our approach with the Living My Life Project.

Improving the allocation model is important to us, by seeking to ensure that every housing development has a number of units allocated for supported tenancies. While competing interests exist, collaborative working can make this practical and possible into the future.

Sustaining our collaboration with the Living My Life Project is important, its bringing solutions as well as the support of the Project staff to prevent crises before they happen. This collaborative work between the City Council and the Living My life Project is making a difference to the lives of people and we are aiming to sustain and grow this partnership into the future.

"Living My Life is a step forward in future housing supports. Our collaboration allows us to explore and accommodate proposals, and it's getting results!"

Catherine Fahy, Senior Social Worker, Galway City Council

By the end of 2025 Galway City Council's collaboration with the Living My Life

Project and support for participants has ensured that

8 Living My Life Project Participants are now living independently in their own homes in tenancies and communities of their choosing.

How the Galway City Council

Living My Life Collaboration Works

Joint working includes reviewing the housing list to match needs with the right locations and homes.

Positive working relationship

Collaborative solution focused discussion and coordination.

Tenant sustainability

A collective focus on stability, accessibility, and community integration.

Results

The collaboration between Galway City Council and the Living My Life Project is delivering outcomes for participants even amid limited housing supply and competing interests in Galway City.



Why **Living My Life** Matters From a Support Worker's Perspective

Over the next year and starting with this edition of the **Living My Life** newsletter each **Living My Life** team member will give their perspective on their work in order to share a sense of the **Living My Life** Project's ethos but also the nature of the work each team member carries out.

Shane Scanlon, Living My Life Project Support Worker talks about his work and shares the principles that guide his support approach with and alongside the **Living My Life** participants.



"I joined the **Living My Life** support team in March 2025, bringing many years' experience working alongside people with intellectual disabilities and supporting self-advocacy representatives. I'm passionate about the partnership that grows with the person I support. For me, this work is about enabling real choice, at the person's pace, and celebrating each step toward independence.

My central ethos is simple, **to promote and encourage confidence**. Practical skills matter, but emotional support and building self-esteem are just as important. I spend time listening, reflecting back what I hear, and helping people recognise their strengths so they can make decisions with confidence.

Listening is a big part of what I do. I make sure each person's voice is heard and acted on. The relationships we build are centred on trust and equality. I learn from participants as much as they learn from me, and that mutual respect shapes every support action.

Collaborating with families is a cornerstone of our work in the **Living My Life** Project. Families know their relatives best, and their insights are invaluable when planning supports. It's a privilege to work alongside families, to coordinate practical help, and to support everyone toward the same goal - a safe, sustainable home where each participant can live independently and happily, confident in their own skills and the decisions that they make.

My role requires ongoing training so the **Living My Life** team and I can offer the best possible support. That training helps us prepare people to move into and sustain their own homes, and to live in their communities as equal citizens.

Seeing someone gain confidence, move into their own place, and say "I can do this" is why I do this work.

Small acts of support - listening, practical problem solving, and steady encouragement all add up to lasting independence"



INFORMATION



Pillar 1:	Inclusive Learning and Education
Pillar 2:	Employment
Pillar 3:	Independent Living and Active Participation in Society
Pillar 4:	Wellbeing and Health
Pillar 5:	Transport and Mobility

What is The National Human Rights Strategy for Disabled People 2025–2030?

Published by the Government on September 2, 2025 the Strategy sets a rights-based, whole-of-government plan to implement the UN CRPD.

Its aim is to secure independent living, equal participation, and accessible public services for disabled people across Ireland.

The Strategy is organised around clear pillars that include Independent Living and Participation, Education, Employment, Wellbeing and Health, and Transport and Mobility. It emphasises co-design, measurable targets, and cross-government accountability so progress can be tracked and

What does the Strategy say about housing?

Housing is framed as a human-rights issue. The Strategy commits to promoting independent living, increasing accessible and adaptable housing, and ensuring supports are joined up with health and social care so people can live in the community with choice and dignity.

It calls for transparent allocation processes, better data and needs assessment, and universal design principles in new builds and retrofits to reduce segregation and enable long-term tenancy sustainability.

Some of the things the Strategy says about housing

“Housing is a human-rights issue - not just a service.”

“Joined-up supports and single support plans prevent crises and sustain tenancies.”

“Location, accessibility and community are as important as the front door.”

The Strategy is available on-line at:

<https://www.gov.ie/en/department-of-children-disability-and-equality/campaigns/the-national-human-rights-strategy-for-disabled-people-2025-2030/>

Copies of the Strategy document, are available on request from disability_policy@dcde.gov.ie. in a number of formats, including: English (PDF), Irish (PDF), Easy-to-Read (PDF), English (MS Word, compatible with screen readers), Irish (MS Word, compatible with screen readers), ISL interpretation (video playlist), Braille (UEB and SEB).

THE LIVING MY LIFE PROJECT TEAM



Olive Keane
Project Manager
087-6430195



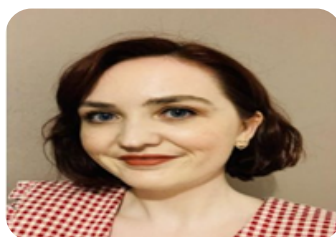
Cara Regan
Social Worker
087 9594547



Síofra O'Kelly
Occupational Therapist
087-3179652



Sarah Ní Mhaille
Speech & Language
Therapist



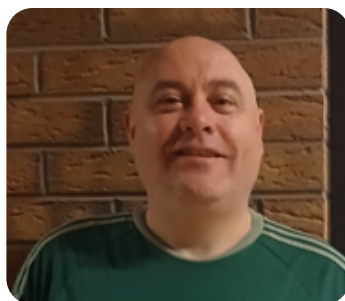
Aoife Ryan
Behaviour Therapist
087-0907118



Martina Carter Law
Team Lead BOC SI - WR
087-1863217



Mike Walsh
Team Lead AW
087-9560814



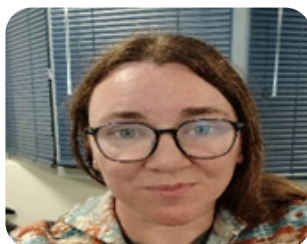
Shane Scanlon
Social Care Worker AW
087-3706272



Caoimhe McManus
Social Care Worker
BOC SI
087-3566003



Caroline Smeets
Support Worker AW
087-9968664



Joanne Hynes
Social Care Worker
BOC SI
087-1473676



Cathryn Johnston
Social Care Worker AW
087-1802970