

# GUIDESHEET

## Community Connectors

### What is a Community Connector?

Community Connectors are 'people specialists'. They know and keep in touch with many people and are able to create and maintain long-lasting friendships. Being a Connector comes naturally to them; it is not something that can be taught. Connectors, in marketing terms, are trendsetters.

Community Connectors are natural networkers, relationship builders, positive, optimistic, caring and compassionate local people. Any attempts to turn them into 'professionals' should be resisted. Their priceless contribution is connecting people, associations and institutions more widely to the community and in weaving the community together.

According to McKnight and Block, Community Connectors are:

- ⇒ Always looking for other people's 'gifts'
- ⇒ See the positive, the 'half full', in everyone
- ⇒ Well-connected themselves
- ⇒ Trusted by others
- ⇒ Know how to create new trusting relationships
- ⇒ Believe in the people in their community
- ⇒ Get joy from connecting and inviting people to come together

### How do you find them / recruit them?

Community Connectors are fairly easy to find. Their names will crop up regularly in Learning Conversations (see **FACTSHEET: The Building Blocks of Community**) and they will usually be present at community events and activities. You probably won't find them at formal meetings as they tend to shy away from these in favour of fun gatherings.

A good starting point for Community Builders in finding Community Connectors is to think about their own networks; who are the people that bring you together with others and whose energy, imagination and kindness provides the bedrock of your connection? These people are 'connectors'.

## TOP TIPS



Many community building efforts struggle or fail because time is not given to finding Connectors and building and nurturing relationships with them. Community Builders must acknowledge that they alone cannot build a community and that it is not within their capabilities to know as much as a vibrant group of Community Connectors.



You might find that some people are uncomfortable to be formally acknowledged as Community Connectors. This will be especially true amongst 'natural connectors' who might have busy lives and a range of commitments. Try to avoid being too rigid in how Community Connectors can be involved in your community building programme – you don't want to start excluding people.



You will often find that Connectors know other Connectors. Community Builders should create a space for Connectors to come together to understand the community building programme they are being asked to support and to discover how they might be willing to work with each other to reach out to the wider community, particularly those on the margins.

## Are Community Connectors paid?

In most circumstances, no.

## What are the tools that every Community Connector needs?

People are identified as Community Connectors because they already possess the tools they need to fulfil the role. It is a natural part of who they are. Generally these include:

- ⇒ The ability to build trusting relationships
- ⇒ The ability to hold vast amounts of information about people and places
- ⇒ The ability to share this information where appropriate and connect people to their community

Within a community building programme it is important for Community Builders to work with their local Community Connectors to:

- ⇒ Understand how to hold a more directed Learning Conversation
- ⇒ Design together a tool to capture information in a way that can be shared easily and appropriately between the Community Connector and Builder, and potentially more widely

## How many Community Connectors does a neighbourhood need?

This will vary from one community to another but we can guarantee, there will be more than you imagine. Ideally, every street, association and institution will have and be aware of a Community Connector. And they will know of one another.

## What support does a Community Connector need?

Community Connectors are supported by Community Builders. They should:

- ⇒ Have regular meetings with their Community Builder
- ⇒ Be able to contact their Community Builder by telephone / email during the day (or as appropriate to your programme)
- ⇒ Be given the opportunity to give and receive peer support from other Community Connectors in their area.



# Core qualities of a Community Connector

**Well connected:** they know a larger number of people than the average person

**Gift centred:** they always see the 'full half' in everyone: the passion, skills, talents, & knowledge

**Trusted:** they are widely trusted and have a wealth of trusting relationships

**Conveners of people:** they get an enormous amount of joy from connecting people and bringing them together. They are not interested in leading; they simply know the power of joining people together

**Information holders:** they are naturally able to hold a lot of information about a person, their gifts and the people they know, and bring it to the fore when needed

**Tour guides:** they know their neighbourhood and / or community like the back of their hand. They know the streets, the people and the groups and associations.