

## Community Connectors Information Sheet

Community connectors are a team of experienced and highly trained staff who can assist people with a learning disability and/or autism to access opportunities in their local community. The connectors can work alongside people to gain sustainable activities within their local communities and provide opportunities to develop skills and interests, take part in activities happening locally, build relationships and experience new things. The service will also offer travel training if required.

We can assist people to look for paid or voluntary work, looking at employability skills and experience work tasters. The connector would work with the person directly for up to 12 weeks and can also look at college courses and adult education centre courses. They can also look at supported employment opportunities within Derbyshire County Council and other outside agencies, supporting the person to gain information and guidance and to signpost or refer them into other agencies.

The connector can help the person to become involved in leisure and social activities, linking into existing activities and creating new activity groups with peers of similar interests. The connector can assist and help the person to form and establish new friendships and relationships. The connector team cover the whole of Derbyshire working weekends and evenings if required.

### Aims of the service

Community connectors aim to work with people to:

- meet their individual goals
- make stronger community links and relationships
- explore new skills and interests
- develop or maintain relationships/friendships

If a person has been awarded an Adult Care personal budget, a connector can help them plan and utilise their budget to meet their desired outcomes.

### Who can use the service?

Currently the service can work with people from 14 upwards through transition, and 16 + to adults of all ages who have a diagnosed learning disability and/or autism and who live in Derbyshire.

A person doesn't have to have an Adult Care social worker or personal budget to use the community connector service.

The connector can continue to offer support for up to 12 weeks if necessary. A review meeting can be arranged, roughly halfway through, to check progress and address any worries or problems.

By the end of the support period, it is hoped the person will be able to access the opportunities they've experienced independently (or with pre-existing support) i.e. a personal assistant.

In some cases, the person may need a personal assistant (PA) to continue to access local community facilities. In these instances, it would be the responsibility of the person or their carers/family members to arrange the PA. If the person has a designated social worker, they may be able to assist with this.

Three months after the support period has finished, the connector will complete a further review to ensure the person and placement are sustained.

If there are any concerns raised during the review, the connector will work with the person to try and help to resolve them.

### **How the service works**

Once it has been confirmed that a person is eligible for the service and is likely to benefit from community-based support, they will be assigned a named connector.

The connector will then make contact, usually by telephone, to introduce themselves and arrange a meeting with the person and, if appropriate, their carer(s) and social worker.

At the meeting the connector will discuss with the person what they would like to achieve by using the service. This could be accessing community-based activities and groups, using local services, meeting new people, gaining paid or voluntary work, taking part in education courses and learning new skills, signposting, digitally connecting and using public transport independently.

After the initial meeting, the connector will research what opportunities are available in the person's local community that best match their interests and goals.

The person will then decide which opportunities they'd like to explore further and the connector will make arrangements to accompany the person to their chosen activities providing encouragement and practical support. The connector can also offer travel training if required, using a systematic approach.

### **Accessing the service – referral process**

A person doesn't have to have an Adult Care social worker to use the community connector service, but the process for accessing the service is different for those people who do.

Professionals and carers/family members can refer a person to the service as long as they have the person's consent.

### **For people who have an Adult Care social worker**

If a person wishing to use the service already has a Derbyshire Adult Care social worker, they (or the person making the referral) should speak to their worker in the first instance.

It is felt that a referral to the connector service would be appropriate, the worker should make the referral electronically through the Derbyshire Adult Care case management system.

A manager of the connectors team will review the referral and get in touch with the person and/or their carers to discuss things further.

### **For people who don't have an Adult Care social worker**

People who don't already have an Adult Care social worker should make initial enquiries about the connector service to our Call Derbyshire contact centre:

Telephone: **01629 533 190**

Email: [contact.centre@derbyshire.gov.uk](mailto:contact.centre@derbyshire.gov.uk)

Our team at Call Derbyshire will carry out an initial telephone assessment and find out what the person would like to achieve by using the community connector service.

The referral will then be passed to the connector team who will get in touch with the person and/or their carers to discuss things further.