



## Volunteer Handbook

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## Welcome Message

Wishing you a warm welcome to Making Connections and a big thank you for your interest in being part of the Making Connections Volunteer Team.

This handbook is designed to give you some background about who we are, what we do, and is involved in joining the Making Connections Volunteer Team.

As a volunteer led organization our work would not be possible without the time and dedication of you, our volunteers. At the heart of Making Connections volunteering is compassionate human connection. This simple, precious gift has the power to alleviate isolation and loneliness and to feel valued included and involved in our community.

Making Connections volunteer roles include: Befriending visits, Telephone Befriending, Community Meals driver, Specialist skills, Board and Committee roles.

In addition to offering high quality services to the older people we support, Making Connections, is committed to providing a positive experience for all of our volunteers. To achieve this the Making Connections Volunteer Program is operated in a highly professional manner.

Making Connections volunteering involves formal recruitment and vetting to ensure the right fit. All volunteers receive clear role description, training, and ongoing support from our staff.

Your formal training will help you to understand your role and how it supports the needs of the older people we work with. We will give you lots of practical guidance and tips to support you in your role including common issues that you may encounter and how to respond safely and effectively.

Informal volunteer meetings and events are also held from time to time. This allows you to meet other like-minded volunteers, to share stories and celebrate the positive impact that we are making together.

Our volunteers often tell us about how they gain as much as they give through their role; the wisdom and stories of older generations; the joy of making a difference; greater understanding of the challenges and opportunities of ageing; the blossoming of new friendships; the development of skills and nurturing of positive values.

As you embark on your own volunteering journey with Making Connections, it is my sincere hope that you too will enjoy many of these benefits.

Finally, I would like to thank you once again, for your interest in joining us to enhance the lives of older people in our community. I would also like to thank all our past and present volunteers whose contribution, experiences and feedback continues to guide our work.

Yours Sincerely

Mary O'Donohue  
Executive Director

## About Us

### Our Vision

A community where older people are supported to at home and to stay connected to the community.

### Our Mission

To alleviate loneliness and isolation by providing Befriending and Wellbeing Supports that empower older people to stay healthy and socially connected. We do this with collaboration with HSE, local government and other agencies

### Our Values

Purposeful Work

Optimism

Integrity

Collaboration



## Our Origins

Making Connections was established in 2009 in response to the growing demand for community-based support for the ageing population of south Dublin. Notably Dún Laoghaire-Rathdown has 15.8% people over 65years compared to the national average of 11.2%.<sup>1</sup>

## Our Work

Making Connections supports older people in in communities throughout Dublin South/ CHO 6. Our main partners are Health Care professionals who identify those in critical need of social support. People experiencing isolation or loneliness need more than ‘services’, they need company, human warmth, genuine interest and meaningful social interaction. Our volunteer led supports include;

- Befriending Visits
- Telephone Befriending
- Links to community and social activities/ events
- Good Food Delivered (Community Meals)
- Responding to the emerging needs of older people in our community

We also aim to inspire wider social change by changing attitudes through campaigns and action projects.



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<sup>1</sup> Census 2009

## How to Get Involved

Volunteers are at the heart of Making Connections. From delivering frontline supports, to providing expertise and leadership for the organization, none of it would be possible without the generosity and dedication of volunteers like you.

### Making Connections Volunteer Roles

- Befriending Visits
- Telephone Befriending
- Community Meals Delivery
- Administrative Support
- Specialist Skills

### Equal Opportunities

Making Connections is committed to being an equal opportunities organisation. This includes our volunteers who will not be treated differently because of age, gender, sexual orientation, disability, race, ethnic origin, nationality, marital status, family status, religion or similar bases.

### Recruitment Process

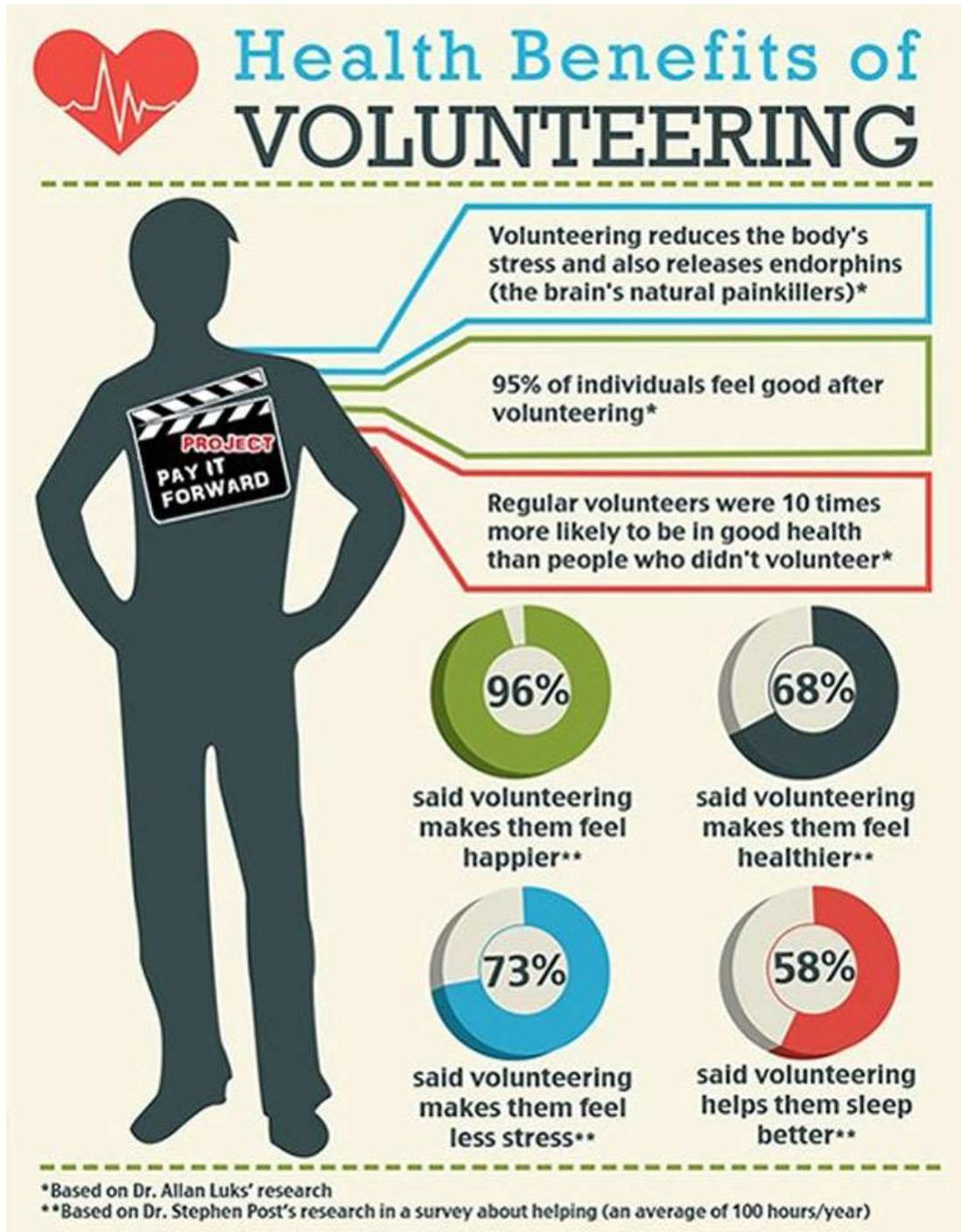
To ensure that we can respond quickly to the needs of older people in our community, Making Connections, aims to recruit a team of suitable volunteers who are ready and eager to be matched to relevant roles as they arise. This means that after you apply, there may be a waiting time until a suitable role becomes available. Here are the steps involved for new volunteers:

<b>First steps</b>	Expression of Interest Form
<b>When a relevant role arises</b>	Volunteer Registration Pack Phone Interview Induction Meeting (Zoom or in-person) Garda Vetting & Reference Checking

Note: the process can vary depending on the role

## Benefits of Volunteering

We know that you're already interested in volunteering to help other people. As a bonus, studies show that it will benefit you in many ways too.



<sup>2</sup> <https://alliance-nel.org.uk/image1/>

## Making Connections Volunteer Roles

### Befriending Visits

Making Connections Befriending Volunteers provide companionship through supported one-to-one relationships between a volunteer and an older person who has been linked in Making Connections. Where relevant, volunteers also assist with other supports where relevant (e.g. assisting someone to learn how to use a smart phone, to get out for a walk, or to access information online).

We ask for a volunteer commitment of **minimum one hour weekly for 12 months**. The regular one-to-one interaction offers the invaluable gift of human connection which can greatly enhance the life of an older person who is socially isolated.

Your role is primarily social engagement. It is not a sitting service, a replacement for home support, nursing staff or family. You will do a lot for a person by just listening, understanding, and sharing interests with them.

Some examples of additional supports may include:

- Assist with laptop phone or email
- Help to access information
- Support to fill out forms
- Supports with small tasks that you are comfortable doing
- Support to stay connected to local activities and events

The needs of each older person are different but by providing small additional supports, you are contributing effectively to their mental health and wellbeing. Making Connections will provide ongoing support to guide volunteers in their role.



## Telephone Befriending Volunteering

The primary role of a Telephone Befriending Volunteer is also to provide social engagement for those requesting this type of support

Telephone Befrienders also offer additional supports such as assistance with accessing information about services and local activities or linking the person back to Making Connections for additional support when needed.



## Community Meals Driving

Good Food Delivered meals is a partnership between Making Connections, HSE and Airfield Estate Dundrum. The service is for Older People who are identified by clinicians as being in need of this support. Clients can receive up to x7 nutritious meals a week which are delivered by a dedicated team of Making Connections Volunteers on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays.

Volunteer Drivers commit to a day a week for a minimum of 6 months. The role can involve driving on a regular route, offering standby cover, or assisting with the packing for pick-up. This volunteer team are more than just delivery drivers – many older people eagerly look forward to the friendly face and on the doorstep.



## Administrative Support

Making Connections is interested in recruiting volunteers with strong administrative skills set to assist with the 'behind-the-scenes' running of the organisation. These roles can involve ongoing support or short-term projects as needs arise. Some roles can be carried out remotely.



## Specialist Skills

Volunteers with specialist skills can contribute a lot to the development of the organisation. Specialist roles include: IT, graphic design, marketing, finance, legal, fundraising, events, etc.

## Other Ways to Make a Difference

Volunteers are encouraged to get involved with the wider Making Connections community and our activities. Here are some of the other ways you can make a difference as a Making Connections volunteer.

**Ambassadors:** All Making Connections volunteers are ambassadors for our mission, vision and values. We are so proud of the work you do and hope you feel the same. We encourage you to share your experiences to promote volunteerism, the value and contribution of older people and the importance of connection and inclusion in our communities.

**Sharing your Stories:** Making Connections relies on volunteers to share their stories, and experiences with us. Real-life stories involving our volunteers and the people they support are essential; to promote the organisation and the services that we offer; to raise vital funds; and to campaign for positive change. Your voice is of great importance to us.



**Fundraising & Corporate Engagement:** As Making Connections ambassadors; volunteers are invited to support our work through fundraising either directly or indirectly. Some options include:

- Nominating Making Connections for a community or workplace fundraiser
- Introduce Making Connections to your company  
Making Connections can engage with your company in many ways such as Charity of the Year, inclusion in Corporate Social Responsibility Activities including payroll and matched giving
- Ask friends and family to donate and get involved with Making Connections campaigns
- Organise a fundraiser with friends, family, or your colleagues
- Participated in a sponsored event



**Social Media:** We ask our volunteers to join us on social media (Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn) and to engage by sharing stories, supporting our campaigns, commenting on posts, and inviting your friends and family to follow us.

**Social Events:** Volunteers may be invited to get involved with social events or activities involving the people we support.

# Volunteer Rights & Responsibilities

## Volunteer Rights

- To have equal opportunity to apply for roles
- To work in a safe a supportive environment
- To have a clear understanding of your role
- To have the opportunity to develop within your role
- To be made aware of relevant policies and procedures
- To receive appropriate training, support, and supervision
- To have someone to contact if you have any concerns
- To say 'no' or to leave your role if you wish
- To be treated with fairness and respect at all times
- To have your opinions, ideas, observations, and feedback listened to
- To be recognised and appreciated for your contribution
- To be covered by Making Connections insurance for your agreed volunteer activities
- To receive updates relevant to your role and the work of Making Connections
- To have your personal data handled with confidentiality
- To be informed about relevant changes regarding the organisation

## Volunteer Responsibilities

- To uphold the aims and values of Making Connections
- To be aware and honest about your preferences and ability to commit to a role
- To sign a volunteer agreement and carry out your role accordingly
- To be aware of and accountable for relevant guidelines, policies, and procedures
- To treat beneficiaries, volunteers and staff with respect and dignity
- To keep an open mind and not to judge others
- To be reliable and to provide sufficient notice for absences
- To be punctual – especially for those visiting an Older Person
- To respect the privacy and confidentiality of the people you work with
- To attend training and support meetings as required
- To provide accurate feedback and report any incidents as they arise
- To be aware of and respect your own limits
- To contact Making Connections;
  - if you experience any problems or have any concerns or queries
  - to pass on any concerns/ updates about the older person you support
  - if the person you support passes away
  - to report any incidents as they occur
- To act as a Making Connections Ambassador by;
  - supporting communications and campaigns
  - assist with fundraising initiatives

## Volunteer Code of Conduct

Making Connections is committed to ensuring that anyone who is involved with us does so in a safe and positive environment. All Making Connections volunteers are asked to commit to a Code of Conduct to promote this aim.

The actions listed below are considered breach of this conduct and may result in volunteers being asked to discontinue their role. Please note that the list is not exhaustive – always be mindful that you are representing Making Connections whilst volunteering.

- Breach of confidentiality
- Abuse of alcohol or drugs
- Failure to adhere to health, safety, and hygiene standards
- Failure to adhere to good practices including reliability and commitment
- Lack of respect for anyone involved with Making Connections or the general public
- Any assault, physical or verbal abuse, or threatening behaviour towards anyone involved with Making Connections or the general public
- All forms of bullying, harassment, discrimination, and sexual abuse
- Theft
- Criminal activity
- Corruption
- Gross negligence

## Volunteer Support & Supervision

At Making Connection, your welfare as a volunteer is of great importance to us. Clear, honest communication is encouraged throughout your volunteering so that we can hear your voice and support you effectively. We communicate with volunteers through regular communication with Making Connections staff.

- **Check-in calls** are made from time to time to hear about your experiences and thoughts about your role as well as providing information or updates
- **Volunteer meetings** are separate to formal training, additional volunteer meetings allow volunteers to meet staff and other volunteers, to share experiences, learn from each other and to celebrate our impact in the community
- **Feedback forms & Surveys** are essential for us to monitor the impact of our work, to assess the changing needs of our volunteers, and the older people you support, and to continue to develop and improve our work

As a volunteer you are encouraged to contact Making Connections staff with any concerns, questions, doubts, or if you need additional support at any time.

Making Connections remains in regular contact with the person/ people you are supporting. In you have any concerns about anyone you support, please contact Making Connections.

## Volunteer Care & Recognition

### Looking After You

Although volunteering has many rewards it can be challenging or upsetting at times. Making Connections encourages all volunteers to contact us and seek assistance when any concerns, doubts or difficulties arise. We are equally dedicated to your wellbeing as we are the older people you support. Volunteers are also encouraged to take personal responsibility for prioritising self-care through their volunteering.

### Happy Healthy Volunteer Tips

- Consider your role description and ensure you are in the right volunteer role
- Establish your personal priorities and boundaries
- Avoid over-commitment of your time or energy
- Be realistic about your goals and ambitions
- Move on or change roles when your role is no longer fulfilling
- Accept that there are some things you may not be able to change
- If your volunteer role is stressful, debrief with Making Connections team member
- Don't be afraid to take time off from your role if you are sick or need a break
- Making Connections can assign another volunteer to the person you visit if appropriate and this shared responsibility can be of great support for you.

### Recognition

We recognise that it is the generosity, time, skills, and compassion of the Making Connections volunteers which make our work possible. Making Connections celebrates the contribution of volunteers through phone calls, emails, cards, e-newsletters, website and social media stories, and volunteer meetings where we share stories about the positive feedback from the people you support and the difference you have made in their lives.



## Holidays

As part of your self-care priority Making Connections recognise that holidays are important. We understand the importance of being able to take time off and not worry about the older person you support. To achieve this, we ask volunteers to give us notice if they are going to be away. This allows us to check-in on the older person whilst you're away.

## Leave of absence

Due to personal circumstances, the death of the person they visit, or other reasons volunteers may wish to take a leave of absence. Volunteers will be supported by Making Connections and will be welcome to return to volunteering when they are ready.

If required, a replacement volunteer will be secured. It is important to contact Making Connections before you resume any volunteering activities so you can be assigned to a suitable role and given further training if required.

## Deciding to Leave

If a volunteer no longer wishes to continue their role we ask that volunteers:

- **Provide at least 1 month notice** so we can secure a replacement volunteer
- Carry out a handover meeting (depending on the role)
- Return any supplies, ID badge, etc.
- Complete a volunteer exit interview and/or form to provide feedback about your experience including positive and negative points and the reason for your departure if possible

## Financial Matters & Insurance

### Financial Matters

Making Connections volunteers should not be involved with any financial matters regarding the older people they support. Further practical tips about issues that may arise will be included in your training. Please contact Making Connections; if you have been involved in any financial matters to date or if you ever encounter any issues or problems of this nature. If an older person you support is experiencing financial difficulty or is in need of other supports, please contact Making Connections with this information.

### Expenses

Unfortunately, it is not financially viable for Making Connections to reimburse volunteer expenses such as mileage. In exceptional circumstances, there may be expenses incurred involving the person you support (e.g., emergency taxi to the hospital). Please keep the receipts, contact Making Connections for an expenses claim form and submit your claim within one month.

Making Connections believes that everyone should have the opportunity to volunteer regardless of their means. If the cost of volunteering is a barrier, exceptions can be made for pre-approved expenses if resources allow. Please contact Making Connections for details.

### Wills & Next of Kin

Volunteers are not permitted to be beneficiaries in the will of any older person who is supported by Making Connections. If an older person asks you to act as an executor of their will, please contact Making Connections. Similarly, if you are asked by an older person to be named as their next-of-kin, please contact Making Connections.

### Public Liability Insurance

Volunteers are protected by Making Connections public liability and personal accident insurance whilst carrying out approved volunteer activities.

### Driving Policy & Car Insurance

Volunteers who use their own motor vehicle during the course of their volunteering activities do so at their own risk and under their own vehicle insurance. Typically, it is required to notify insurers if the vehicle is used for volunteering purposes. This may vary depending on the insurer.

**It is the volunteer's responsibility to check the requirements with their insurance company.** Where a letter is required, it is the volunteers' responsibility to request a letter from Making Connections to provide to your insurance company.

## Confidentiality

The Making Connections Confidentiality Policy outlines the rights and responsibilities which apply to staff, volunteers, and the people we work with. It is important that volunteers treat any personal information regarding older people, the organization, or its staff with strict confidentiality.

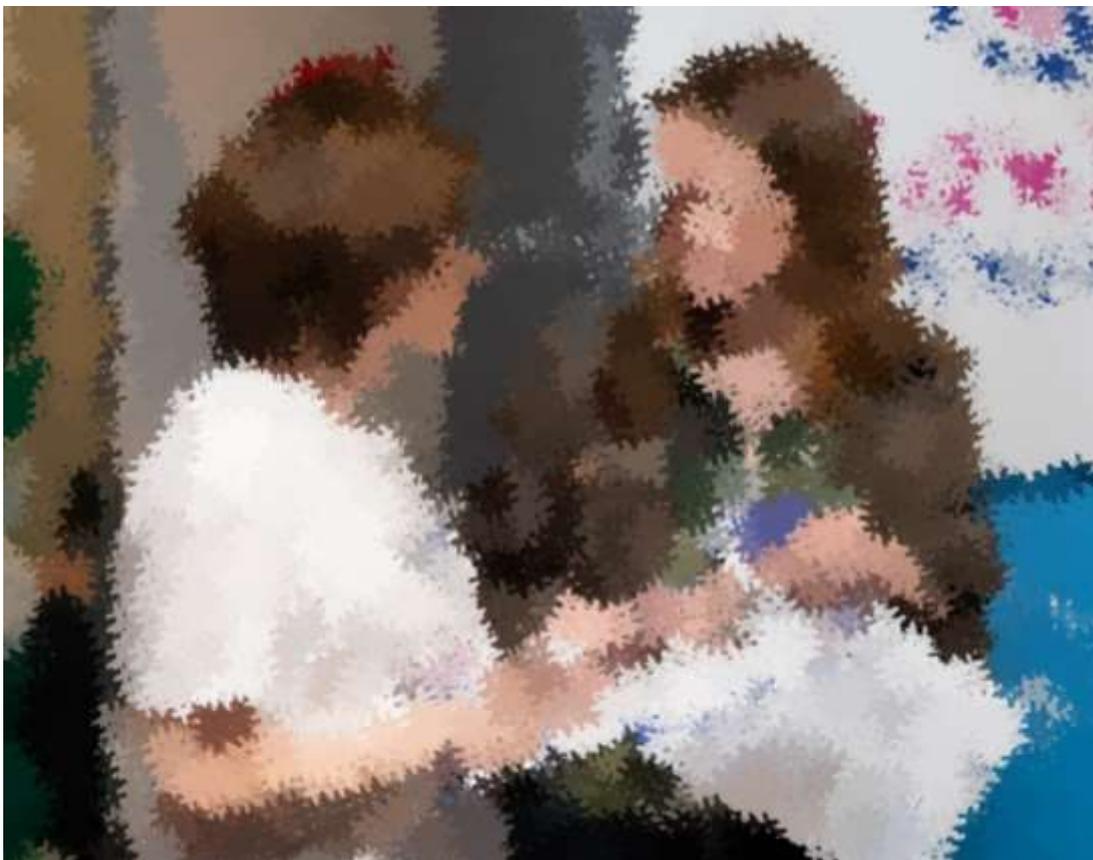
### Older People:

Volunteers are not permitted to share personal information about the older person (including photos) with anyone other than designated Making Connections staff. Where health or safety concerns arise regarding the older person, it is accepted that information may need to be passed onto Making Connections and will be handled with discretion.

### Volunteer Meetings:

Volunteer meetings are designed to be safe spaces where all participants are bound by confidentiality. You will be encouraged to share stories and experiences. It is important however not to name the older people you support, or to share sensitive information.

**Your Commitment:** Volunteers are asked to sign a Confidentiality Agreement. Breach of this agreement can result in termination of the volunteer's role. If in doubt about Confidentiality matters, always ask Making Connections staff.



## Privacy & Data Protection

Making Connections will always ask for your permission before collecting personal information. Information is handled lawfully and appropriately in accordance with the General Data Protection Acts and (GDPR). A copy of Making Connections Privacy and GDPR Policy is available on request.

Making Connections collects, processes, and retains information relating to Volunteers for the purpose of; service delivery, communicating effectively with our volunteers, general administrative tasks, and other best practice requirements. It is used for volunteer recruitment, for the duration of your volunteering, and up to 24 months after ceasing your role.

Making Connections uses volunteer data to support the provision of our services to older people. On occasion your data may be used or shared with other staff, volunteers, or groups to support when additional supports are required for the older people we work with (e.g., first name and phone number may be provided to co-ordinate an emergency response).

Making Connections will only share personal information about you where; it necessary in order to prevent injury or damage to the health of an individual, it is required by law, or required to be made available to the Gardaí in relation to a criminal investigation.

If Making Connections wishes to use your personal data for purposes other than the reason it was collected, you will first be provided with the relevant information about the new reason.

Making Connections is the controller of volunteer data for the purpose of the GDPR. Your rights include the following;

- the right to request access, correction of or deletion of your personal data
- the right to object to, or to limit processing
- the right to data portability in certain circumstances (i.e., provision of data in a format that you can use elsewhere)
- the right to withdraw your consent for data processing if previously given
- the right to lodge a complaint with the Data Protection Commissioners' Office if you believe Making Connections has not complied the GDPR requirements regarding your personal Data

## Health, Safety & Welfare

Making Connections is committed to protect the health, safety and welfare of volunteers, staff, and the older people we support. In line with National Policy, Making Connections regards Safeguarding as ‘everyone’s responsibility’ and as such, volunteers have a duty of care towards older people who they are in contact with through their volunteering.

### Safeguarding Adults

‘Safeguarding’ refers to measures to protect the health, wellbeing, and human rights of individuals, which allow people – especially children, young people, and vulnerable adults – to feel safe and to live free from abuse, harm, and neglect of any kind.

The “Safeguarding Vulnerable Persons at Risk of Abuse - National Policy and Procedures 2014” considers a vulnerable person as “an adult who may be restricted in capacity to guard himself/herself against harm or exploitation or to report such harm or exploitation. Restriction of capacity may arise as a result of physical or intellectual impairment.”

In accordance to the principles outlined in the National Policy, Making Connections has a ‘no tolerance’ approach to any form of abuse (physical, sexual, psychological, financial, or material, institutional, neglect and acts of omission, or discriminatory) and work actively to promote a culture which supports this ethos. Some of the principles underpinning the policy include:

- Respect for human rights
- A person centred approach to care and services
- Promotion of advocacy
- Respect for confidentiality
- Empowerment of individuals
- A collaborative approach

### Safeguarding Children

In principle, Making Connections volunteers will not be interacting with children through their role. Our volunteers are not Garda Vetted to work with children. Making Connections does however have a Safeguarding Children’s Policy in case volunteers or staff encounter a child in the home they visit or are told information about a child.

### Safeguarding Policies & Training

Safeguarding policies and procedures are included in Making Connections training including practical tips on how to deal with situations which may arise.

If a volunteer has a concern about abuse or neglect (including self-neglect) of an older person, child, or any other vulnerable person encountered through their volunteering it is essential to report it immediately to the Making Connections Designated Person

## Problem Solving

### Dispute Resolution

In the case of serious incidents or allegations, the volunteer involved will be asked to cease volunteering activities. Dispute resolution will be carried out as confidentially as possible and Making Connections will ensure the protection of the volunteer and any older person involved. Due process will be carried out and all parties heard. When the investigation is complete the volunteer will resume their activities or be asked to leave. Any volunteer who is asked to leave will have the right to appeal.

### Volunteer Complaints & Grievances

When a volunteer has a complaint or grievance, they should first discuss it with a Making Connections staff member. If the problem cannot be resolved, the volunteer submits their complaint to Making Connections in writing. Making Connections will follow due process and take appropriate action in accordance to the Complaints and Grievances policy which is available on request.

### Asking a Volunteer to Leave

A volunteer may be asked to leave under the following circumstances: breach of the Code of Conduct, failure to comply with current Policies and Procedures, failure to perform their volunteer role satisfactorily, following a complaint that is lodged against them, or if the role is no longer required.

Volunteers will first be informed about the concerns and will have the opportunity to discuss the issues with Making Connections. Follow-up action may include re-assignment to a more suitable role or providing additional training. Failing an appropriate solution, and with approval from the Executive Director, a volunteer may be asked to leave.

## General FAQ

### Is Making Connections a registered charity?

Making Connections is a registered charity (Company Number 559418 | CHY21301 | CRA 20149635). We have a Board of Directors who meet regularly every year.

### How is Making Connections funded?

We receive some government funding but we rely mainly on grants, corporate and individual donations and fundraising activities. Although the donation of your time is the most valuable gift to us, we appreciate your support with the fundraising activities of the charity where possible

### Does Making Connections collaborate with other organisations/ groups?

Yes, Information sharing, the pooling of expertise and resources with the a variety of other organisations is one of our core values as it guides the development of the work we do and ensures best practice.

### Does Making Connections have paid staff?

Yes, Making Connections has a small staff team to ensure the professional quality of our services, governance and compliance standards and sustainability of the organisation.

### Will I get to volunteer straight away when I apply?

We require a team of volunteers who are available in a variety of locations throughout Dublin South. Due to the variety of unpredictable circumstances arising for older people, there may be a delay between applying and being offered a role.

In order to respond quickly to the needs of older people in our community, Making Connections requires a bank of volunteers with varied interests, availability and from different locations. In this regard, your application to volunteer is extremely valuable and important – it is important however to be aware that there may be a delay between applying and being offered a role.

### What if my circumstances change after I apply?

Simply contact Making Connections and we will update your record to help us identify a suitable role.

### I don't have time to commit to befriending – how can I get involved?

Please have a look at other volunteer role options available with us under the section above titled Volunteer Roles.

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Please have a look at other volunteer role options available with us under the section above titled Volunteer Roles.

### Before you finish reading, please take a moment to connect with us

We encourage you to engage by commenting, liking and sharing our posts to help us spread the work.



[@makingconnections.ie](https://www.facebook.com/makingconnections.ie)



[@connections\\_ie](https://twitter.com/connections_ie)



[MakingConnections](https://www.linkedin.com/company/makingconnections)

*Thank you for your interest in joining the  
Making Connections team!*



## Contact Details

Making Connections,  
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Clonskeagh,  
Dublin 14

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Email: [info@makingconnections.ie](mailto:info@makingconnections.ie)

Charity Registered Number (CHY): 21301

CRA Number: 20149635

Company Number: 559418