



**making
connections**



Annual Report 2025

**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.



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Director's Message

If there is one lesson that 2025 has reinforced, it is that connections really matter.

We live in a time of extraordinary contradiction. We can communicate instantly across continents, yet loneliness remains one of the defining challenges of our age. We are surrounded by networks, platforms, and technologies designed to bring us together, yet too often people feel unseen, unheard, or left behind.

This year, through the work of Making Connections, I have been reminded again and again that another story is unfolding alongside the headlines.

It is the story of individuals finding hope after periods of isolation, of people discovering confidence, purpose, and belonging. It is the story of ordinary people doing extraordinary things when given the opportunity to connect.

Communities are not built by programmes, buildings, or technology. Communities are built through relationships. They are strengthened every time someone reaches out a hand, shares a skill, or creates space to listen without judgement.

Throughout 2025, we have seen countless examples of this. Some were small and quiet; others created lasting change. Together, they formed something much bigger than any single initiative or project. They strengthened the social fabric that helps people weather challenges and find hope for a brighter future.

This report highlights many achievements from the past year, and we are proud of what has been accomplished. But behind every statistic is a human story. Behind every outcome is a relationship. Behind every success is a community of people who chose to invest their time, energy, and compassion in others.

I would like to thank our participants, volunteers, staff, partners, funders, and supporters for their commitment throughout the year. Sincere thanks to our Board of Directors for their leadership, guidance, and unwavering belief in our mission.

The challenges facing society are real. But so too is our collective capacity to respond to them. Every connection made, every barrier reduced, and every person welcomed and included helps create the kind of society we all want to live in—one that is more compassionate, more connected, and more resilient.

That is the future we are working towards. And thanks to all who support our mission, it is a future that feels not only possible, but within reach.

In a world that often asks what divides us, our experience this year has shown us what unites us. Every day, through acts of kindness, inclusion, and participation, people continue to make connections. And in making those connections, they create stronger communities, greater resilience, and renewed hope for the future.

Yours sincerely,



Enabling Independence and Engagement

The Befriending and Wellbeing Supports Programme continues to deliver tailored, person-centred supports to older people across our community. By responding to individual needs, the programme enables participants to maintain their independence, enhance their wellbeing, and improve their overall quality of life.

“At its core, the service is about meaningful human connection—ensuring that no one feels alone, unheard, or unsupported.”

Suzanne Mahon, Support Coordinator for Making Connections

“It makes a world of difference to have someone to talk things through with, it helps to have someone who listens.”

Jane, 87

“I love having a volunteer by my side, not only for the connection but for the practical supports too, like filling out forms.”

John, 79



Person Centred Approach

An 84-year-old woman, living alone, was referred to Making Connections by her GP due to concerns about the suitability of her housing and increasing social isolation.

A person-centred approach was taken to understand her needs, preferences, and the challenges she was facing in her daily life.

Supports Provided

- A comprehensive home assessment was carried out to identify risks and areas where practical supports could enhance safety and comfort at home.
- She was supported to engage in the Walk and Talk programme, creating opportunities to build confidence, improve physical health, and connect socially with others.
- A referral was made to Care & Repair to progress essential home improvements, supporting her ability to remain safely in her own home.
- She was supported by one of our team of volunteers who provided one-to-one support for a variety of tasks.

Through continued engagement, Making Connections remains committed to supporting individuals like this woman to feel safe, connected, and empowered to live independently at home.

“I look forward to my volunteer’s visits; they give me a lift, and I would be lost without them.”

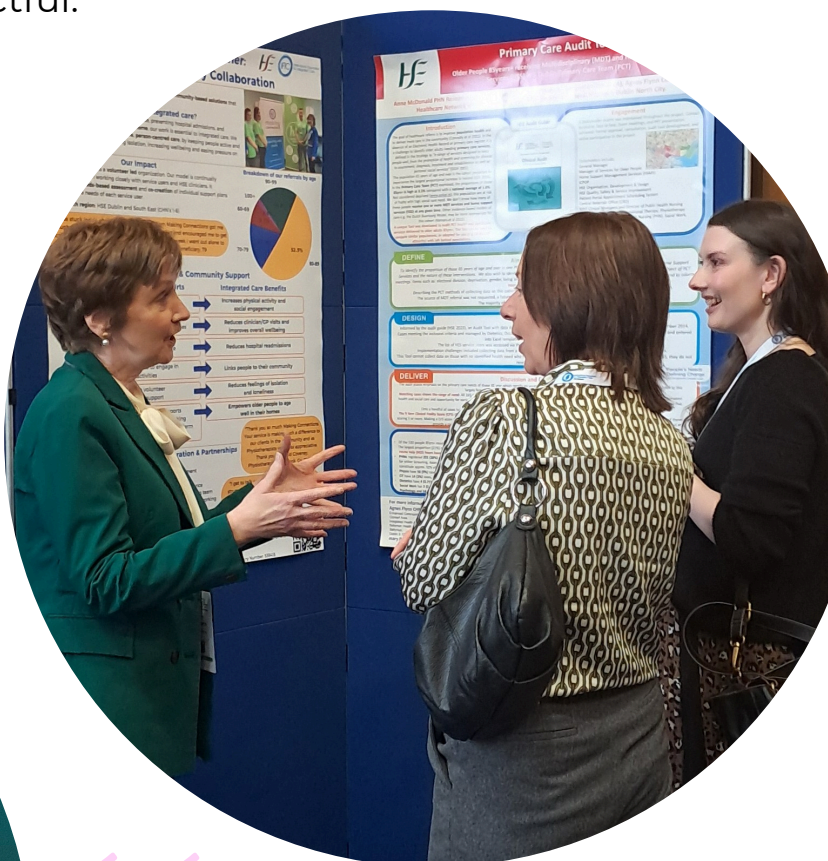
Aoife, 93



Creating a Society For All Ages

In 2025, Making Connections continued to prioritise collaboration as a cornerstone of effective service delivery. Strong partnerships, particularly with the HSE, have been instrumental in ensuring that supports remain person-centred, responsive, and impactful.

Ongoing engagement with clinicians, has enabled a valuable exchange of insights. This collaboration, combined with direct feedback from the community, ensures that services are continuously refined to meet evolving needs.



“Making Connections is invaluable to the community. Our Public Health Nurses always recommend your service, which proves so beneficial to the community. Thank you again for all your support.”

Jane, PHN, Dublin 16

Siobhan McArdle, Assistant Secretary Social Care Mental Health Department Health
Mary O'Donohue, Executive Director, Making Connections

Beyond healthcare partnerships, Making Connections actively contributed to wider engagement through conferences, workshops, and network meetings focused on ageing, social prescribing, and integrated care. This work supports the recognition of social connection and community-based supports as essential components of health and wellbeing.

Community Engagement

As part of this engagement, Making Connections was proud to host an information stand at the DLR County Council Age Friendly Exhibition in June, providing an opportunity to connect directly with older people, promote available supports, and encourage independent living.



“I am so grateful that you got to John so quickly. I really appreciate it and know it will make such a huge difference in keeping him both safe and at home, like he wants to remain.”

Peter, Physiotherapist, Blackrock

2025 Highlights



Walking
Programmes:
3 million+ steps
taken



6,000+
Volunteer
Hours



390
Older People
supported



Weekly
Walking
Programmes
delivered

Our Volunteers: The Ripple Effect

Making Connections is a volunteer-led organisation, strengthened by a dedicated and compassionate community of individuals who give their time to support others. Their contribution extends far beyond practical assistance—each interaction creates a ripple effect, fostering connection, dignity, and a stronger community.



“This was more than just a person I visit. There is 50 years between us, but it never felt like that. It is remarkable how much we had in common.”

Rob, Volunteer

Whether offering companionship or practical help, volunteers play a transformative role in the lives of older people, opening up opportunities for engagement and reducing isolation.

“I didn’t socialise for 6 months after my sister died, but your phone calls really kept me going.”

Virginia, 73



Inspiring the Next Generation

As part of Founders Week at Rosemont Secondary School for girls in Sandyford, Emilia O'Connor- Programmes Lead for Making Connections - was invited to speak to students on the theme "Made for Others."



The session highlighted the organisation's work in addressing loneliness through programmes that promote connection, service, and community engagement. Through real-life examples, students gained insight into the powerful impact of intergenerational relationships on wellbeing and social participation.

We are grateful to Rosemont School, a valued partner, for hosting this event and for their continued commitment to fostering a culture of service and meaningful connection among the next generation.

"Hearing the stories of older people is truly special — they've lived such incredible lives, and it's not often you get the chance to listen to those experiences first-hand."

Hannah, Transition Year Student



Supporting Health and Confidence

The Walk and Talk programme, managed by Making Connections in partnership with the HSE, continued to achieve strong outcomes throughout 2025. Three 10-week programmes were successfully delivered across Churchtown and Leopardstown, offering structured and supportive opportunities for physical activity.

“This programme is the absolute highlight of my week. Whatever challenges I am facing, it keeps me going.”

Janet, 65

“I love the programme—it is very beneficial and I feel better for it. Great volunteers who are friendly and most welcoming.”

William, 79



The programme welcomed many new participants, supporting them to build confidence, form meaningful social connections, and increase their physical activity levels. Participants reported sustained improvements in both physical health and overall wellbeing.

Social Walking Programme: Expanding Reach and Impact

Funded by Healthy Ireland through the DLR County Council, the Social Walking Programme continues to prioritise sustainability and long-term impact. Managed by Making Connections, the programme encourages people aged 65+ to participate in regular social activity, supporting both physical health and positive mental wellbeing.

“It is wonderful to be on a programme where I don’t feel out of place.”

Johnny, 96



“When we started walking round the park, I never thought I’d manage a full loop. Now I am walking one and a half times! I have regained confidence and made new friends.”

Lola, 86

In 2025, the programme expanded successfully to a second location in Leopardstown — reflecting strong demand and growing community engagement.

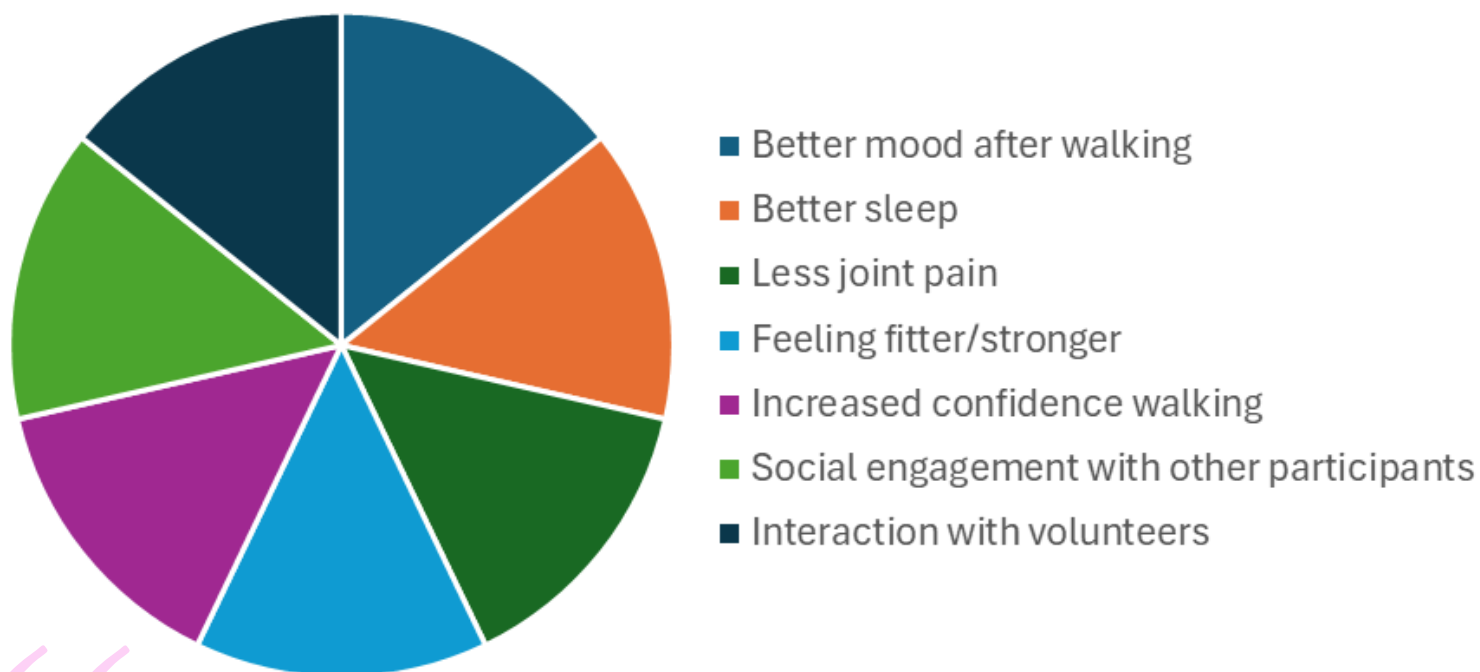
With programmes now established in both Churchtown and Leopardstown, a strong foundation has been laid for continued growth.

“The pace is just right, the people are wonderful, and I feel motivated to walk more during the week.”

Roisin, 73

Walking Programme Benefits

The top benefits reported by participants after completing the Walk and Talk Programme:



“I would never have gotten out of the house without this programme.”

At the beginning of 2025, 57% of participants in the Social Walking Programme in Churchtown reported positive mental health, as measured by EVI indicators. By year end, this had risen to 84% — a significant improvement that highlights the programme’s meaningful impact in supporting wellbeing, connection, and overall quality of life.

“When I first heard about the programme, I was hesitant as I had lost my confidence. Now, I can’t wait to get out for the walks.”

Rosaline, 67

Michael, 83



“This Programme is such a fantastic idea—I haven’t been this social for a long time.”

Paul, 91

Celebrating a Fantastic Year

Participants from across the walking programmes were brought together for an end-of-year celebration, marking a year of connection, progress, and shared achievement.

The event provided an opportunity for participants, volunteers, and staff to reflect on personal milestones, strengthened relationships, and the sense of community built throughout 2025.

“I really love this Programme. Making Connections is such a wonderful organisation with so many kind and caring volunteers.”

Tom, 75

“My walking has improved no end. I feel stronger and I can walk longer now.”

Marie, 88



We also extend our sincere thanks to our corporate partner – Avolon Areospace Ltd. - for hosting this event and demonstrating a strong commitment to the wellbeing of older people in the local community.

Committed to Good Governance

Making Connections remains committed to the highest standards of governance and accountability. Strong oversight and transparent practices ensure that all resources are used effectively to deliver meaningful impact for older people in the community.



Thank you to our Funders and Supporters

The work of Making Connections is made possible through the continued generosity and commitment of our funders, donors, volunteers, and supporters. Your support enables us to enhance lives, strengthen community connections, and deliver essential services to older people. Thank you for making this impact possible.

“The support you have given me has been a lifeline. Thank you, I would be lost without it.”

Eoin, 86

“We all know the feeling of no post arriving, no phone calls, no one to talk to. Since joining this programme, I finally feel a sense of belonging. Each week, I know there are people expecting me — and we always have a great laugh.”

Dara, 94



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