



Developing Business Skills for *Community Connecting Services* in the Third Sector

About the Project

We are helping small third sector organisations (including groups of family carers) to develop a *connecting* service from scratch or expand the repertoire of services they currently provide.

What do we mean by '*connecting*'? Our research over the past five years has shown that despite receiving the highest levels of funding, people with high support needs rarely get the right help to make strong, enduring relationships in their local communities. Skilled and time-limited interventions by paid *connectors* can help by marrying people's skills, talents and aspirations to opportunities in their communities. Such *connecting* fills a gap that often exists between person centred planning and the achievement of good outcomes for people.

The emphasis is less on supporting people to be 'in the community' or to do activities and more about them building relationships based on reciprocity; what do people with high support needs have to offer and what can be offered in return?

Connectors work with and alongside paid support workers, families and people's circles of support. The service may be characterised as 'brokerage plus' in recognition of the fact that the usual brokerage models do not provide the level of depth and level of intensity required.

The potential outcomes are significant. People using the service, and their families, can see an improved quality of life and increased options, paid support staff learn new ways of working with the community and there are long-term savings to be made as 'natural supports' diminish the need for specialised services. We also see that *connecting* works best when it can be supported through a person's individual or personal budget where the person and their families have control over how they arrange their support.



Our principal aim

Our principal aim is to help get services up and running and to give them the best chance of surviving as a going concern.

To this end we have a package of support (funded through a Department of Health grant) for those areas taking part:

- A small start-up fund
- Training and mentoring about setting up a *connecting* service
- Business modelling and planning
- Support for care managers and commissioners
- Information and resources
- Access to a national network and events

We tailor this package to local circumstances. We want to avoid selling a model of *connecting* – the principal aim of the project is sustainability. What we ask therefore is that there is a local commitment to the project from a potential service provider, the local authority and some people with high support needs and their families to give it a good foundation.

This is an exciting project that makes an important contribution to diversifying local social care markets to meet the sorts of demands being articulated by people taking control of their own care support. More importantly, *connecting* is a practical and effective way of tackling the social exclusion suffered by one of the most vulnerable groups in society.

To find out more or to take part in the project, please contact Molly Mattingly on 0207 8031149 or email mmattingly@fpld.org.uk

You can also find out more at:
www.learningdisabilities.org.uk/our-work/community-and-inclusion/community-connecting/



Community
Connecting
Services

Foundation for People
with Learning Disabilities