

Phone companion service increases sense of security

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Credit: Peter Griffin/Public Domain

An increased sense of security and a reduction of feelings of loneliness were among the positive impacts of a Co Donegal telephone befriending service for older people, according to new research conducted by psychologists at Trinity College Dublin.

The Good Morning Service, which aims to reduce feelings of isolation,

loneliness, vulnerability and insecurity among older adults in Co Donegal, provides a free confidential telephone befriending service. The service has over 240 clients who receive over 1,000 calls a week from 110 volunteers. The service was established in Innishowen in 2006 and has since expanded to a further five centres across the county.

Professor Brian Lawlor, Conolly Norman Professor of Old Age Psychiatry, Trinity commented: "We know from research studies that loneliness and being isolated from friends and family can have about the same effect on how long you live as cigarette smoking and obesity, and that a lack of social engagement contributes about the same level of risk for developing dementia as lack of physical activity or depression. The findings of this research demonstrate how a community volunteering service can positively impact and enrich the lives of all of those involved and help combat loneliness and isolation."

Clients of the service reported increased sense of security and safety in their homes and a reduction of feelings of loneliness and [social isolation](#), according to research conducted by psychologists at Trinity's Institute of Neuroscience.

Users of the service also reported that the Good Morning Service provided an important source of information about other care services, helped maintain connection to the local community and also offered practical support with everyday issues and problems (such as form filling or getting help with household tasks).

The research, which was funded by an Irish Research Council 'New Foundations' Award, also looked at the experience of volunteers working on the [service](#). Volunteers reported a range of benefits including a sense of personal satisfaction, enjoyment of interesting conversations with the clients, improved mood and sense of well-being and development of new skills.

Marian McAlinney, Chairperson, Good Morning Service, added: "Our experience tells us that the Good Morning Service is both necessary and effective in alleviating [loneliness](#) and isolation for our older population in Donegal. The research conducted by Trinity College Dublin gives an independent view and an authenticity to what has been up till now mainly anecdotal evidence. The outcomes of the evaluation will support our everyday contacts with our clients as well as informing our ongoing development plans."

Provided by Trinity College Dublin

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