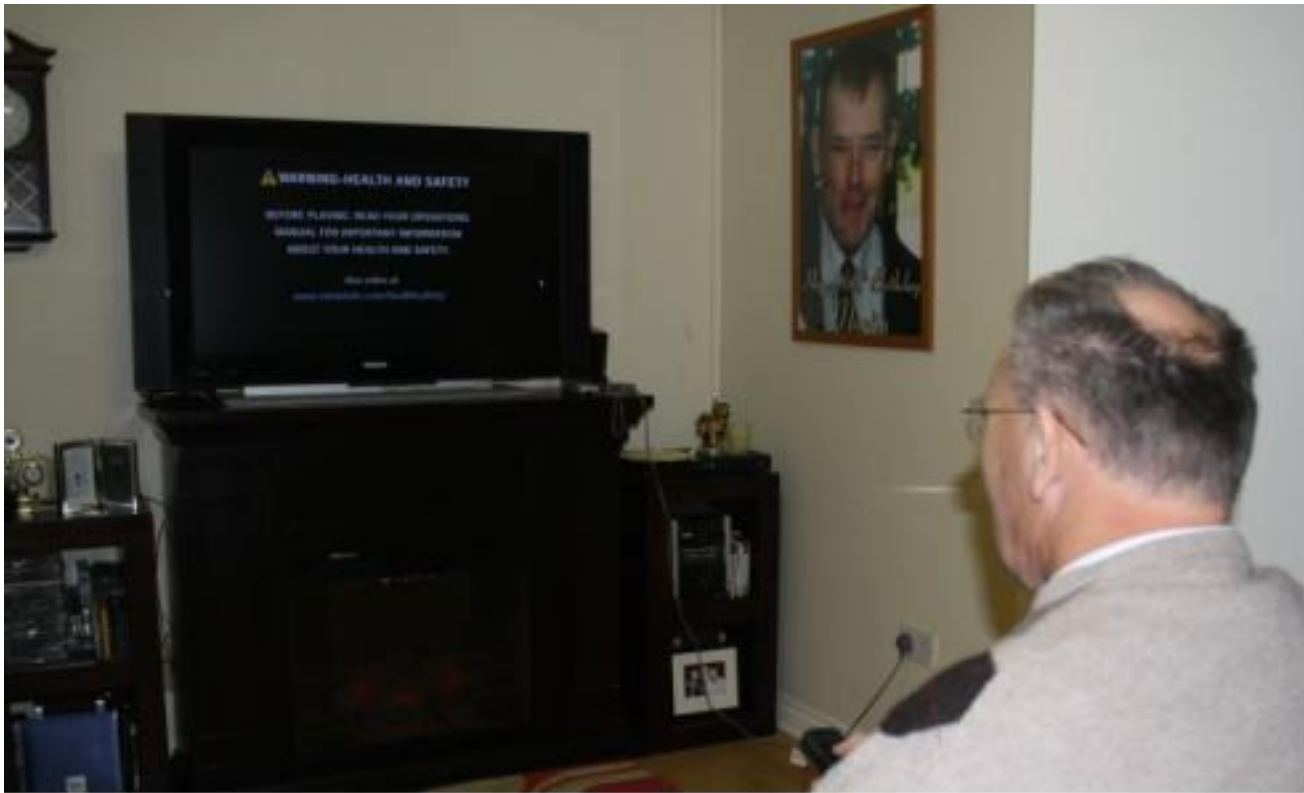


**Warning!** Health and Safety  
*Managing risks for increased  
independent living opportunities*  
Martin Dooher



My name is Martin Dooher



I am from Ballina in Mayo



When I was 8 years old I moved to an institution in Cork. My mother and father thought this would be the best place for me

We slept upstairs in the dormitory, there were lots of people sleeping there. That's not right



In the institution everything was together in the one place. We didn't have the opportunity to go into the community .



**We didn't learn how to do lots of things because people we afraid to let us take risks**



- I moved to another institution in Galway when I was 16. It was nearer Ballina but there were still too many people
- When I was in my 20's I moved into a group home.



- There were still too many people and staff made most of the decisions.

- When I lived in a group home, I wanted to watch football on Saturday afternoons



- But instead we all had to go shopping together every Saturday.  
- Everybody looks at us when we are in a group together, it makes us look bad and made me upset

- I moved into my own apartment 5 years ago.



- At that time I was sharing with someone else and staff needed to be here because the apartment needed lots of changes.



- About 3 years ago I got a grant to do up my apartment.
- There were things that needed to be done to allow me live an independent life:



The apartment needed to be made wheelchair accessible



Inside, a breakfast bar was removed and the doors were made wider for the wheelchair

An accessible bathroom was created



In the group home I was told when I had to take a shower.

Now I decide.



I like to make a cup of tea. When I lived in the group home you couldn't have tea after 9pm. Now I can make tea whenever I want.



And I can cook whenever I want and  
whatever I would like to eat



I have learnt about all the safety aspects to this



Sometimes it takes a while to get everything right. The alarm was installed too high for me to reach the first time!





I have blister packs that allow me to safely take my own medication.  
These are made up by the pharmacy.



I choose my own entertainment – my family came and set up the Wii on my television. This could not have happened in the group home.



Fire safety is very important. I can reach everything and I know how to use the fire extinguishers



I have a pendant that I can use if there is an emergency  
and I need to contact a support person



Family and friends can come to visit me – it feels like my home.

People did not believe at first that I would be able to live independently



But now everyone can see how well I  
can manage by myself



Because I had no chance to do things for myself until I was in my fifties, it took me a while to learn



**Now every day I learn new things. I love to learn things and I really want to know how things work and be able to do it myself so I am not waiting for other people**



- Staff used to tell me to sit down and they would tell me when dinner is ready
- I make a fry for a people who come to visit





## **I Look after my own money now**

Before the money was locked away, and the staff decide how much I could spend.



I recently travelled to England on my own for the first time



**My family visit more often, and stay with me sometimes now that I have my own house**



**I have spoken at a conference in Finland.**

I used to be scared to speak up, but now I am not afraid anymore.

I would like a tenancy agreement.



- There are lots of people like me who want to move out of institutions and group homes



- Its about a more fulfilled life.
- **If I didn't have the chance to take certain risks I wouldn't be so confident. I would still probably be in the group home.** I would not be going anywhere
- I would not be so connected with my family
- I wouldn't be as happy as I am now

- I have more ambitions for the future
- I would like to have an electric chair and to go on holidays and have a relationship. I would like to have my own girlfriend and we can go out when we want.

