

Connect Fermanagh

**Trustees' Annual Report
Year ended 31st March 2025**

Connect Fermanagh

Contents	pg. 2
Administrative details of the Charity including Trustees	pg. 3
Annual Report of the Trustees	pgs. 4-6
Trustees' responsibilities statement	pg. 7
Summary of Financial Activities	pgs. 8
Balance Sheet	pg. 9
Independent Examiners Report	pg. 10
Notes to Financial Statements	pg. 11

Connect Fermanagh

Trustee's Annual Report (Incorporating the Chair's Report)

Structure, governance and management.

The Charity was established April 2020 and is governed by its Constitution, adopted on 29th June 2021, managed by the Trustees. Day to day operations are carried out by 1 part-time staff member with the support of Volunteers and the Trustees themselves.

Reference and administrative details

Registered charity name	Connect Fermanagh
Charity registration number	NIC108524
Office and registered address	Fermanagh House, Broadmeadow Place, Enniskillen, Co Fermanagh, BT74 5PX

Trustees

Hazel Gardiner
Helen Gilmour
Sonya Johnston (Secretary)
Lauri McCusker (Chair)
Alison Wylie
Mary Slevin
Pauline McManus
Caroline Storey (Treasurer)

Objectives and activities

Connect Fermanagh believes in, advocates for and supports the health and wellbeing of people across Fermanagh, enabling individuals to feel connected, confident and valued.

Aim

To enhance people's lives, supporting those most vulnerable and marginalised in our community to achieve positive emotional wellbeing and feel connected to and secure in their communities.

Purposes

- Reduce service-users' feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Help service users feel connected
- Provide information on local and regional services and supports
- Signpost and support individuals to access services and supports
- Provide a platform to have the voices of service users heard by decision-makers locally and regionally.

Statement on Risk Assessment

There have been no risks identified, the trustees are content that the charity has adequate resources to continue in operational existence for the foreseeable future.

The Trustees present their annual report together with the financial statements of the Charity for the period 1st April 2024 to 31st March 2025.

In presenting this report, the Trustees have had regard to the Charity Commissions guidance on public benefit, the report details how our activities have enabled us to fulfil our public benefit purposes as required under section 70 of the Charities Act (NI) 2008.

What we do:

In order to improve the health and well-being of people in the Fermanagh area, Connect Fermanagh continues to recruit Volunteers to provide regular, friendly phone-calls to anyone aged 18+ from 9am - 2pm 7 days per week. We accept referrals from any individual or organisation. We call people on a weekly basis to prevent loneliness and isolation, build confidence, and help individuals feel connected and valued.

We provide friendly conversation, we provide information over the telephone and information to Volunteers and service users via a monthly newsletter on local activities, services and supports.

We provide signposting to organisations offering support on specific issues and we provide advocacy and emotional support to those who require it. Where individuals have specific needs, information and signposting to specialist services and support organisations is provided. Volunteers, under the direction and guidance of the Project Coordinator ensure individuals have an awareness of support services available to assist them with a wide range of needs.

We organise and facilitate up to 4 events each year, bringing volunteers and service users together to enjoy a range of activities to build friendships and connections in a safe, warm and welcoming environment.

Service users will feel valued and have their voices heard, records of needs and gaps in services will be maintained and used to raise issues with local and regional decision-makers to advocate for improved or new services.

Why we do it:

We want our service users to feel connected, we want to alleviate feelings of loneliness, isolation and anxiety. We want individuals to know about activities and services they can access, and we want their voices heard in decisions that may affect them.

We want our Service Users to be better informed of opportunities in the local area, about changes to services and supports they may be entitled to do. We want them to live in safe and stable homes and to have a trusted person that will listen to them and refer them on, for specialist support when needed.

We want our service users to enjoy life, to build connections, to make friendships and have fun, we want them to feel valued and listened to.

The direct benefits flowing from our purposes include: improved health and well-being, reduction in social exclusion and levels of stress and anxiety, feelings of loneliness and isolation.

What difference have we made, our impact:

This year, Connect Fermanagh has continued to support individuals experiencing isolation and loneliness, while steadily increasing the profile and awareness of our charity. We've strengthened connections across the community and deepened our understanding of referral pathways that help meet the evolving needs of those we support. Our success in securing new funding opportunities has been vital in sustaining and growing the project. At the heart of everything we do is a commitment to listening, responding, and helping people feel less alone whether through befriending calls, practical support, information signposting, or referrals to appropriate agencies. Our work remains rooted in compassion, connection, and a belief that no one should feel or experience isolation or loneliness.

Between April 2024 and March 2025, Connect Fermanagh welcomed 12 new referrals to our befriending service and 4 new Volunteers. During this period, 30 dedicated volunteers provided weekly or fortnightly calls to 44 service users. These calls offered far more than conversation they became a source of connection, comfort, and, for many, a vital lifeline. In these instances, the Project Coordinator was able to follow safeguarding procedures and referral pathways to ensure that the person in need was connected with the appropriate support and agency. Throughout the year, several recurring themes emerged, including increased

anxiety and low mood linked to the rising cost of living, fuel poverty, and storm-related home damage. These challenges, coupled with ongoing mental health concerns, highlighted the growing complexity of needs within our community. The befriending service continues to play a crucial role in reducing isolation, promoting wellbeing, and ensuring vulnerable individuals feel heard, supported, and connected.

To date, 157 individuals have been supported through Connect Fermanagh's befriending service. Each one has received friendly conversations, a listening ear, and practical help through information, signposting, and referrals when needed. Our service users come from across the county, with 35% based in Enniskillen and 65% living in rural areas and villages. The majority of individuals receiving our calls are female and are aged 60 and over, in 2024/25 new referrals were 75% female and 25% male.

To promote our service and encourage new referrals and volunteer engagement, we hosted information stands at venues such as Killyhevin Hotel, Belleek Information Event, Dunnes Stores, Asda, Tesco, Lisnaskea Library, and ARC Healthy Living Centre. We also participated in networking and awareness events including the Devenish Partnership/Age Aware NI gathering, Fuel Poverty workshop, Cleenish Hall Health Fair, and the Fermanagh and Omagh Intergenerational Forum. We remain active members of key regional partnerships including the SouthWest Age Partnership, Family Support Hub Fermanagh, The Centre for Ageing Better, Age Friendly NI, and the Intergenerational Forum, to maintain awareness, strengthen referral pathways and advocate for those we support.

Connect Fermanagh actively promoted its work through regular updates on Facebook and through partnership with Volunteer Now, raising awareness and celebrating achievements. The Impartial Reporter and The Fermanagh Herald published articles and photographs covering our Spring Planting event and Christmas Appeal, publicly recognising our impact, thanking funders for their generous support and shining a light on our need for new volunteers.

A major highlight of the year was receiving the Volunteer Friendly Quality Standards Accreditation Award, which formally recognised our commitment to best practice in volunteer management. This award celebrates our commitment to best practice in volunteer management and acknowledges the vital role our volunteers play in supporting vulnerable individuals and families across the region.

We're proud of what's been achieved and grateful to our volunteers, Funders, and community partners who continue to make this work possible. Together, we're helping people feel less alone and more connected one call at a time.

What difference have we made, our impact:

Our friendly phone-calls and social activities have increased a sense of belonging and boosted happiness for people who would otherwise be socially isolated and feeling lonely, for many that we call this is the only contact they have in a week from someone who isn't paid to be there for them. Our calls reduce feelings of loneliness and improve people emotional well-being.

Our calls help individuals feel more connected, we improve people's resilience to be able to cope with life-challenges. Reducing stress and anxiety by having someone to talk to, having someone provide information and signposting to services and supports has had a positive impact on both the physical and mental health of those we call.

Providing opportunities for people to build social networks and having access to social events for people who have mobility issues, living in rural and isolated locations significantly improves and enriches the quality of life of those we call. People we call are more resilient, more confident, feel less isolated and are living happier lives as a result of the work of our dedicated Volunteers

Financial Review

Connect Fermanagh is in a strong financial position, with a healthy, diverse range of income including private donations, charitable foundations, support from the AXA Community Grant, Community Foundation, Tesco's Groundworks Grant and the National Lottery Awards for All. The financial support from Charitable Trusts and funders continues to be appreciated as without it, many of Connect Fermanagh's activities would be impossible or significantly reduced.

Financial Management Systems

Connect Fermanagh has in place sound financial management procedures which we are confident are robust and appropriate in terms of good governance.

The results for the year ended 31st March 2025 are set out in pages 8 and 9 of the Financial Statements

The Trustees consider that the unrestricted funds of the Charity are sufficient and adequate to fulfil their obligations.

Reserves Policy

The income of the Charity is considered adequate, and the risks associated with any significant reduction in income is regarded as unlikely. The Trustees are satisfied with the current level of reserves at the present time.

Trustee's responsibilities statement

The Trustees are responsible for preparing the Trustees' Report and the Financial Statements in accordance with applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice). The charity trustees are required to prepare financial statements for each year which give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable trust and the incoming resources and application of resources, including the income and expenditure, for that period. In preparing these financial statements, the Trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently.
- observe the methods and principles in the applicable Charities SORP;
- make judgments and accounting estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue in business.

The Trustees are responsible for keeping adequate accounting records that are sufficient to show and explain the charity's transactions and disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity. They are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

Auditor

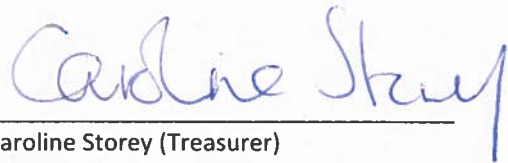
Each of the persons who are a Trustee at the date of approval of this report confirms that:

- So far as they are aware, there is no relevant audit information of which the charity's auditor is unaware; and
- They have taken all steps that they ought to have taken as a Trustee to make themselves aware of any relevant audit information and to establish that the charity's auditor is aware of that information.

The Trustee's annual report was approved on 11th September 2025 and signed on behalf of the board of Trustees by:



Lauri McCusker (Chair)



Caroline Storey (Treasurer)

Commulative Connect Fermanagh Financial Summary	
End of Year 3 - 31/3/25	
Profit from previous years trading carried forward	£ 19,092.31
Petty Cash carried forward	£ 182.81
Year 2 Profit/ Loss	£ 3,236.61
	£ 22,511.73
Closing Bank Balance - 31/3/25	£ 22,280.43
Paypal Balance - 31/3/25	£ -
Petty Cash Balance 31/3/25	£ 231.30
	£ 22,511.73