

NIALL IS A FIGHTER

Man who woke from 21-year-coma wouldn't have had second chance at life if new euthanasia laws introduced, family say

Niall McGrath stunned doctors when he came out of his coma in 2010 and has been steadily recovering ever since.

By Geraldine Comiskey, 21st August 2018, 7:30 am

A MAN who woke up from a 21-year coma would never have a second chance at life if new euthanasia laws are introduced, his family have said.

Niall McGrath stunned doctors when he came out of his coma in 2010 and has been steadily recovering ever since.

The Daniel O'Donnell fan has been helped by his mother, Mary, and sister Sandy Roper, as well as the Donegal singer who sang to him while he was on life-support and kept in touch with the family.

The Mullingar lad incurred massive brain damage when he allegedly fell down steps in a London pub on March 6, 1989.

However, cold-case detectives have launched an investigation after a doctor at St Bartholomew's hospital, London said he believed Niall had received "a massive blow to the head with a block of wood".

His sister said: "They actually withdrew him off life-support three times. He was a write-off." But instead of rapidly wasting away, Niall began to breathe.

He was moved to the National Rehab centre in Dun Laoghaire and later St Joseph's Care Home in [Longford](#), where he has remained since.

Niall could not speak or move up to eight years ago and "now he's able to stand up for 25 minutes and he can transfer himself from the wheelchair to the bed".

He also uses an iPad, and attends speech therapy.

Six operations and ten days later, a week before his 21st birthday, doctors pronounced him "clinically dead".

In between sessions, Sandy voice-coaches him. "In the beginning he struggled to say my name. All he could say was 'Ssss'. Then one day he said to me: 'I love you.' He even sang a few bars of a Daniel O'Donnell song, Footsteps, after we played it at his bedside.

"Then another time he said 'F***!' He was cursing because he was frustrated. Now he's got a lot of words. If you ask him 'How are you?' he says 'Very well, thank you'."

But while the now 50-year-old is making massive strides, Sandy, who works as a therapy attendant for disabled people, believes he would make even more progress if he didn't have to live with older patients.

"All the other residents are elderly. It's depressing for him. The staff do their best but there isn't enough money put into therapy for people like Niall."

She visits him every lunchtime and brings mother Mary, 73, to visit every evening.

The rest of the family also visit, including two nieces, a grandniece and grandnephew who weren't even born when Niall went into the coma.