

COMMUNITY BEFRIENDING IMPACT REPORT 2023

Depaul Community Befriending Programme

DEPAUL

Homelessness has no place

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A WORD FROM THE BEFRIENDING COORDINATOR

As we reflect on 2023, it's inspiring to see how the Befriending Programme has continued to grow and adapt to the evolving needs of our participants. At the heart of our mission is the commitment to prevent homelessness and transform lives, starting with empowering individuals to take responsibility for their own journeys.

This past year, we have demonstrated an unwavering dedication to building relationships with the men at Back Lane and supporting their transition to independent living. By fostering engagement among participants and encouraging connections within the community, we aim to ease their path out of supported accommodation. Our volunteers play a crucial role in this process, showing participants that they have a vital place in society and a community to call their own.

The Tuesday Club has emerged as a cornerstone of our offerings, successfully encouraging residents to participate and, later, connect with community befriending initiatives. This represents a significant stride toward breaking the cycle of repeat homelessness.

Every social event and connection we facilitate is designed to reduce isolation and prevent a return to homelessness. Our incredible volunteers, including the ESC team and long-term supporters, create a welcoming environment that helps ease this transition to independence.

Thank you for your continued support and belief in our program and in the men who are taking charge of their lives, making meaningful strides toward a brighter future.

Tina Hurling

COMMUNITY BEFRIENDING OUTCOMES

Together with your help in 2023 we:



**SUPPORTED
81 MEN TO
DEVELOP THEIR
STAKE IN THEIR
COMMUNITY**



**This is the most service users we have ever worked with –
an increase of 28% since 2022!**

**DELIVERED
434 IN-PERSON
ONE TO ONE
LINK-INS**

**DELIVERED
321 PHONE
SUPPORT
LINK-INS**

**SUPPORTED
603
VOLUNTEER
AND
PARTICIPANT
CONTACTS**



**SUPPORTED
24 VOLUNTEERS,
ALLOWING THEM
TO TAKE THE
LEAD**

THE IMPACT OF YOUR SUPPORT

The Depaul Community Befriending Programme empowers both participants and volunteers, creating a supportive environment that fosters growth and positive change. By offering a variety of activities and interventions, the programme not only helps participants reach their potential but also strengthens the community by encouraging collaboration between participants and volunteers.



EMPOWERING PERSONAL GROWTH

The programme provides a platform for participants to set and achieve personal goals, building their confidence and renewing their sense of purpose. The programme also supports community participants with personal admin and paperwork. Through this support and by facilitating service user-led activities, participants take ownership of their progress, breaking barriers and gaining self-esteem. Volunteers play a crucial role in this journey, learning how to support and uplift participants while developing their own leadership and empathy skills.

FACILITATING SMOOTH TRANSITIONS

For individuals transitioning into independent living, the programme offers personalised support, helping them navigate new environments and build meaningful connections. Volunteers are empowered to become advocates and companions during this process, enriching their own understanding of resilience and adaptability. Together, they foster a community that promotes mental well-being, inclusivity, and mutual empowerment.



Through these shared experiences, both participants and volunteers grow, contributing to a more resilient, inclusive community where everyone feels valued and supported.

COMMUNITY BEFRIENDING TIMELINE



January

- Community and in-house groups organised cinema trips to see *A Man Called Otto*, combining the outings with meals and enjoying good turnout despite January challenges.
- Various social activities were arranged, including a coffee morning at Botanical Gardens and regular Tuesday evening events featuring pool, chess, bingo, and movies, with plans to expand based on suggestions from residents.



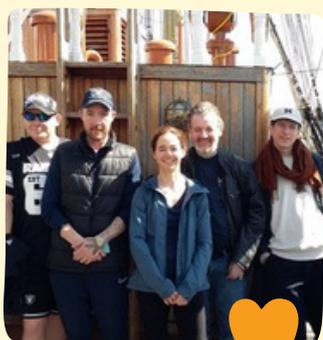
February

- Both community and in-house groups visited the Guinness Storehouse museum, experiencing interactive exhibits and enjoying discounted tickets, with good attendance from participants and volunteers.
- Other activities included a coffee morning at the Chester Beatty Library and the continued development of the Tuesday Social Club, featuring engaging activities like quizzes, cards, and mindful coloring.



March

- Both community and in-house groups visited the Museum of Modern Literature (MoLi), enjoying guided tours about Irish writers and Dublin's literary history, while other outings included a trip to Collins Barracks and the Museum of Decorative Arts & History.
- The Befriending Programme continued to develop with a Social Committee Meeting for future planning and the ongoing Tuesday Social Club, which offered various activities such as card games, bingo, and craft projects, fostering socialization and engagement among residents.



April

- The community group enjoyed a special outing to see 'CIRQUE: The Greatest Show' at the Helix, while the in-house group visited the Jeanie Johnston famine ship, combining fun and history in their activities.
- Regular social engagements continued with in-house coffee mornings at local cafés and the Tuesday Social Club, which offered activities including card games, bingo, quizzes, and seasonal arts and crafts, fostering interaction and socialisation among residents.

COMMUNITY BEFRIENDING TIMELINE



May

- The community and in-house groups enjoyed outdoor activities, including trips to Powerscourt House and Gardens, Bray beach, and St. Ann's Park, taking advantage of the good weather and providing opportunities for scenic outings and social interaction.
- Cultural activities continued with a visit to the Epic museum, while the Tuesday Social Club remained a consistent weekly event, adapting to changing resident participation and fostering social engagement through various activities and pre-activity interactions during dinner.



June

- Both community and in-house groups enjoyed summer outings to the National Stud and Japanese Gardens in County Kildare, combining nature, education about horse breeding, and cultural experiences, despite varying weather conditions.
- Social activities continued with a community group social committee meeting, an in-house coffee morning at St. Patrick's Park, and the ongoing Tuesday Social Club, which offered various activities like quizzes, card nights, and bingo, attracting fluctuating numbers of residents.



July

- Both in-house and community groups visited the National Maritime Museum in Dun Laoghaire, combining historical education with leisure activities like a pier stroll and lunch, while the in-house group also enjoyed a special outing to a Shamrock Rovers football match.
- Regular social activities continued with a coffee morning at the Ginger Café and the Tuesday Social Club, which maintained its schedule of quizzes, card nights, and bingo, providing consistent engagement opportunities for Back Lane residents.



August

- The in-house group enjoyed outdoor activities with a pitch and putt outing in Clondalkin, while the community group had a popular horse riding trip near Donabate, both taking advantage of good weather for picnics and seaside walks.
- Regular social activities continued with an outdoor coffee morning in St Patrick's Park for the in-house group, and the Tuesday Social Club maintained its schedule with volunteers taking a more active role in organizing quizzes and card nights.

COMMUNITY BEFRIENDING TIMELINE



September

- Both in-house and community groups demonstrated flexibility in their activities: the in-house group enjoyed an accessible outing to Ardgillan Castle, while the community group adapted to poor weather by visiting the Decorative Arts and History Museum.
- Regular social activities continued with coffee mornings at the Ginger Café for the in-house group, a social committee meeting for the community group to plan and review events, and the Tuesday Social Club maintaining its schedule with card nights, bingo, and quizzes, focusing on social interaction and getting to know each other.



October

- Our annual Dublin Zoo visits was a highlight, welcoming both new and familiar faces from our in-house and community groups. Despite the weather, participants and volunteers shared memorable moments, watching the meerkats and making it a special day for everyone.
- Befriending activities like coffee mornings, football games, and the Tuesday Social Club created a warm, inclusive environment. Whether chatting over coffee or sharing laughs during card nights, these events bring our community closer together.



November

- Our November trips to the ancient site of Newgrange were a special experience for both in-house and community groups. Participants enjoyed exploring the 5,200-year-old passage grave and learning about its history. We capped off each visit with a cozy meal at the visitor centre, fostering connections in an engaging environment.
- From coffee mornings at Ginger Café to volunteer-led activities like the Tuesday Social Club, our befriending events continued to be welcoming and accessible for everyone. With activities ranging from museum tours and bingo nights to art and crafts, these gatherings bring our residents and volunteers together, creating a warm and supportive community.



December

- To close out the year, we organised visits to the Dublin Castle chapel and the Christmas market, followed by a cozy lunch at the Chester Beatty Library Café. For our community group, the annual Christmas lunch at Wynn's Hotel was a festive highlight, complete with a turkey dinner, Secret Santa, and lots of laughter.
- Regular events like coffee mornings and the Tuesday Social Club provide welcoming spaces for residents to connect and celebrate. Our ESC volunteer-led activities, including trips to the Little Museum of Dublin and creative Christmas card-making sessions, added extra joy. From decorating the Christmas tree to sharing steaming beverages, these gatherings fostered a warm, festive community spirit.



NEW IN 2023



This year, we had the opportunity to expand our outreach to a different demographic of people experiencing homelessness. Within Depaul services, there are many young individuals seeking access to independent housing.

Our Befriending Youth Program focuses on supporting young adults aged 18 to 25 living in Depaul services. The program encourages social integration through various events and activities. With an emphasis on community engagement, we aim to inspire young residents to explore interests and hobbies that can continue into independent living, ultimately reducing isolation by fostering social interaction.

We offer regular group activities such as day trips and visits to local amenities and exhibitions, open to all young people across Depaul services. Additionally, we have replicated the successful Tuesday Club from Back Lane and established one at Peters Place. This initiative provides residents with a regular opportunity to socialise and engage with both volunteers and each other. Staff at Peters Place have noted increased engagement among residents participating in these activities, and our Peters Place residents have said it's given them the opportunity to establish friendships!



A VOLUNTEER'S PERSPECTIVE

Zach has volunteered with the Befriending Programme for over a year and has become a familiar face at our Tuesday Social Club in Back Lane. Zach is well placed to understand our service users in Back Lane as he spent some time here himself. He experienced homelessness between 1988 to 1992.

"It felt weird when I moved out first, I couldn't manage all the bills, it was a lot. I was lucky I had family and friends who helped me out and showed me how to budget. I was still a bit lost for a long while and put a strain on my family. Eventually I got involved with outreach programs and addiction counselling.

When I was ready, I started training courses in Horticulture and got some work as groundsman on various CE schemes. I loved the gardening but I wanted to be involved with people. I saw an ad for Depaul's HHPA program on Activelink. I didn't think I could go for it but my friends gave me the confidence to try. They said I have the life experience to help others going through what I did. They said you've a great heart and are a good listener, you'd be perfect. The HHPA wasn't the right fit but I met great people in Depaul and wanted to stay with them. That's when I heard about the Befriending Programme.

Befriending is exactly what I was looking for. I love doing the Tuesday Club. I get to come in every Tuesday and have a meal with the men. Then I see who I can encourage to come to the club. I see what the men want to do. Sometimes its cards or pool or it could be just a chat. I've really grown since I started helping out with Befriending. My friends have seen the change in me. I love contributing and being here for the residents. I get a lot out of it. It gets me out of the house and I get to meet people. It's just once a week but it gives me a bit of structure. I help out with the events too and get to go places I've never been before.

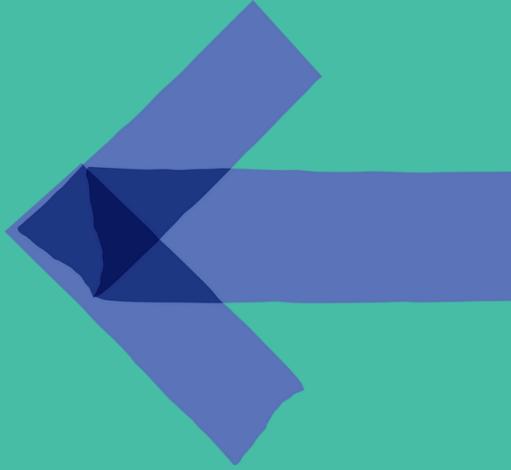
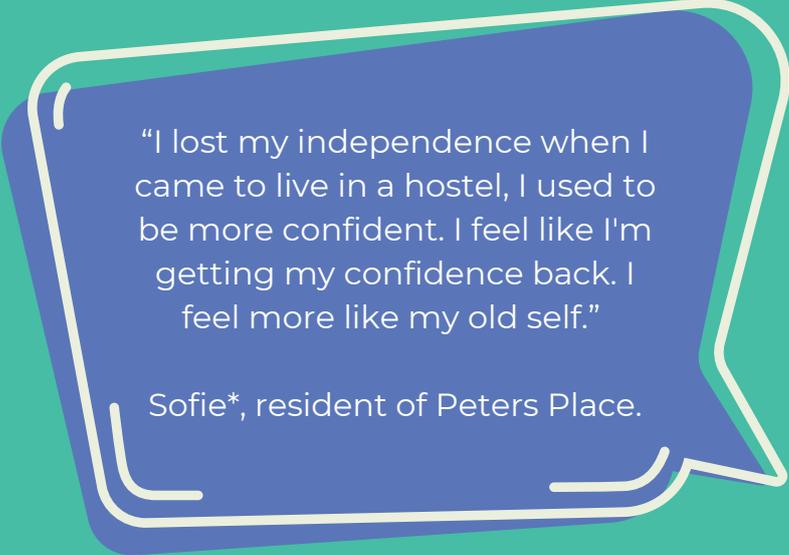
I got lots of support from friends and family when I needed it so I know how important it is to have someone listen to you and take time. Befriending does that for all its participants so I love being a part of that."

ZACH GOODMAN

"I want to take a moment to thank Zach and all our incredible volunteers for their hard work and dedication. I've personally seen Zach in action, welcoming men into the poolroom during our Tuesday Club, and his warmth and enthusiasm play a huge role in making them feel at home and encouraging them to stay. His consistency is a key factor in bringing our residents back week after week. We are truly fortunate to have Zach and all of our volunteers, whose efforts create such a positive and comfortable environment for our participants. Your impact is deeply appreciated!"

TINA HAWKINS

VOICE OF THE PARTICIPANTS



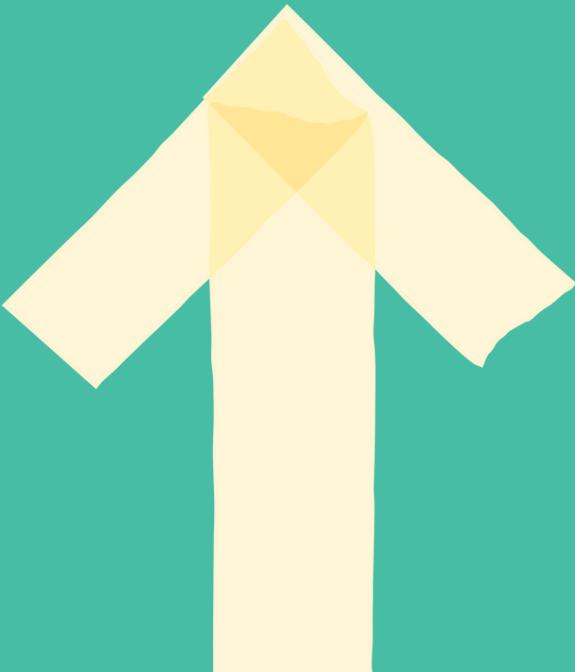
"I lost my independence when I came to live in a hostel, I used to be more confident. I feel like I'm getting my confidence back. I feel more like my old self."

Sofie*, resident of Peters Place.



"I came into the room and started to talk to a real gentleman, he made me feel relaxed so I stayed for the club!"

John* on his first introduction to a Befriending volunteer at our Back Lane Tuesday Club.



"I've been with Befriending since I got my own place years ago. I don't meet up that much now but I know when I need people around me the Befriending group is there."

Michael*, a long-term community group participant.



A THANK YOU TO OUR FUNDERS

None of the work the Befriending Programme does, or the incredible outcomes it achieves would be possible without the unwavering support of those who continue to fund and assist the programme. The continued generosity of the Society of St. Vincent de Paul and the Bewley Foundation is what enables the Befriending Programme to have a transformative impact on its participants.

By helping our participants engage with each other and their community, we are easing the transition out of supported accommodation and showing our participants that they have a place in society and a community to join.

We are eternally grateful for the support our funders provide so that we can enhance the programme and adapt to our participant's needs. We hope you know that your support means a great deal to everyone in Depaul, especially our service users and programme participants who are grateful for your ongoing belief in their future potential.



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