



making connections

Annual Report



2024

**Ageing is
inevitable
loneliness
doesn't have
to be**

Our Vision:

A community where no older person is isolated or alone.

Our Mission:

To alleviate loneliness and isolation by providing supports that empower older people to stay healthy and socially connected.



Director's message

Making Connections is committed to creating a society where older people can live well at home and remain connected to their communities.

It's encouraging to see life expectancy rise, and equally important to ensure growing older at home is both possible and conducive to good health.

In 2024, loneliness was the most common challenge for those referred to Making Connections. We received an outpouring of positive feedback from many who benefited from our walking programmes, befriending services, and other practical and social supports.

None of this would be possible without our volunteers. Their generosity and dedication were vital in 2024 — responding to loneliness, supporting mental wellbeing, leading walking groups, and ensuring participants felt seen, valued, and included.

I wish to acknowledge the ongoing commitment of our Board, who support our work while ensuring full compliance with the Governance Code. Credit is due to our staff, whose hard work, positivity, and commitment to individual needs have been exceptional.

We were sorry to bid farewell to our Development Support Officer, Rachel Gilliland, after four years of outstanding service. Rachel was a tremendous asset, and her professionalism, warmth, and kindness left a lasting impact on all those she worked with. We wish her every success in her next adventure.

I look forward to 2025 with optimism as we expand the team and continue strengthening connections and supporting older people to live well at home and in their communities.

Yours sincerely,
Mary O'Donohue



2024 Highlights



**Walking
Programmes:
2 million+ steps
taken**



**6,000+
Volunteer
Hours**



**360
Older People
supported**



**Social Walking
Programme
launched**

Ageing well together: Clinical-community collaboration

In 2024, Making Connections supported people over 65 to stay physically active and socially engaged in their communities.

Our strong partnership with the HSE is central to this work. 91% of our referrals in 2024 came from HSE clinicians.



“I get to talk with people who are facing similar struggles to me. It means I don't feel so alone with my problems anymore.”
James, 87

“I feel uniquely blessed to have people like Making Connections who look after me and my needs.”
Jack, 95

Celebrating our volunteers

At Making Connections, volunteers are at the heart of everything we do.

Our volunteers build strong relationships with the people we support and respond to individual needs. They often notice early signs of health changes, which enables us to provide the right support at the right time.

“The group was so welcoming, and I loved connecting with the participants. Their energy and stories made the experience so enriching.”

Kritika, Volunteer



“Mercedes is an amazing and inspiring woman. She helps me remember not to take life too seriously; she inspires me to keep traveling, and it's amazing to share many laughs together!”

Marike, Volunteer



HSE Collaboration

We believe that real impact happens when organisations work together.

In 2024, Making Connections collaborated with 165 clinicians through information-share meetings, gaining valuable insights into the evolving needs of the older people we support.



“Thank you so much Making Connections. Your service is making such a difference to our clients in the community and as Physiotherapists we are so appreciative. Thank you.”
Physiotherapist, Blackrock, Co. Dublin

What Matters to You, Matters to Us

Throughout 2024, we expanded our supports, connecting people with the right services and resources to meet their needs.

While aging is inevitable, loneliness doesn't have to be. The Making Connections model, shaped in collaboration with HSE clinicians and service users, centres on personalised support. Referrals to the charity tripled in 2024 .

“ Making Connections has been so helpful. You are so thoughtful and considerate. I never expected to be treated to well.

Bernie, 83 ”

“ Your charity gives me such a lift and I feel secure knowing that ye are there for me & I can call on you.

Simon, 92 ”



“ It wasn't just about the task they did. It was the helpful attitude of your volunteers: their presence, their company, their smile and sense of humour. I will never forget it.

Maura, 75 ”

The benefits we provide include:



Increase in physical activity and social engagement



Reduced feelings of isolation and loneliness



Empowerment to age well at home



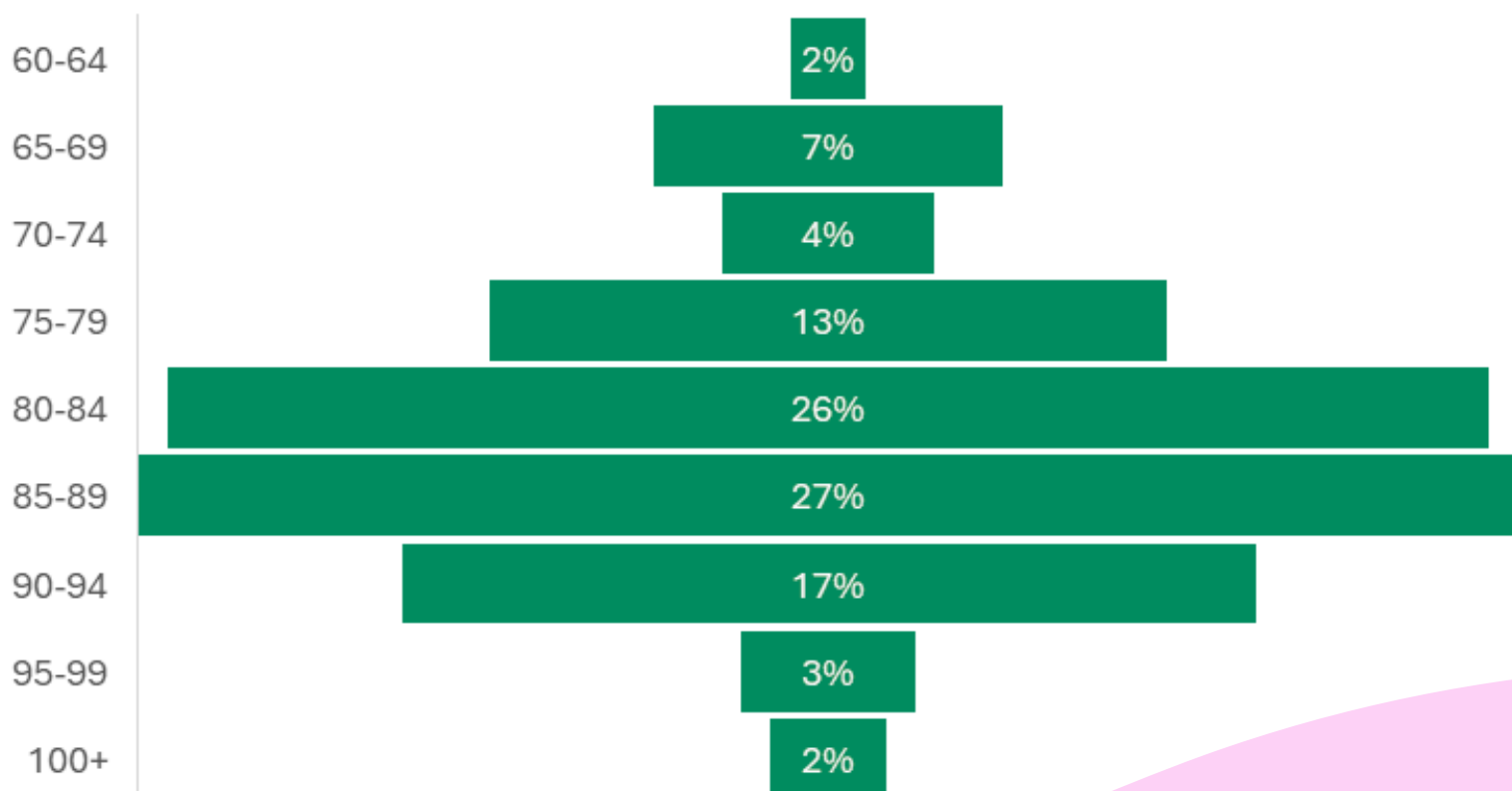
Boosted mood and overall wellbeing



Renewed involvement in community activities



Age Profile of Beneficiaries 2024



Making Connections Walk and Talk Programmes

Making Connections Walk and Talk Programmes, in partnership with the HSE, continued with great participation and success in the locations of Churchtown and Leopardstown.

Feedback has been overwhelmingly positive. 100% of participants said the programme improved their health and wellbeing, and all reported they were likely to continue walking afterward.

The top benefits reported by participants were:

✓ **Improved mood following the walks**

✓ **Positive social engagement with other participants**

“When you age, your world can get smaller. This programme is excellent for getting people out, meeting new people of a similar age...and the volunteers are fantastic.”

Eoin, 87



Making Connections Walk and Talk Programmes showcased at the HEPA Conference in August:

We were delighted that Shane Lee, Sláintecare Healthy Communities Coordinator, shared the impact of the Making Connection Walk and Talk Programmes at the Health-Enhancing Physical Activity (HEPA) Europe Conference in Dublin.

It was a fantastic opportunity to showcase our work, learn from others, and highlight how local, community-led initiatives can support healthy ageing across Europe.

“The volunteers were very helpful and the pace was just right. I hope more people will try this programme. Fidele, 76”

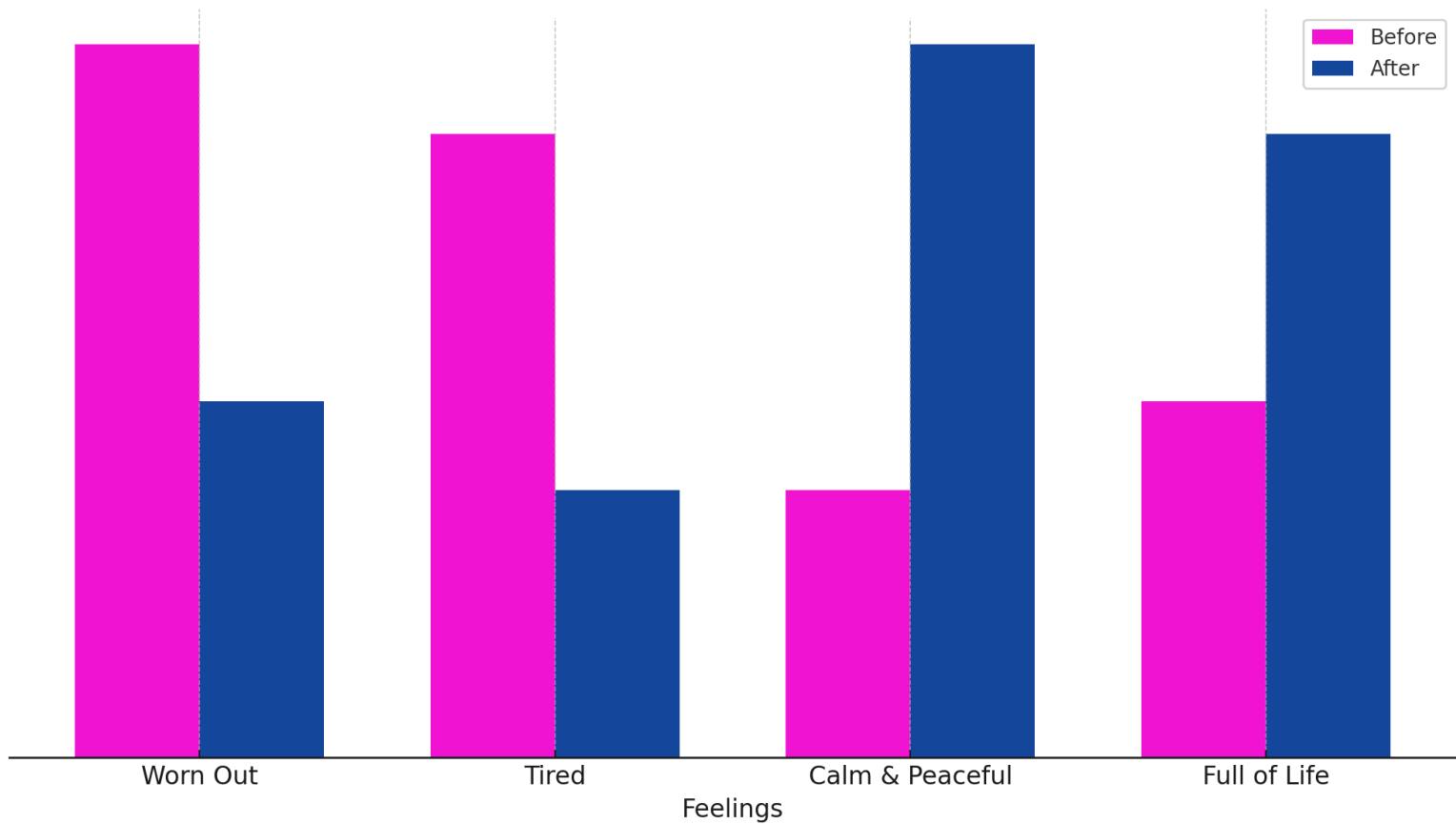


“I get to talk with people who are facing similar struggles to me. We get to share experiences and support each other. It means I don't feel so alone with my problems anymore. Jim, 82”

Social Walking Programme

The Social Walking Programme offers participants that have completed the Making Connections Walk and Talk Programme a sustainable way to stay active and connected. Many have shared how much they value the structure and support it provides,

Changes in participants wellbeing



“I probably wouldn't leave the house if it wasn't for this programme. It gives me something to look forward to each week.”
Germaine, 69

Outing to Royal Hibernian Academy

Thanks to the generosity of a corporate sponsor, we were delighted to invite older people and volunteers to a special event at the RHA Gallery.



The participants thoroughly enjoyed learning about the works of both Irish and international artists. It was wonderful to see them engaging in lively discussions with each other and the volunteers as they explored the gallery together.

“It’s good to have a reason to come here; I haven’t been here in years!
Kane, 91”

End of year celebration



At the end of year celebration, participants shared the benefits of the walking programmes for their mental and physical health. Many felt inspired to set new goals for staying active over Christmas, helping carry the programme's momentum into the new year.

Feedback from participants highlighted that the sense of community and the genuine connections formed were among the most powerful aspects of the programme.

“I joined with my sister, as she hadn't left her home in two years. It was the best thing she ever did, and I would recommend it to anyone.”

Joan, 88

Good Governance

Thanks to the board of Making Connections for continuing to provide strategic leadership, financial oversight, and ensuring regulatory compliance. In 2024, the board convened 5 times and held an Annual General Meeting. The trustees ensured that Making Connections adhered to the Charities Governance Code and met legal obligations.

Making Connections undergoes an annual audit conducted by Crowleys DFK, and financial statements are made publicly available.



Making Connections Trustees (L-R): Colin Shaw, Laura Ryan, Ciara Wallace, Jordan Campbell, Timothy Brick (not pictured: Aine O'Mahony)

Thank you

The progress we achieved in 2024 would not have been possible without the generosity of our donors and supporters. We extend our heartfelt thanks for your commitment, which enables us to continue our work, scale our programmes in response to rising needs, and provide tailored support to each of our beneficiaries.

“I was afraid of loneliness more than any health issue. Your volunteer has been a lifeline. I will never be able to thank you enough.
Albert, 93”



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