

Providing connection during COVID-19: Exploring the implementation of Friendly Call Cork



Health
Implementation
Research Hub



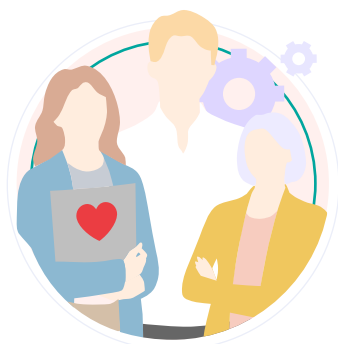
Why did we carry out this study?

- COVID-19 has focused more attention on befriending services such as Friendly Call Cork.
- Friendly Call addresses isolation and loneliness through a daily phone call to older people, and individuals with physical and mental disabilities.
- However, there is not a lot of research on how befriending services work.

We wanted to find out what hinders and helps Friendly Call to deliver its service, how it links in with healthcare services, and how volunteers and people who use it (clients) experience the service. We also wanted to understand changes to the service during the pandemic.

What did we do?

We conducted focus groups and interviews with:



3 people involved in
the coordination of
Friendly Call



**10 healthcare
professionals** from
different services



9 clients
of the
service

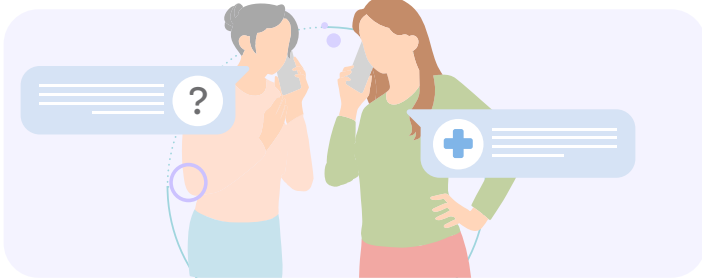


9 volunteers
helping Friendly
Call

We also held an **online workshop** with coordinators, health care professionals, and volunteers to discuss the findings and ways to address challenges within the service.

What did we find?

Overall, Friendly Call provides a 'lifeline' and 'safety net' for vulnerable people and their families by providing daily contact. During COVID-19 it began to provide more practical support to clients, for example, assisting with shopping and collecting prescriptions.



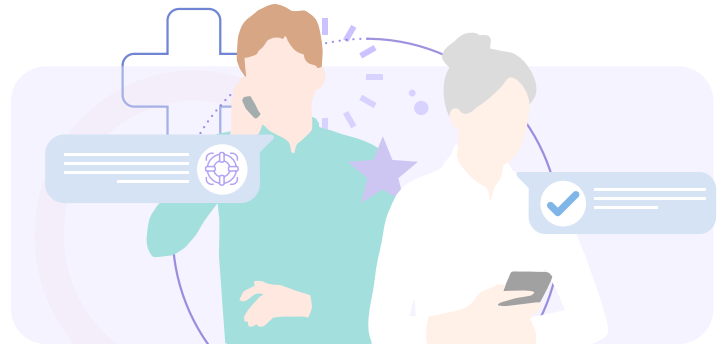
Clients

- Friendly Call was a way to replace connections lost through bereavement, ill health or cocooning due to COVID-19.
- It was flexible, meeting both their emotional and practical support needs.
- During COVID-19, when a lot was changing, clients appreciated that Friendly Call was consistent and reliable.



Healthcare professionals

- A simple process and one central coordinator made it easier to refer to the service.
- It could be promoted more among other professional groups who may not be aware of this valuable service.



Coordinators

- Friendly Call benefits from strong relationships with other agencies and health care providers.
- A committed and accessible person to manage the service was an asset.
- During COVID-19, other agencies became more aware of Friendly Call. Referrals to the service increased. As a result, Friendly Call faces additional resource challenges.

Volunteers

- They found their role rewarding.
- Working remotely during COVID-19 made it easier to fit volunteering into their life but it also meant they had limited peer support from other volunteers.
- Sometimes they found it difficult to manage the boundaries of their relationship with clients and would like more training to help them to support clients.
- Some new volunteers were uncertain where to direct clients if they need help.

You can learn more about this study, Learning how to create Integrated community Networks through Knowledge exchange here.

