



ANNUAL REPORT

2022 Recovery
& Reconnection



Mary O'Donohue,
Executive Director

OUR VISION:

A community where no older person is isolated or alone.

OUR MISSION:

To alleviate loneliness and isolation by providing Befriending and Wellbeing Supports that empower people to stay healthy and socially connected.

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR RECOVERY & RECONNECTION

2022 was described as the 'permacrisis' year but at Making Connections, it was another very proactive twelve months supporting people to re-connect and recover from the two challenging pandemic years. Our aim was to deliver a message of hope.

Many had lost their independence and were fearful about venturing out again. In addition, physical activity declined leading to deconditioning, a rise in falls and reduced mobility. People were fearful as described by one of our beneficiaries, "I fear I will never experience 'normality' again in my lifetime."

Against this background and in collaboration with HSE, we piloted a highly successful 'Walk & Talk' group for people 65yrs+ in Churchtown. It was aimed at those who needed to get out of the house, connect with others, and find confidence in exercising and socialising again.

Our strong clinical-community collaboration continued to be a key strength in 2022. Clinician referrals from public health nurses, GPs and hospitals enabled us to support many of the 'hardest to reach' individuals.

In 2022, Making Connections was selected as a lead implementation partner for the dlr Age Friendly 5 Year Strategy (2022 – 2026). Key priorities were identified following consultation with older people in the County and we are committed to playing our part in delivering essential aspects of the strategy over coming years.

Sincere thanks to our staff and volunteers, including our Board Directors, for their commitment to Making Connections. Their generous investment of time and skills, very often in the background, brought hope and happiness to many people in our community who may otherwise be without it.

Executive Director
Making Connections

OUR IMPACT



16,000
NUTRITIOUS
MEALS DELIVERED



6,000
VOLUNTEER HOURS



268
OLDER PEOPLE
SUPPORTED



100+
VOLUNTEERS
ENGAGED



INNOVATIVE
COLLABORATION
WALK & TALK PILOT
PROJECT



INTERGENERATIONAL
VOLUNTEERING

AGE FRIENDLY COUNTY 5 YEAR STRATEGY

As a member of the local Age Friendly Alliance, Making Connections was actively involved in developing a 5-year County strategy (2022-2026). In 2022, we were selected as a lead implementation partner to deliver key objectives in the coming years.

This multi-sector collaboration is aimed at changing how we think about ageing and how services for older people are planned and delivered. Together we work to make our community a great place to grow old.

During the research phase of the strategy, a public consultation (621 older people) revealed Health & Social Support as a top concern for the next five years (including loneliness, isolation, mental health, and post-Covid challenges). All of our work in 2022 involved social and wellbeing supports which contributed towards our shared strategy objectives.

Multi-Sector
Collaboration





COLLABORATION - STRONGER TOGETHER

In 2022, we continued to align our work with National policy and strategy, and to work in collaboration with local agencies to maximise the impact of our work.

National Alignment:

- › Age Friendly Ireland
- › National Positive Ageing Strategy
- › Sláintecare
- › Volunteer Ireland

Local Collaboration:

- › Dlr Age Friendly 5 Year Strategy
- › HSE Managers & Primary Care Teams
- › Community Policing Team
- › Social Prescribing Network
- › Corporate partners

Our work aligns with Sláintecare's vision of integrated community-based care in the right place at the right time. We link with HSE Managers and clinicians to stay on the pulse of emerging needs enabling us to support those who are most in need.

**Social
Prescribing
Network
Meetings**





Partnering to
Improve Physical
& Social Activity

NEW WALK & TALK PILOT PROJECT

In collaboration with HSE Community Healthcare East Primary Care services and Health & Wellbeing, we delivered a successful 'Walk & Talk' pilot project in Churchtown. The aim was to improve physical activity levels and social engagement in older adults, and to promote health and wellbeing.

Together, we developed and delivered two pilot groups. Each group completed six weeks of walking in Loreto Park, followed by a café social in Nutgrove shopping centre. The walks were supported by our volunteers as well as staff from Making Connections and the HSE.

To measure impact, participants completed a clinical assessment and wellbeing evaluation surveys before and after the initiative.

- › 100% reported a positive impact on their health and wellbeing
- › 90% showed an improvement in muscle strength
- › 94% indicated that they were motivated to walk more after the programme

Due to the success of this scalable model, it was decided to roll out the Walk & Talk programme in 2023.



Enjoying
Social
Engagement

“ I can walk for longer now. I’m no longer afraid to go out alone. ”
PATRICK, 74

“ Connecting with others lifted my mood. I can’t believe I’m making new friends at my age. ”
CATHERINE, 86

Building
Confidence
to Exercise





BEFRIENDING & WELLBEING SUPPORTS

Loneliness doubled during the Covid-19 pandemic according to Irish research. Many people referred to us in 2022 revealed that they had not re-established their social connections since they were asked to 'cocoon.'

In response, Making Connections broadened the range of social and wellbeing supports available including:

- › **Regular befriending visits**
- › **Walking companionship**
- › **Buddy support** (e.g. trip to café/ shops/ cinema, etc)
- › **Practical support** (e.g. help to fill forms, access information, teaching how to use mobile devices for online shopping, etc)



Providing
Social &
Wellbeing
Supports

We focussed on social connections, lightening the load and nurturing a sense of purpose. In simple terms, we witnessed how meaningful connection encouraged more laughter, less stress, and greater hope for the future.



I was afraid to go out alone after being stuck in the house for so long. Cormac has helped me get back to 'normal'. We've even ventured out to go for walks around block. I think I'm getting my spark back!

JIM, 76

Helping
People to
Re-Connect



FINAL YEAR OF MEAL DELIVERY

We were proud to roll out the final year of Good Food Delivered in partnership with Airfield Estate and the HSE. This project was initiated in 2020 as an emergency meal delivery service when the pandemic hit. The success resulted in a clear need to extend the duration and scale of this project.

2020 – 2022 Impact

- › 30,000 nutritious meals delivered
- › 6,000 volunteer hours
- › 300 people supported

As well as physical health, this service also supported our goal of post pandemic re-connection. For many still shielding from Covid-19, the doorstep chats with Making Connections volunteers was the only regular social engagement they experienced. This invaluable interaction 'with the outside world' was reported to be an essential support to many.



“When I came home from hospital it was a difficult recovery. I’ve no family around and I was really struggling to manage alone. The meals were an invaluable lifeline during that challenging time.”

PAT, 87

“I used to love cooking but the arthritis got too bad. I went off food for a while and was losing weight. Having meals delivered to me by a friendly face helped me get my appetite back.”

MARGARET, 73

Delivering
Nutritious
Meals



VALUING VOLUNTEERS

Making Connections' model of volunteer engagement unlocked thousands of one-to-one support hours and meaningful social engagement, essential for wellbeing.

Acting as "eyes on the ground," they also enabled us to identify and respond to situations arising before they became critical.

In 2022, we were delighted to host a Volunteer Appreciation event to celebrate their achievements and share inspiring stories about their experience of volunteering.

Looking to the future, as a member of the dlr Age Friendly Alliance, our insights regarding volunteer-led community supports for older people formed part of the upcoming 5 Year Strategy.

“My life has been so enriched by knowing him. When you have lived 93 years you have a lot of fascinating life experience to share. When I leave, he always says he feels so much better but I really think I get a lot more out of it than he does.”

DANIEL, 42, VOLUNTEER

“I'd like to be a role model for my son. I want him to learn that regardless of age or ability we are all the same and that everyone needs connections.”

ANNA, 36, VOLUNTEER



FAMILY VOLUNTEERING

In 2021, Making Connections completed a pilot project through Volunteer Ireland as part of an EU-wide initiative. The positive experience of the families involved motivated them to continue to volunteer with the support of Making Connections.

“We sometimes do their gardens and light housework but the important thing is we are connecting with people. As we are pulling the weeds we are chatting away. We feel privileged to be part of their lives.”

PATRICK, 42

“As we were talking, she cried. She hadn't met up with anyone socially for over 2 years... but these were tears of happiness - that she had people with her and that she was able to talk. She had so many stories to tell.”

ELENA, 16



CASE STUDY: THE POWER OF INTERGENERATIONAL CONNECTIONS

“My house used to be full, but my children are overseas and my husband died long ago. I used to be so active, but with the Parkinsons I can't even get out alone. I feel trapped alone in the house. During the pandemic the streets were empty and I'd have nobody coming to the house – the loneliness was horrendous.

When Making Connections volunteer, Estelle, came along it was such a joy. I haven't laughed so much in years. I look forward to seeing her every Friday. When the weather improves, she's going to help me get out the local park.

VERA, MAKING CONNECTIONS BENEFICIARY

“Since joining Making Connections I feel more energetic, grateful, and joyful as it allows me to make a positive impact in my community. Even though we only spend a small amount of time together I can see it makes a huge difference to Vera. Volunteering is one of the best decisions I have ever made.

ESTELLE, MAKING CONNECTIONS VOLUNTEER, AGE 24



SPIRIT OF CHRISTMAS

Through our Winter Plan 2022 we reached out to people to provide additional support and reassurance during these challenging months.

One project, the 'Spirit of Christmas,' involving students from Rosemont Secondary School, brought joy and light to many older people during the Holiday period. Packs full of heartfelt letters, humorous stories, fun photos, puzzles, thoughtful gifts and crafts were delivered to people spending Christmas alone.

Our Family volunteers also arranged additional activities including a Christmas social and carols in Beauford Day Centre for local residents.



Delivering
Additional
Supports



Bringing Joy
with Personal
Messages

GOOD GOVERNANCE

Five board meetings were held in 2022 in addition to an Annual General Meeting. The Board of Making Connections ensured that our work remained fully compliant with the Charities Governance Code in 2022.

OUR COMMITMENT

As a lead implementation partner for the dlr Age Friendly County Strategy (2022 – 2026) we remain committed to supporting people to live happy and healthy at home, and connected with their community. We will continue to provide a wide range of volunteer opportunities for all ages; and to support people to recover and reconnect, and regain confidence to move forward after the pandemic.

A MESSAGE FOR OUR SUPPORTERS

Our achievements in 2022 would not have been possible without our donors, local businesses and programme partners as well as our volunteer team. We are very appreciative of your generosity which allows us deliver a quality service and to respond to emerging needs.



To all who
have supported
us in 2022 –
Thank you





MAKING CONNECTIONS

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Charity Registered Number (CHY): 21301
CRA Number: 20149635
Company Number: 559418

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- › Adrienne Gormley, Chair
- › Laura Ryan, Vice Chair
- › Helen Boyd, Company Secretary
- › Timothy Brick, Treasurer
- › Joe Coleman

Photo Credit: Aengus McMahon Photography
(p1, front cover (beneficiary & volunteer) and p16
(beneficiary and volunteer with colouring pencils)).

