



Trinity Civic Engagement for Societal Impact



HANA CONNECTS

A Conversation Cabaret for communities

HANA CONNECTS was designed to uncover practical opportunities for collaboration across Tallaght's health and community sector. Bringing together health and community stakeholders, the event aimed to help participants discover local services, identify potential partnerships and make connections that could strengthen support for Tallaght residents. Rather than relying on traditional networking, the event introduced a 'Conversation Cabaret' format, combining

short, engaging presentations with small-group discussions. The approach encouraged participants to meet colleagues beyond their usual networks, explore shared priorities and consider how services could work together. The format proved effective in generating engagement and discussion, with participants actively questioning speakers and exploring potential connections. The experience also highlighted opportunities to refine the Conversation Cabaret model.

ORGANISER

HANA (Health Assets and Needs Assessment)
Subcommittee on Mental Health

VENUE

5th Floor, Russell Centre,
Tallaght, Dublin 24

DATE

Friday, 8th May 2026

FUNDERS:

Health Service
Improvement, HSE

This work showcases how Trinity is engaging with multiple stakeholders in order to building mutually beneficial relationships that can move public policy forward.

*Prepared by Trinity Civic Engagement for Societal Impact,
September 2026*



Purpose of the Event

The Health Assets and Needs Assessment (HANA) study provides an understanding of the assets that support residents' health in the Tallaght community as well as the needs that they express. It is a survey of 274 randomly selected households and 755 residents, and it highlights positive health trends while also addressing key concerns, including mental health, healthcare affordability, and community safety.

The public sector and community stakeholders involved with the study have since formed an implementation group to act upon the findings from the study. One subgroup, Mental Health and Wellbeing, ran an agenda-setting workshop in early 2026. Feedback from that event was clear: participants were surprised by the range of services and programmes that were being delivered by other stakeholders. There was a sense that, rather than creating new programmes and services, the stakeholders might benefit from a closer working relationship.

The aims of this event, therefore, were to:

- create a low-stakes event where people would discover local programmes and services that are relevant to their organisation of which they would not have previously been aware
- identify possible partnerships or opportunities between organisations, such as a referral line, or a common agenda or client group
- share contact details for potential follow-up

Challenges of the Event

The initial suggestion from the subgroup was to hold a 'community fair', with each organisation having a stand where participants could find out more about its services. There was, however, concern that this format might encourage people to remain at their own stands or gravitate towards colleagues they already knew, rather than exploring the wider range of organisations represented.

A second suggestion was a 'speed dating' format, where participants would have a few minutes to speak with each person in the room. This would provide a clear structure and reduce some of the uncertainty that can accompany networking. Speed-dating formats, however, can also be demanding and may result in participants retaining relatively little of what they hear, given the volume of information and number of new people they are processing.

The challenges for this event, therefore, were:

- Because people can find 'networking' challenging or intimidating, how to create a structure so as to get over people's reluctance to network
- Not everyone will get to speak to everyone in the room but how to create chances for people to find common ground within a group
- Colleagues tend to stick together at events so how do you create a way to spread them across a group, rather than simply speak to one another.

Design of the Event

Conversation Cabaret

There was a willingness to explore a novel format that would address some of the challenges. The 'Conversation Cabaret' is loosely based on the Conversation Café format that is used to create a series of group discussions about a particular topic or problem.

The Conversation Cabaret was set up as follows:

1. Four people were invited, in advance of the day, to speak about their programme or service for five minutes.
2. On the day, attendees were invited to join a table of five or seven. They were asked not to sit with a colleague if they could avoid it and to seek out a table where they did not know anyone. They wrote a name badge with their first name.
3. Once all were settled, they were invited to briefly introduce themselves to those at their table with their name and the organisation or group they were representing on the day.
4. The first of the four speakers got up and spoke to the room for five minutes on their service. Each table had a discussion about what they heard and whether listening to the speaker had prompted any ideas for them about partnership with their own service or project. If the discussion prompted any questions, they would also get to ask questions that arose about the service to the speaker. All

attendees had a worksheet in front of them where they could record the name of each speaker and their organisation. These worksheets had four prompts:

- a. What I'm wondering about your service or programme is...
 - b. What a partnership with us might look like is...
 - c. The person I think you should talk to in our place is...
5. This step was then repeated for each of the remaining speakers.

Ensuring there was a less formal section

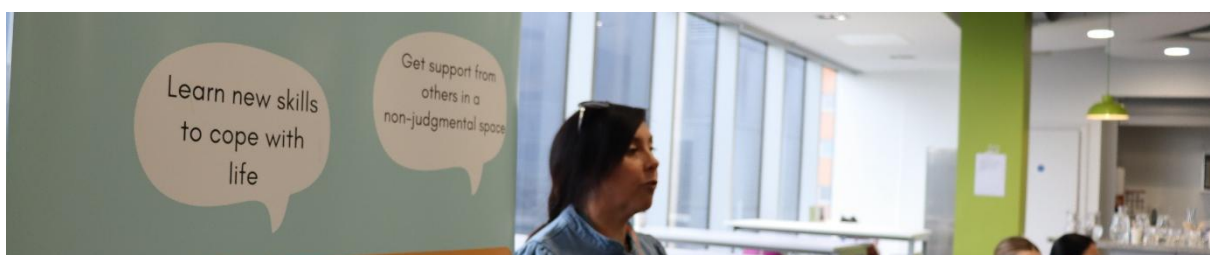
While refreshments were available from the beginning, there was a light lunch at the end. This was to give those who had made a connection to chat with one another outside of the structure of the Conversation Cabaret.

It also meant that those who were less comfortable with unstructured networking could leave discreetly once the formal part of the event had concluded.

Making Connections

Prior to the lunch, all attendees would have access to postcards which they would fill out that said: "I met you at HANA CONNECTS and we talked about... My name is ... I represent ... and you can reach me on ... And this is about exploring the idea further – it's not a contract!"

The postcards were A5 in size: small enough to fold and carry in a pocket, while still being large enough to be easily retained and used as a follow-up reminder.



Implementation

The format proved a useful one. The four speakers were ALONE, Foróige, HeadsUp (a mental health programme for adults based in South Dublin Partnership) and South Dublin Social Prescribing (also in South Dublin Partnership). Most of the speakers generally focused on stories and on why their services mattered to those who used them, which made the five-minute talks quite compelling to the audience.

The room did not stick to the Q&A format after the discussion. People asked questions during each talk and then there was an opportunity to ask any questions after the discussion. This was a positive, in that people were engaged and comfortable enough to ask questions as they arose.

The worksheets were used in different ways. Some people made use of the suggested prompts, while others used the sheets primarily as space to record their own notes. Some people used the postcards at the end, but few were completed and exchanged. They acted more as a prompt for people to remember to exchange details rather than be used.

One limitation of the conversation cabaret format was that the speakers did not have an opportunity to speak to each table individually. If the event was in a larger space, it might have been better to have all four presenters deliver the same talk four times, moving from table to table. The drawback of that, however, would be exhausted speakers towards the end of the event. Another option might be to have a 'fishbowl' conversation at the end of the event about what people learned and heard in the room on the day.

For More Information

The objective of HANA is to inform local health service and community planning through robust, equity-focused assessment of population needs and assets in Tallaght, Dublin 24.

[Introductory video about HANA Wave 3](#)

[Read the full report from HANA Wave 3](#)

[Read the summary and recommendation report from HANA Wave 3](#)



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