

Community Connecting

through
CONNECT & DO

**“Community
Connecting
made me feel
human again”**



Improving lives, growing
communities & reducing
demand on health and
social care services.



About our approach:

We know that people living with long-term health conditions, such as mental health or learning disabilities, experience high levels of social isolation and loneliness and often lose the confidence to go out, meet others and try new things. We also know that active and sustainable social networks help people to lead longer, happier and more independent lives.

Community Connecting is the approach of a dynamic team that supports members of the community who are socially isolated or who have mental health problems to connect with other local people around shared interests. They do this through offering 12 weeks of one-to-one coaching support on a flexible basis that is tailored to people's interests and preferences.

In the last 12 months:

The Community Connecting team in Lambeth has used Connect & Do to enable 150 people to connect with others around shared interests

Significant increase in mental well-being outcomes:

Users' average validated WEMWBS* scores increased from 17.4 before involvement to 23.6 after using Community Connecting.



*Based on WEMWBS 7-item scale

Participants 3 months after Community Connecting:



80%

felt more supported



87%

were more independent



73%

felt they could better deal with crisis

We collaborated with over 30 mental health and VCS services in Lambeth to offer integrated support around people's well-being, and promote a shift towards the use of more asset-based approaches.

What is Connect & Do?

Connect & Do is a social networking website designed to help people connect around shared interests with friends, groups and places in their communities. It can be used in the following ways:

- By **the Community Connecting team** as a resource to support conversations with people about their interests and the groups they might like to join
- By **other services and professionals** to signpost people to opportunities in the community
- By **members of the general public**, who can contact the team themselves if they want to access support as well as contact people and places near them
- By **community organisations and groups** who can advertise their offer to new, often marginalized members of the community, thus becoming more open, equal and inclusive.



Highlights of the Connect & Do website

In the last 12 months:

- Over 100 organisations – including colleges, cafes, art galleries and sports clubs - featured on the website
- Over 3000 new visitors to the website
- 2 people self-referred through the website

“A huge proportion of the people that I help are suffering from social isolation. I almost always refer them to the Connect & Do website. I think it's a really valuable tool that could potentially be used by a wide spectrum of different services and professionals seeking to implement more asset-based approaches.”

Patrick Nyikavaranda, Solidarity in a Crisis

Why now?

“Until now, we've had a one-size fits all approach to care. The focus has been on what disabilities someone has, or what services local authorities can provide, rather than on the individual. That's disempowering. So for the first time the system will be built around each person – what they need, how they can best be cared for, and what they want.”

Norman Lamb, Care and Support Minister, 2014

It is widely recognised that to meet the challenge of rising demand alongside cuts to funding, new models of support are required. The 2014 Health and Social Care Bill announces radical change with a particular focus on increasing the use of flexible, strength-based approaches. It outlines the duty of councils to provide more preventative care that promotes people's physical, emotional and mental wellbeing.

Research has shown that social isolation can be as damaging to health as smoking. Traditional health interventions – in focusing on people's health needs – have often failed to address the wider social factors that contribute to people's conditions, and this has often led to poor outcomes. Community Connecting and Connect & Do turn this approach on its head, by building people's social capital first with the expectation that improvement in their health outcomes will follow.

Connect & Do and Community Connecting offers a practical approach for commissioners to put asset-based support into practice. It can help deliver better outcomes for people at lower cost, by unlocking and building on the assets and capabilities of individuals and communities.

The journey so far:

In our start-up year we have:

- Offered coaching support to 142 participants
- Trained and supported 8 local volunteers
- Supported 100 different South London organisations to be more accessible through Connect&Do
- Networked at 85 local meetings and events
- Linked with 30 different services across south London to support referrals

The people that we support have been busy too:

They have accessed 87 different kinds of groups and activities, including:



7

volunteering opportunities



13

accredited courses accessed



3

people employed



12

exercise activities, such as cycling, yoga, and Pilates



14

skills building groups, such as jewellery making, gardening, art, and pottery

“Working with the Community Connecting Team to use Connect & Do was like getting back on a bike after a long time. By being outdoors with my coach, walking and talking, I felt as though I was reacclimatizing [...] I was so happy to be able to achieve my year-long goal of attending the gym independently, with just the support of a telephone call.”



Benefits of our approach

Helps **commissioners** to implement strategies around asset-based approaches to improving health & wellbeing, improve outcomes and reduce costs across the system.

Supports **organisations** and staff to shift to way they work with people towards a more facilitative, empowering, asset-based model.

Empowers **individuals** to build on their strengths, develop resilience, forge connections with people in their local area and improve their self-management.

Where next?

The Connect & Do website can now be accessed by people and organisations across 6 London boroughs: Lambeth, Southwark, Ealing, Bromley, Brent and Hounslow.

Local content is being developed on a daily basis by people, groups and organisations posting information, exchanging resources and connecting with each other. Users can set up their own groups and promote events, access information about local resources and take part in discussions online. Staff, volunteers and peer supporters across Certitude services are being trained to provide Community Connecting support to people and local organisations who want to use the website.

What is the impact of Community Connecting?



Being more **ACTIVE** helps people to lead more fulfilling lives and builds their confidence to interact with the world around them.



Being more **CONNECTED** helps people to build lasting and supportive social relationships.



Being more **RESILIENT** helps people to better manage their own health conditions and deal with crisis.

Cost benefits for the health system



Sustained and wider impact

Traditional service lens

Jenny is in her late 20s and has a history of schizophrenia, severe mental illness and heavy reliance on acute mental health services. Throughout her teens and twenties she lacked the self-confidence and motivation to leave the house.

With our approach

As a result of her involvement with Community Connecting, Jenny joined a singing group and eventually went on to sing at the Royal Festival Hall as part of this group. She is now enrolled in an English and Math course - an opportunity that she found on the Connect & Do website - at her local college and wants to study Human Rights at university.

Traditional service lens

Corinne has depression and anxiety and is a full-time carer for her adult son, who has suffered from severe mental health problems and schizophrenia since his teenage years. She was living a very isolated life, far from friends and family.

With our approach

Through Connect & Do, Corinne accessed a jewellery-making course and joined a volunteer gardening group. It was here that she met a group of other people who have experience of looking after people with disabilities. She has formed friendships within this group and now feels more supported.

Traditional service lens

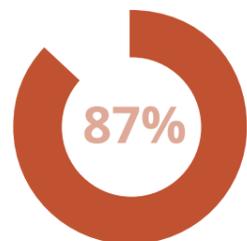
John suffers from severe depression, as a result of which he has been hospitalised on numerous occasions. He has a care worker and is heavily reliant on medication to keep him stable.

With our approach

With the Community Connecting team, John revealed that he was a talented artist and was interested in developing his catering skills. As part of his coaching he joined an art group. Despite a relapse towards the end of his involvement with us, during which he was briefly hospitalised, John was discharged after a short time with a new resolve to pursue his creative ambitions. Now enrolled in an art and building course, he says: "The team really helped me to progress. Thanks to their help, I understood what I needed to do when I came out of hospital."

- Improved mental and physical health and better access to support through social networks leads to **reduced reliance** on health services.
- Preventative approach:** low-level support to help people to stay well in the community prevents underlying mental health issues from developing into more serious problems.
- More speedy recovery:** improved resilience means people are better equipped to deal with crisis and to recover more rapidly, reducing the need for expensive and lengthy interventions.
- People who are healthy and well are better able to **participate in and contribute** to mainstream life. This creates a virtuous cycle that sustains the impact of Community Connecting.
- Many users have a long history of social isolation and joblessness, but with us go on to **access courses, do volunteering and find paid work**.
- Wider benefits for families and friends:** people who are mentally and physically well improve their relationships with those around them and can provide **more effective care for others** as parents or carers.

After support from Community Connecting:



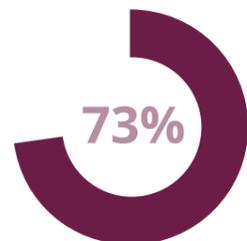
More likely to leave the house



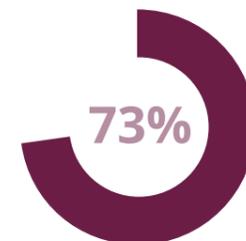
Taken part in new activities



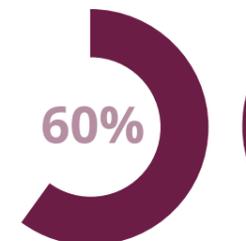
Accessed learning opportunities



Reconnected with family or friends



Met new people



Made new friends



Felt more supported



Felt more independent



Felt could deal better with crisis

Our model

MARY BEFORE:



- 47 years old
- Formerly an art director for short films and music videos
- Suffered a breakdown due to work and relationship-related stress and was living at home with parents
- Had barely left the house for over a year
- Interactions with health service over last 6 years included: CBT support, occupational therapy, group therapy, regular GP appointments, 1.5 years of intense support from psychotherapist.

“I was completely immobile – I had lost the will even to see my closest friend. I only left the house for GP appointments.”

MARY AFTER:



- Regularly attending gym
- Goes out with friends often
- Continuing to volunteer for local community garden
- Considering looking for part-time employment
- Working one day per week in her friend’s shop
- Fewer interactions with health services

“I am astonished at the progress I have made. My brother is proud of what I have achieved and my mother feels she has got her daughter back. I feel like I’ve remembered who I was.”

THE INTRODUCTION

FIRST MEETING

6 WEEK REVIEW

12 WEEK FINAL MEETING



Mary’s OT tells her about Community Connecting. Mary likes the sound of it and says she wants to get involved. OT passes Mary’s details to Community Connecting team.



The coach contacts Mary by telephone. They have a brief conversation during which the coach reassures Mary that her experiences are very common. She asks where Mary would like to meet. Mary chooses a local coffee shop.



Coach meets Mary at the coffee shop. They discuss Mary’s interests and Mary shares her passion for art.



Coach accompanies Mary to three different organisations to see what they have to offer. As they walk they talk and get to know one another. They come across a community gardening project in a local park and Mary signs up to be a volunteer.



Mary and her coach visit the community garden together. En route, Mary experiences an anxiety attack but the coach reassures her. They sit down for a while and when Mary recovers they continue. At the park Mary meets a local artist and agrees to take part in a mural painting project.



Coach telephones Mary in the morning of the following day to talk through any last minute anxieties that Mary may have. She then follows up by telephone with Mary to see how it went. Mary says she really enjoyed the mural project and would like to go again.



The two keep in touch over the telephone and through texting and email as Mary keeps attending the community garden over the following weeks.



Mary and her coach meet again at a cafe. Mary is really enjoying getting to know the other volunteers and the coach congratulates her on her progress. They discuss what Mary would like to do next and Mary says she wants to sign up to a local gym. The coach says ‘go for it!’

“I had wanted to go to the gym for over a year. This felt like a huge step forwards.”



At 12 weeks, Mary and the coach have their final meeting. Mary talks about the huge progress that she has made but also notes that she still wants to make further progress.

The two consult the Connect & Do website to find out about organisations that might offer art-related projects and groups.

“I really enjoyed being outdoors, walking and talking. It felt like I was reacclimatizing. It reminded me of what life could be”



Time taken:

of coaching calls: 5

of texts/emails sent: 37

Total face-to-face coach time: 5 hours

Total coach time including texts, emails, phone calls: 8 hours

2 weeks after 6-week review meeting, Mary consults the Connect & Do website independently and finds a pilates class at her local gym which she goes along to.

At the 12 week meeting the coach tells her about a women’s coffee morning that is run by a Community Connecting volunteer for participants and suggests she joins that to continue practicing social interaction and developing confidence. Mary goes along and enjoys meeting other women and sharing experiences.

PRINCIPLES OF HOW WE WORK

Keep it real

We work with people where they feel comfortable. We don’t ask them to complete paper work or come into mental health specific settings.

Focus on people’s assets

We encourage people to tell us about their passions and aspirations rather than the things that are holding them back.

Coach, don’t hand hold

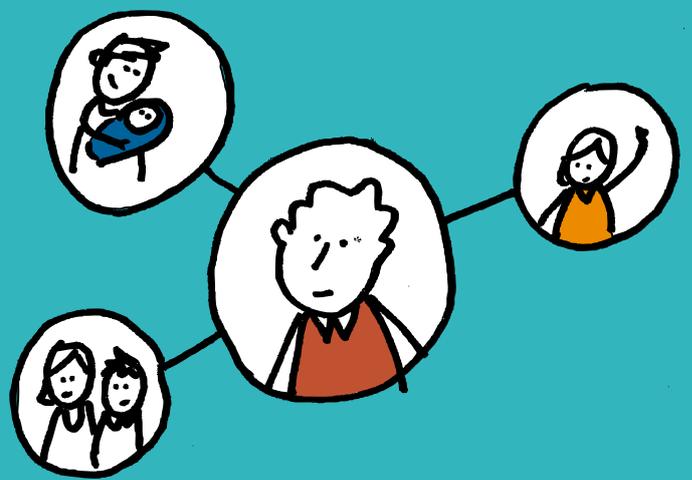
We encourage participants to be increasingly independent. Face-to-face contact usually reduces after the first 2 – 3 weeks, after which we keep in touch more regularly through text, email and phone.

Build people’s resilience and ability to self-manage

We are focused on equipping people with the skills and know-how to manage their needs and recognise and celebrate their own strengths and assets.

Be open and flexible

Some participants that we work with need no further support after a few weeks and are happy to bring the coaching support to an end early. Others need the full 12 week support. We take a flexible approach according to people’s individual preferences.



To learn more about Community Connecting
or find out how you can set up a Connect &
Do website in your area, contact the team on:

www.connectanddo.org

Jessica Agudelo

Email: connect@certitude.org.uk

020 8772 6222

CONNECT & DO
certitude