

'We look after the mind, body and soul': Brain injuries facility set to expand

Shauna Bowers
Health Correspondent

An Saol Foundation helps people with severe acquired brain injuries, aiming to be a voice for people who cannot advocate for themselves

Robert Flynn was 32 when, after a relationship broke up, he decided to move to Jamaica to work for a telecommunications firm.

His second life in the Caribbean, his father Brendan says, but everything changed when Robert suffered a cardiac arrest at Miami Airport in 2001.

"He suffered a hypoxic brain injury because his brain was deprived of oxygen," Brendan says. The health episode left Robert reliant on a wheelchair and peg feeding.

After returning to Ireland, he spent time in hospitals and health facilities due to his significant care needs before his parents were able to bring him home.

This included eight years in a nursing home. The Flynn family say Robert deteriorated markedly during those eight years due to the lack of specialist care available for people with severe acquired brain injuries in such facilities.

Attending day services with the An Saol Foundation, a registered charity helping people with severe acquired brain injuries, has allowed Robert access to specific rehabilitation.

Brendan says his son is a "wonderful" man in companionship to whom he is grateful going to the care in Saol, north Dublin.

"The other caregivers there?"

“What happens in cases with people who are long-term severely affected, they're written off

would get him to indicate what letter comes after C, what number comes after three. With regard to the saying things, he got to the stage where one blank was yes and two blanks were no," Brendan says.

"The day says, 'I'm not taking that'. It's putting him to say 'Yes'. 'No' is difficult because you can't say 'no' unless the tongue is up behind the top front teeth. We're trying to get him to the point where he's making the effort."

Robert, who recently celebrated his 47th birthday, is one of the organisation's 28 clients.

Life support

An Saol Foundation was established by Richard Schaller and his wife Patricia O'Flynn after their son Pádraig experienced a severe acquired brain injury and they realised there was little support available to them. It opened in 2020 on a pilot basis.

Located inside a nondescript building in an industrial park, the organisation, which aims to be a voice for people who cannot advocate for themselves, is plan-



From top: Robert Flynn celebrates his birthday with his father Brendan (left) and staff at An Saol Foundation's day centre in Saggart, Dublin. Catherine and Peter Cahill, whose son David requires around-the-clock care, Gavin Cahill with physio Dran Clabry, Oua Flah with holistic therapist Sonia Coppard.

He was on life support. He was just 23 at the time and had three heart attacks, which resulted in a severe acquired brain injury and the loss of his sight. David requires around-the-clock care. Catherine and Peter have been providing much of it for the past 18 years. "It's hard for us because of our age now. I don't think there's enough support," Peter says.

Catherine says: "We got cars in, but they're always changing. Some of them aren't trained and we have to train them ourselves."

David has been attending An Saol Foundation since it opened. He enjoys music therapy, robotic therapy, gait training and stretching, as well as having a pump, which contains medication to treat his spasms, refilled. Before his injury, David was an active gym-goer. So independent.

"I feel so sorry for him. He keeps me going, but it was heartbreaking to see the outcome," Catherine says. Peter adds: "If it wasn't for this place, we would be completely lost, as everyone else will tell you. It's somewhere to bring him in the morning and he's going to get something out of it with physiotherapy, etc. It's good for us and it's good for our son."



ning to expand and move to a much larger purpose-built facility.

The new facility will be 3,000sq m and provide services such as therapy, accommodation and respite. It is forecast to cost €12 million to €13 million to build, with an expected opening date in 2028 or 2029.

The charity receives €100,000 from the HSE a year. It has 30 staff members, including physiotherapists, a holistic therapist and a learning support or cognitive specialist. While the service is a lifeline for many families, Schaller says it is not enough.

"Without those services, they will die," he says. "What happens in cases with people who are long-term severely affected, they're written off. What happens if they get contractors, they're again, hard work."

"We look after the mind, body and soul. The body is really half of what we offer to clients and then the mind is cognition work, so memory work, communication mainly. The holistic therapy is around sound, relaxation and meditation."

Catherine and Peter Cahill's son David was on holiday on the Greek island of Crete in 2008 when they got a phone call to say

Landlord fined €26,000 over rental zone rules

Dublin-registered Vestry issued with written caution regarding four properties

ELLEN O'DRISCOLL

One of the major landlords in the State has been fined €26,000 for failing to comply with rent pressure zone rules for a home at Russell Road in Tallaght, Dublin.

Landlord Nigel Tuite, with an address in Killybeg, Co Dublin, was found to have failed to register a tenancy on Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, with the RTB, as required by law. He was sanctioned last December and fined €12,812 for this and for failing to comply with rent pressure zone rules and for incorrectly relying on an exemption to those rules.

CEA Ireland SA Dev Ltd was fined €11,000 in January after being found to have sought payment to secure a tenancy.

Vestry Limited Partnership was established to acquire and let residential investment properties in Ireland, according to the latest financial statement of its general partner company Vestry General Partner DAC. Filings for the partner company show the partnership is linked to hundreds of properties across the State.

Annual rent increases were legally capped at 2 per cent on active rent pressure zones, which were introduced nationwide in June of last year.

Restrictions

While those pressure zone restrictions will apply to old tenancies, a new rental rule register was introduced last March permitting the setting of rents to market rates at the end of a six-year tenancy term. An annual rent cap of 3 per cent applies during the six-year contract. Only tenancies created after March 1st of this year are governed by the new rules.

The RTB has powers under the Residential Tenancies Act to investigate alleged breaches of rental laws and to seek court sanctions for improper conduct.

Other significant sanctions published this year include a December 2025 fine of €35,000 for Dublin-based Divy Property Holdings for

failing to comply with rent pressure zone rules for a home at Russell Road in Tallaght, Dublin. Landlord Nigel Tuite, with an address in Killybeg, Co Dublin, was found to have failed to register a tenancy on Northumberland Road, Ballsbridge, with the RTB, as required by law. He was sanctioned last December and fined €12,812 for this and for failing to comply with rent pressure zone rules and for incorrectly relying on an exemption to those rules.

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“The RTB has powers under the Residential Tenancies Act to investigate alleged breaches of rental laws and to seek court sanctions

tenancy in excess of what was allowed. Landlords cannot ask a prospective tenant to pay more than one month's rent as a deposit to secure a property.

The Dublin-based landlord was found to have carried out the "improper conduct" in relation to 260 student apartments at Carmua's Hall on Garden Lane in the Liberties, Dublin.

The sanctions come as new RTB data shows the average rent for new tenancies was €1,750 during the first quarter of this year, up 5 per cent on the previous 12 months. Existing tenancy rents grew by 4.4 per cent over the period to stand at €1,565 in early 2026.

Landlords with 100 or more tenancies increased to account for 15.3 per cent of all private rentals in Dublin. These major landlords are bigger players making up 79 per cent of private tenancies.

RTB deems notice of termination issued after alleged 'violent' assault invalid

JACK WHITE

A notice of termination issued by a landlord in Cork after he was allegedly "violently assaulted" by her tenant's grandson has been deemed invalid by the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) tribunal.

Landlord Ailina Gross purchased a Passage West property in February 2024 with tenant Linda O'Sullivan, who had been renting the home since 2020 in situ.

O'Sullivan did not attend the tribunal hearing in December.

Gross told the tribunal she had been trying to arrange an inspection of the property for some time, and that a date that had been agreed with her tenant was cancelled with two days' notice.

The landlord sought a new date, but O'Sullivan "refused to engage", she claimed. Gross attended the property regardless

on March 22nd last year with her teenage daughter. She told the tribunal there was no answer at the front door, despite her being able to see people inside.

Although it was a two-bedroom home, she said only O'Sullivan was "authorised" to stay there, and had "reason to believe" others were occupying the property.

“Violated the scene”
Gross told the tribunal she "violated the scene" with her phone and then went to the rear of the house with her daughter. She subsequently knocked on the sliding door, which backed on to the patio.

After a few minutes, she claimed a "very angry man", who she said was the tenant's adult grandson, opened the door, "pushed" her and attempted to grab her phone.

She subsequently fell to the

ground, hit her head and hurt her right elbow, she claimed. Gross told the tribunal her tenant was inside the house throughout the alleged incident. She claimed meetings with her tenants after she purchased the home were "booming".

“Describing it as a 'single incident', the tribunal said there was also no evidence that it was part of a pattern of such behaviour

tle", saying they had made it "clear" they did not want her as a tenant.

Gross claimed the alleged incident had aggravated her health issues and had a "serious impact" on her daughter.

The landlord subsequently issued a notice of termination to O'Sullivan, citing serious tenancy behaviour, which gave the tenant seven days to vacate the property.

The notice of termination was deemed invalid by the tribunal.

Although Gross claimed to have been "violently assaulted", the tribunal said there was no suggestion O'Sullivan was involved in such behaviour.

Grounds
It said it was "impossible" to conclude the tenant could have any knowledge that her grandson would engage in the alleged behaviour.

Describing it as a "single incident", it said there was also no evidence that it was part of a pattern of such behaviour. There was no evidence O'Sullivan would have intervened in the alleged incident, it added.

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