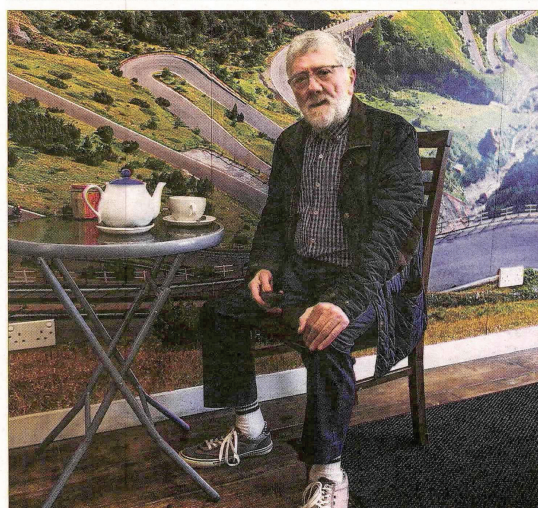


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Louth man Joe Kerrigan

Joe stars in major photo exhibition

BY ALISON COMYN

A Louth man, who experienced homelessness and mental health issues over the years, is now featured in a major photography exhibition in Dublin.

Genio, a not-for-profit working with people living with disabilities, mental health difficulties, dementia, and those who are long-term homeless in Ireland, is celebrating ten years and has collaborated with photographer Ruth McElber to create the exhibition **Facing Change**.

The exhibition features 10 portraits of inspiring people from the four corners of Ireland, from a variety of backgrounds and across ages and genders.

They have all been supported to overcome personal challenges and to have more control over their own lives and live in the community.

Joe Kerrigan has been living in mental health institutions, hospitals and hostels for the past four decades. Last year, he was supported by the HSE and Genio to move into his own home in the community.

Genio has published figures on the impact of its collaboration with the Government of

Ireland over the past ten years. Genio works with government to reform social services in a person-centered, cost-effective direction for people with disabilities, mental health difficulties, dementia and those who are long-term homeless.

To celebrate the ten-year anniversary Genio is showcasing the impact of this work, which aims to ensure that Ireland's legacy of institutional care is a thing of the past.

Genio has created a leading model for reforming social services at scale. This means that people are supported to live as independently as possible in their own communities.

"We focus on developing collaborations to bring about lasting change in how services are delivered, and we have very progressive government policy in Ireland designed to change the lives of people with disabilities, mental health difficulties, dementia and the long-term homeless by supporting them to live full lives in their communities instead of institutional care," explains Madeleine Clarke, Founding Director at Genio.

"We work with the state and service providers to bring about

improved services to make these policies a reality.

"At Genio we believe that everybody who wants to live in the community should be afforded that choice, and we support initiatives that make sure they can achieve that.

"In many cases, people are being supported to move out of institutions and services are being re-focused to the community. We also work with government to help people to avoid institutional care."

Genio commissioned Ruth for this exhibition due to her unique ability to capture individual personalities and stories within her portraits and for her person-centred and collaborative approach.

She worked with each person to identify a location for the portrait that is meaningful to them and, where possible, provided them with a remote-controlled trigger which enabled them to have as much agency over the process as possible and take their own picture.

The exhibition began its national tour last weekend at Dublin's Gallery of Photography and will now travel around the country.