

Real people...

LIVING ORDINARY LIVES IN ORDINARY PLACES

PADDY and Michael have both recently moved house. Nothing out of the ordinary about that you might say. For these two gentlemen, however, as former long term residents in a large residential centre for people with an intellectual disability, this is a long awaited and much welcome event.

Through a partnership approach with the COPE foundation and the HSE, both men have recently moved to their own homes in the community and the residential centre, Grove House in Cork city, is now closed. So, while we might not describe their moving home as 'out of the ordinary', for Paddy and Michael and their families, it is significant.

The closure of Grove House is good news as it demonstrates the change in our approach to delivering services for people with a disability. Grove House was a centre for people with an intellectual disability and behaviours that challenge. Traditionally, people with a disability lived in centres like this and other large institutional

settings, often located in isolated areas and away from their families, local communities and services. However, change is under way.

As part of the HSE's 'Transforming Lives' programme, a fundamental reform of disability services in Ireland is being implemented. This reform programme is about moving away from the large institutional type model of service to a model where people with a disability live in the community; in essence, 'living ordinary lives in ordinary places'.

The key to the successful implementation of the 'Transforming Lives' Programme is based on individual needs and personal choice; individuals may choose to live on their own in an apartment type

residential setting, others may choose to live with a number of close friends and for some, with more significant needs, they might live in purpose built, disability friendly type accommodation.

The HSE and disability service providers

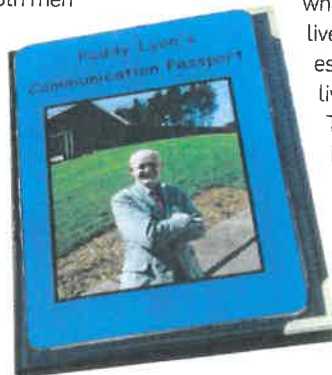
have been working with individuals and their families to identify how they wish to be supported in relation to where they would like to live, who they would like to live with and the activities they would like to be involved in within their community. Individual plans are being developed in consultation with the individual, their families and advocates e.g Inclusion Ireland, to ensure people are fully supported in all elements of life such as relationships, employment, hobbies, recreational activities and personal choice.

Having been through this process quite recently, we meet with two former residents of Grove House who have successfully moved to community living to see how their lives have changed.

PADDY'S STORY

PADDY Lyons is 78 years old and lived in Grove house since the early 1990s. Paddy moved in July last year and shares his home with two other gentlemen with whom he has developed new friendships. Paddy and his housemates are supported on a daily basis by the COPE Foundation.

Prior to the move, HSE and COPE foundation staff worked together to ensure Paddy's





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move was a success. Paddy's transitional programme consisted of visits to his new home and recreational outings of his choice. Paddy expressed that he would be happy to live in the house on a permanent basis and demonstrated his readiness for the move by packing his bag and requesting to move.

Paddy is very happy in his new home and was only too delighted to show us around and to make a cup of tea in his kitchen. Paddy also showed us his communication passport which serves as a support to any new staff getting to know him. The communication passport is a means in which Paddy can

represent things that are important to him in a picture “easy read” format, illustrating his likes and dislikes, people who are important to him; family and friends, his past, hobbies and interests. He uses his communication passport very effectively. It especially helps him to express himself with all people he

meets, as it helps open conversation and helps others to understand him. Although Paddy has some communication difficulties, it never limits him from being sociable, enjoying chats and having banter with everyone he meets. He is charming and a gentleman at heart.

Paddy did not have any difficulty making the transition to his new home and is now fully settled there. Paddy's interests include bowling, music, singing, dancing and socialising and he goes to mass in the local church every Sunday.

Paddy's family have expressed their happiness in how well he has embraced his new home. They can see he is so happy and has a great quality of life now. He takes great pride in all he has and is now enjoying his life the way he wishes.

MICHAEL'S STORY

MICHAEL O'Shea is 52 years old and had lived in Grove House for 26 years. Michael did benefit from the safety and security that Grove House offered but staff felt that he was ready to move on to a new home in the community and worked closely with Michael and his family to prepare him for the move. A number of different options were explored before Michael moved to his new home in the city.

In advance of the move, Michael visited the house on a number of occasions to become familiar with the new setting and his new staff team. He was encouraged to bring personal belongings from Grove House and leave them in his bedroom so that it felt like his own room. Michael is a big Liverpool supporter and a team poster takes pride of place on his bedroom wall. Staff from Grove House organised a series of get togethers for Michael, his family and his two house mates and their families. These were great getting to know you occasions.

Michael has a circle of support that includes staff and his family. In the few weeks since he moved, Michael has settled in really well and has become comfortable in his new home. He has started to explore the local community with his house mates and staff and has recently been on a train journey. Michael's new Person Centred Plan will chart new opportunities and new roles for him into the future. Michael's family, who were initially anxious and concerned about the move and the closure of Grove House, are now very happy especially when they hear Michael humming and smiling more than he used to.

Michael's mother and sister Mary said, "We are so delighted and feel very reassured to see how he has progressed in the last couple of months. We see how well Michael has taken to his new home. The new experiences and opportunities open to him are fantastic. We are so appreciative of the care and support



Michael O'Shea shows off some of his medals, with a poster of his beloved Liverpool on the wall behind.

given by the team in COPE foundation in making this transition so positive for Michael."

In Michael's new home, there is an open door policy where friends and family can visit and call for a cup of tea whenever they like!

Paul McKeown, COPE Foundation, CNM2 said, "It has been a privilege to be involved in Michael's transition. Michael has shown a great ability to accept change, in terms of his environment and his engagement in new positive experiences. It is so important to ensure Michael is afforded every opportunity to have a great quality of life and be happy. This move has created a positive future for Michael and the staff and I are excited to be part of this journey with Michael and his family." The location of Paddy and Michael's new homes are within a few minutes walking distance. This ensures both men continue to maintain friendships. Both have visited each other in their new homes for a chat and a cup of tea, and regularly see one another at lunch in the canteen facilities nearby.

Pat Healy, National Director, Social Care said, "We heard, loud and clear, the very powerful message that came across at our disability summits last year about how important it was for people to have choice

and to have a key to their own front door. The implementation of Transforming Lives is a new era in disability services in Ireland and our focus is on ensuring that stories like Paddy and Michael's are replicated nationwide.

"In progressing this reform programme, the areas of biggest challenge, such as the large institutions, are being targeted first and significant capital funding of €100m announced by the government in 2015 means that we can accelerate this pace of change. This remains our focus and we will continue to collaborate with all our partner organisations to ensure people with a disability have the choices and the homes they deserve."

In 2015, the Government announced a dedicated capital programme of €100m over a six year period to continue the process of moving people remaining in large institutional settings to the community. €20m is being made available this year (2016) to transition up to 165 people and a further €10m is to be provided by the Department of the Environment to facilitate more than 100 people with a disability to move from institutional settings to social housing in their community.