

# Massive reaction to Lynn's powerful piece on RTÉ's Cutting Edge

SISTER OF ST MARY'S RESIDENT GENERATES HUGE SLEW OF SUPPORT IN RELATION TO HER BROTHER'S PLIGHT UNDER HSE'S 'MOVING ON' POLICY

By DÓNAL NOLAN

ONE woman's fight for the future of the care centre her brother calls home lit up social media last week after a cutting-edge appearance she made on the national broadcaster.

Cahersiveen native Lynn Fitzpatrick - whose profoundly disabled brother Bernard has lived in St Mary of the Angels since he was a child - appeared on the Soapbox section of RTÉ's Cutting Edge, presented by Brendan O'Connor.

It was an appearance that came on the back of a moving article she wrote in recent months, printed in *The Kerryman*, cogently setting out her argument that the language now used to sensitively discuss the welfare and lives of the disabled in general is having a negative impact on the most profoundly disabled - like her beloved brother Bernard.

St Mary of the Angels has been closed to new admissions for some years and was the subject of intense

fears in recent months that residents were to be moved into houses in towns and villages under a national policy.

The HSE's Time to Move on from Congregated Settings policy set out a new vision for the care of adults with disabilities: moving adults into homes in communities. However, Disabilities Minister Finian McGrath moved to assure all families that none would be moved out of the home unless they wished to move.

But Lynn feels the whole language surrounding the disabled actually fails the most profoundly disabled, like her brother, who account for four per cent of the disabled population: those who are both severely intellectually and physically disabled.

As she set out in her hard-hitting appearance on RTÉ on Wednesday, Lynn believes the term 'handicapped' a much more accurate description of this vulnerable minority's state and one that would exert a fairer influence if recognised by the policy-makers.

"I want people to wake up to the reality that places like SMOA are communities in their own right. I want people to think about why it's okay to have Special Olympics but not Special Communities? I want admissions reopened so that those people caring for their children at home can get the help and support they so badly need and so that children and adults with severe and profound disabilities can avail of the same fantastic opportunities that Bernard has," Lynn told *The Kerryman* this week.

She said she was blown away by the reaction to the piece, as hundreds of messages were posted by people sympathising with her views - including Norah Casey, who remarked on Lynn's courage (left),

"The response on social media has been fantastic and thank you to everyone who is engaging in this conversation. I think it is vital that people like Bernard are no longer misrepresented and hidden by language," Lynn said.



Lynn with Bernard and, inset, some of the Facebook reaction.

Norah Casey @NorahCasey  
Following  
You were great. It took a lot of courage - but you're speaking up for those who feel displaced by our sanitised world of wellness

Lynn Fitzpatrick @Lynn2385  
Following  
Lynn spoke eloquently as always, sadly most of the panel missed the main point. George to his credit got it, issues deserved more time.

Cllr Norma Moriarty @normamoriarty  
Following  
Looking forward to hearing from Lynn Fitzpatrick on Cutting Edge tonight on RTÉ

Lina O'Dwyer  
Lynn spoke straight from her heart... her devotion to Bernard and to the others like him who cannot speak for themselves nor do for themselves has been inspiring. Her unrelenting attempts to get the blinded politicians and policy makers to understand that living in the community can be a successful transition for those who are capable and who choose to do so... but will not work for the vast and forgotten percentage of severely and profoundly mentally and physically disabled people currently receiving the very best of care and services in first class residential homes such as St. Mary of the Angels in Beaufort. Their needs are not being considered and are not being given the choice. This Time to move on from congregated settings policy is determined that Bernard and those special people like him should live like an ordinary person in an ordinary community... but my son, now 40 years old will always be a baby... will always need 24 hour care and be dependant on those who care for him when he is not at home with me. Bernard is a most Extraordinary Person. Living an Extraordinary Life in a most Extraordinary and exceptional place. I shed tears of sadness, pride and emotion watching and listening to my wonderful and talented daughter on the Cutting Edge last night... also for my darling son who will always be my baby. Thank you Lynn from your proud Mum and a drink had from Ruhs xxx



Thanks again @CuttingEdgeRTÉ  
In my house the word we use is Bobo (his longtime)

It was a phenomenal read. Please share. Read it a few times.

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