



Connecting
PEOPLE

Training manual

FOREWORD

Connecting People helps to increase mental health service users' social networks and connections to improve their quality of life. It was developed over several years by combining the best parts of existing activities in organisations in the UK and internationally, trying them out, and evaluating whether they worked. Research showed that Connecting People worked better in some organisations than others. This training manual is part of a series of guides to help practitioners, service users and mental health organisations adopt Connecting People, and give it the best chance of success.

All guides were produced in consultation with a group of mental health service users, practitioners, and researchers.



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HOW TO USE THE CONNECTING PEOPLE TRAINING MANUAL

The Connecting People Training Manual is organised into three sections. The first section introduces the Connecting People model. The second section presents the training activities around each of the eight steps in the model. The third section highlights useful tips to support training in Connecting People.

This training manual has been developed for practitioners in community mental health teams (CMHTs). However, it could also be used by practitioners in other statutory services and non-statutory settings. The manual is not meant to be prescriptive; the model emphasises how practitioners and service users should bring their own expertise and adapt Connecting People to suit their needs.

We believe the training approach that is most likely to be used is a train the trainer model. Therefore, the training manual is designed to help a trainer to train others on how the Connecting People model works and how to connect the people they work with to others in their local community. The training could be delivered by external professional trainers or by practitioners within the team who are able to lead on taking Connecting People forward within their organisation. Someone who is new to the Connecting People model can train others but those who have previously used the model in their work are more likely to be comfortable in delivering the training. The training could be jointly delivered by service users, carers and practitioners as all are stakeholders in the model and need to feel equally valued.

We suggest that whole teams are trained as far as is practicable, including social care workers, occupational therapists, community psychiatric nurses, support workers and any other practitioners in the team who are directly involved in the recovery process with service users.

We recommend that the training incorporates space for guest speakers, ideally a service user, social worker, and support worker who have experience of using Connecting People and are willing to share their experiences and answer questions from trainees, e.g. about how the model worked, how they managed time pressures and how they overcame barriers, for example. In addition, a guest speaker from the third sector could be invited to talk about some of the services and activities that are available in the local community and what each service/organisation can provide. This could enhance knowledge and engage other services from the start so that they are aware of Connecting People and hopefully would be supportive if they received additional referrals. Responsibility for finding the guest speakers would have to fall to each team as the speakers would need to have local knowledge or local connections.

Practitioners need to be connected to the local area – be aware of what activities, groups and services are continuing, what's going on in the local community, what's due to close and when, for example.

To improve understanding of the Connecting People model, this Training Manual should be used alongside the Connecting People Practice Guidance. A Connecting People Implementation Manual is also available which aims to support organisations in making the changes that would help Connecting People to flourish. Both are available within your organisation and also online at www.connectingpeople.net.

SECTION I: INTRODUCING CONNECTING PEOPLE

What is Connecting People?

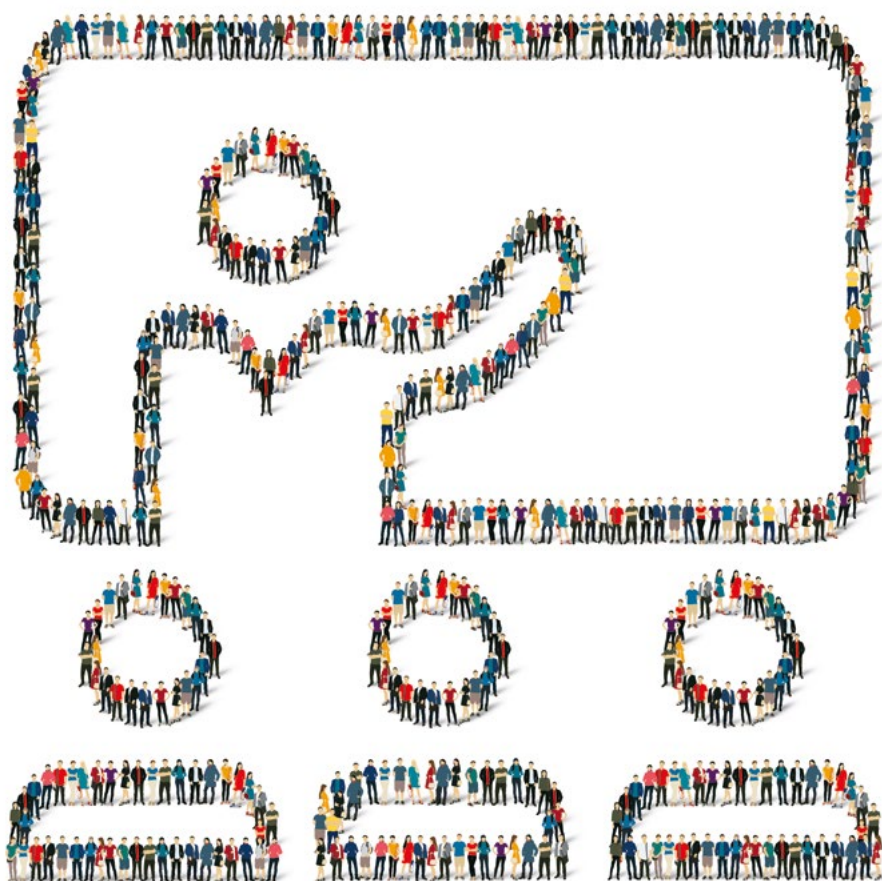
Connecting People has been developed following a two-year study of practice in six health and social care agencies and an international systematic review of social participation interventions which highlighted good practice and gaps in the evidence base.

Connecting People aims to help practitioners to support service users connect with people beyond health or social care agencies as they try out new, or reacquaint with old, activities. Social connections may be made with: neighbours or people living locally; people interested in the same hobby, sport or leisure pursuit; family or friends with whom the person may have lost contact; local businesses and local communities; or through voluntary work. Based on ideas from social capital theory, Connecting People encourages people to develop and use resources from across the community, and practitioners can help this process.

Research has found that social networks help people to find work, live longer and to improve their mental health, wellbeing and quality of life. However, whilst social networks have been identified as one of 'five ways to wellbeing', there is little guidance available to support practitioners in helping people feel less isolated and more connected with others. At the core of the Connecting People model is the desire to empower the individual through mutual trust and an equal relationship with the practitioner. Developing that relationship is at the heart of the Connecting People model.

ACTIVITY 1

Give a presentation about the research which underpins the Connecting People model and how it connects to contemporary health and social care policy. The PowerPoint presentation can be downloaded from www.connectingpeople.net.



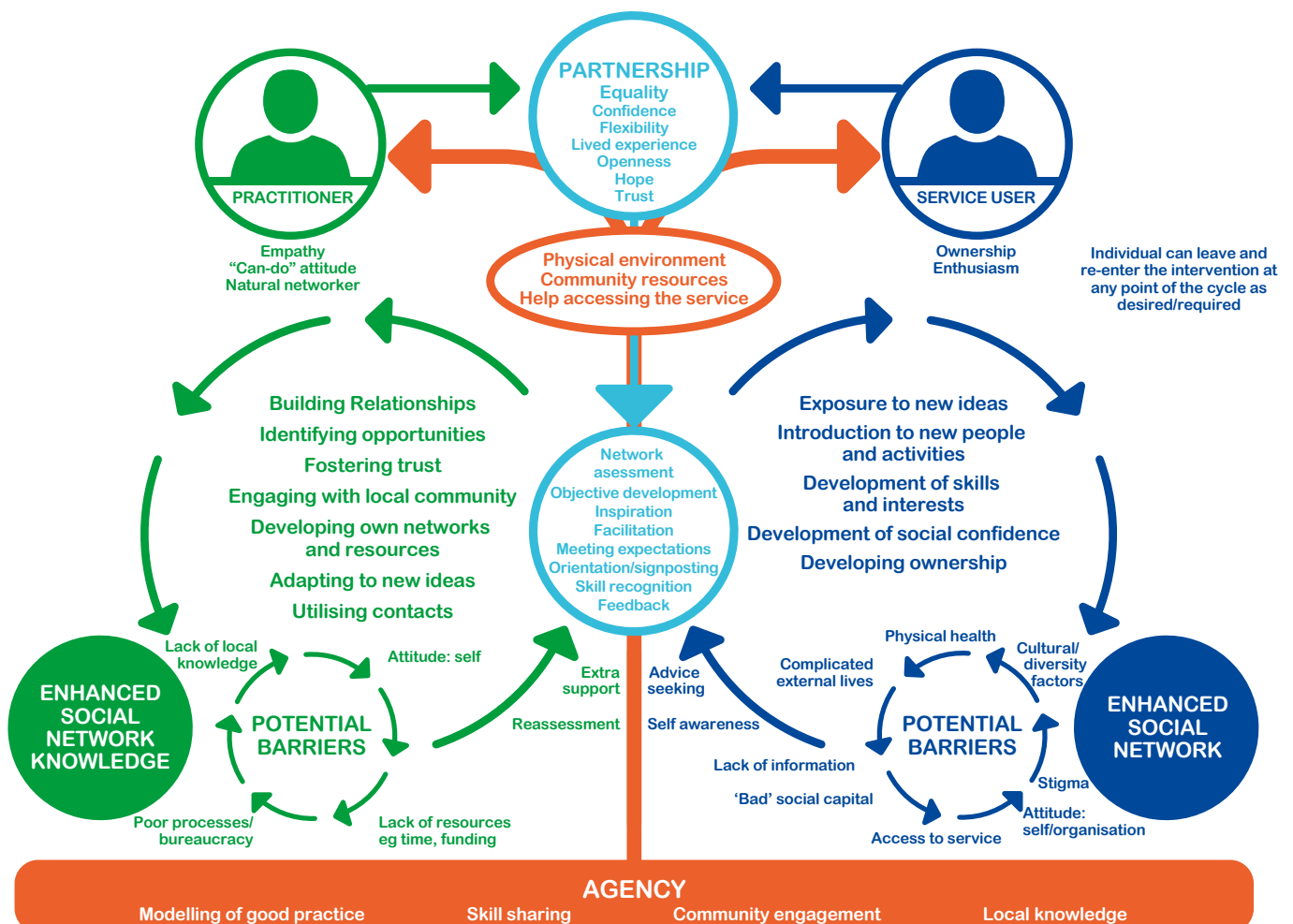


The Connecting People model consists of eight steps:

1. Getting started and talking about trying new things;
2. Mapping existing connections;
3. Making plans;
4. Stepping out;
5. Taking stock;
6. Working around barriers;
7. Looking at the organisational culture;
8. Reviewing the process.

The eight steps may be worked through as an ordered sequence, but steps may also be combined, rearranged, or revisited as required. The Connecting People model is flexible - people can leave and re-enter the process at any time in their journey to recovery. Each of us at any given time have tried new activities and found that we were not suited to them or did not enjoy them. It is therefore to be expected that people may withdraw from

some new activities and wish to try others instead. One of the roles of the practitioner is to offer reassurance that support will be provided along the way to help people develop and maintain their social networks. Connecting People encourages practitioners to be open to continuing conversations about developing social networks even when people report being uninterested to begin with.



ACTIVITY 2

Play the animation which explains what the Connecting People model is all about. Whilst watching the animation, ask the trainees to each write down: (1) what you already know about this general approach; and (2) what is new to you, anything you don't understand or feel less confident about.

Once the animation has finished, ask trainees to share their thoughts on (1) and (2) above. Then, ask them to write on flipcharts anything they were not clear about and address these during the training.

Connecting People does not follow a traditional linear process in which a practitioner does something for the service user and an outcome occurs as a result. It is not prescriptive about the size or quality of networks. It is up to individuals to decide how many people they want or need to be in contact with at any point in time. However, it does aim to ensure that people engage with others outside of health and social care services, in addition to those within them.



SUGGESTIONS

Guest speaker:

Ask a guest speaker, such as a service user or practitioner, to talk about their experiences of working in the way described by the Connecting People model, including any barriers that they may have faced and how they worked around them.

Ask the practitioners to keep in mind throughout the training how they envisage using Connecting People in their day-to-day work.



SECTION II: TRAINING ACTIVITIES AROUND EACH STEP

Step 1 Getting Started

OBJECTIVE: To find out how the service user feels about trying new activities and making new connections.

The Connecting People model attempts a cultural shift whereby both service users and practitioners take ownership of the work they do together and feel equally valued. An open-minded, optimistic, 'can-do' approach by the practitioner will help to facilitate the sessions. When discussing the service user's feelings about trying new things, the practitioner and service user should be working together. Practitioners need to use their own judgment as to when to introduce Connecting People to the people they are working with.

ACTIVITY 3

Ask the trainees to imagine they are introducing Connecting People to a service user. The key element during the contact is that the practitioner and service user work together to start thinking about how to improve social connections. Ask the trainees to think about how they would run the session so that both the practitioner and the service user feel equally valued. Ask the trainees to make some notes about the key points to include in this first session.

More information about this step is available on pages 8 and 9 of the Connecting People Practice Guidance.

A number of resources are available in the Connecting People implementation toolkit and online at www.connectingpeople.net. One is a social isolation scale. This could be used during Step 1 to assess levels of social isolation. If it is to be used, then it needs to be introduced as part of the conversation about Connecting People rather than a means of the practitioner collecting data. It could be provided to the service user to self-complete; discussed and completed together; or questions from the measure could be used to open up a conversation about social isolation.



Step 2

Mapping Existing Connections

OBJECTIVE: To map the existing connections that service users have with other people and services.

ACTIVITY 4

Ask the trainees to work individually and map out their own connections. The purpose of this activity is to experience the process of mapping connections before asking service users to do it. Ask the trainees to be as creative as they like in how they do this - there is no right or wrong way.

Ask the trainees to reflect on how they found this activity (easy, difficult etc.). Have a discussion with the group about their social connections. How complex are their maps? Is their map of existing connections dynamic or static? Does it include people who are no longer part of certain networks? How easy/difficult is it for them to share their personal lives with someone else?

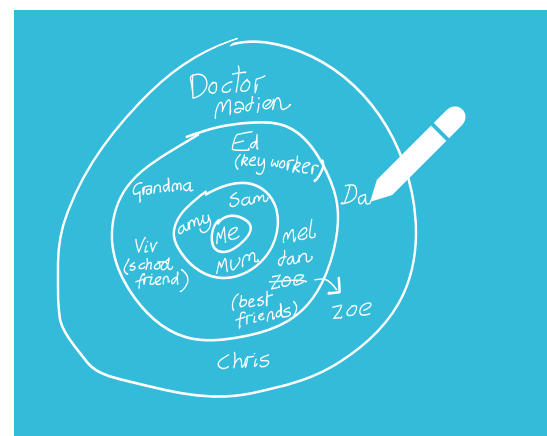
Ask the trainees to think about what they share with their connections and what their connections share with them (e.g. interests, resources, connections, emotional support, practical advice, friendship, etc.). Is there reciprocity in the exchange of resources? How can you help others and how can they help you?



Existing connections could include family, friends, colleagues, acquaintances, and staff in organisations. The exercise is to work together and identify meaningful connections, how close they are to the individual, how often they see them, whether they do anything together. At this step, the practitioner and service user should explore the person's strengths and assets - interests, qualities, what they enjoy and what they are good at doing. Various tools for mapping connections are widely available. The resource generator questionnaire could be used with the service user at this step. This is available in the toolkit and on the website.

KEY LEARNING POINT:

Ask the trainees to think about how they will work with a service user to map out the connections they have with other individuals, members of their team, and the wider community.



ACTIVITY 5: MAPPING LOCAL CONNECTIONS

As a team it is important to be aware of local networks, groups, services, resources and activities which people can engage with. Ask the trainees to spend some time (in the training and continue outside of it) mapping their team's connections in the local community. What services and activities are they aware of / do they have connections with? What are the gaps (in knowledge and in actual networks, groups, services, resources and activities) and how might they fill them?

More information can be found on pages 10 and 11 of the practice guidance.



Step 3

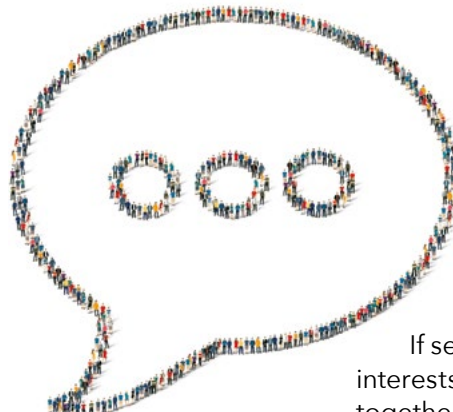
Making plans

OBJECTIVE: To work with people to help them to identify aspirations, goals and plans for the future.

Identifying aspirations and goals will be different for each person. The focus should be around things that the person would like to do. They might include specific activities such as attending a walking group, or more general goals such as making new friends (but with a plan about how this could be achieved). People's goals will be revisited throughout the Connecting People process to ensure they remain relevant, and to record progress. Remember that this should be an equal

ACTIVITY 6

Ask the trainees to think about how they (the practitioners) would support service users to identify their aspirations and goals to increase social connections. Use the example of Deloris and Kay from the Connecting People website. Kay is Deloris' support worker from a CMHT for older people. They talk about working together. Deloris and Kay are not their real names and all personally identifiable information has been removed. Their words are spoken by actors. At the end of this case study, ask the trainees to explore with others in their group some of the aspects of good practice and areas that could be improved.
www.connectingpeople.net



partnership and service users should take the lead in the conversation where possible.

If service users have similar interests consider bringing them together to share in an activity. Not only might this lead to new connections being made, it could also save practitioners time and thus be more attractive to managers.

More information on this step can be found on pages 12 and 13 of the practice guidance.

The Goal Attainment Scale is a method of supporting a service user to record and rate their goals. Discuss how this could be used in this stage of the Connecting People process. A copy of this tool is provided in the Connecting People pack and available online at www.connectingpeople.net

Step 4 Stepping Out

OBJECTIVE: To support people to begin putting plans into practice.

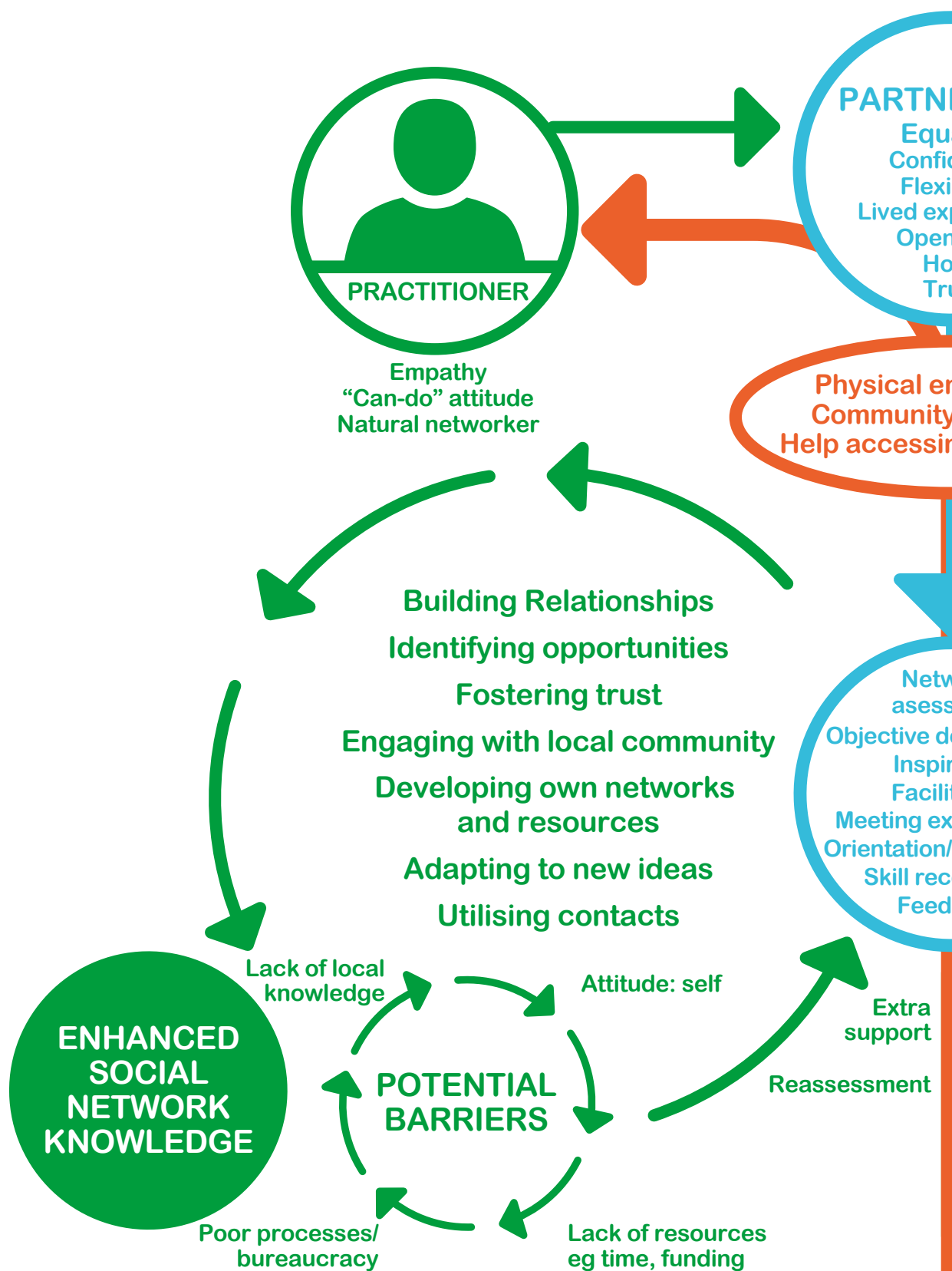
ACTIVITY 7: DISCLOSURE

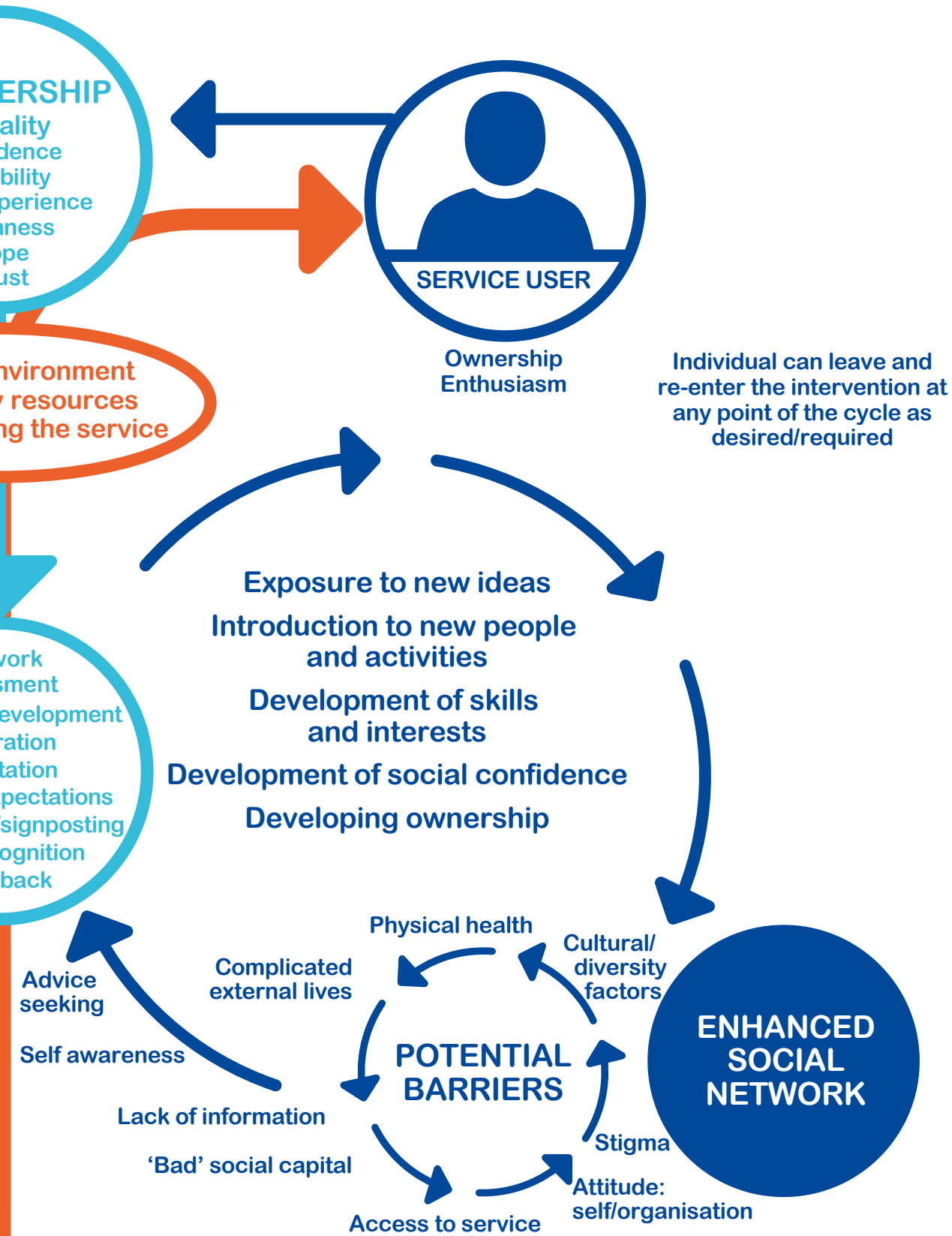
Ask the trainees to consider if they were introducing a service user to a new activity or new people, how much or how little of their personal information would they share? In the group, explore how they (the practitioners) and the service user might deal with issues around confidentiality and disclosure.

To access activities and opportunities, people may need support. Support could come from the practitioner or other team member, someone the person knows (identified in their asset map), a named person in an organisation or activity that the person has been introduced to, or through new skills and knowledge, such as building confidence.

More information on this step can be found in the practice guidance on pages 16 and 17.







NCY
Community engagement Local knowledge





Step 5

Taking Stock

OBJECTIVE: To review what is working well and identifying any barriers.

Service users may have tried some activities that they enjoyed and wish to continue. Some may experience barriers to participation that were not identified before activities took place. This step is about looking at what is working and what isn't, and crucially, why. Connecting People is a continual process. Change and adapt as you go along. Make the most out of what works and identify barriers.

Step 5 is about reviewing how the process is going so far. This is about connecting not assessment. People may be held back by a

ACTIVITY 8

In the group, discuss a scenario in which a person is lacking the confidence to go out (e.g. due to anxiety and depression). Ask the practitioners to consider how they might support them to attend, for example, a walking group in which they had previously expressed an interest.

number of barriers, for example personal confidence or motivation, lack of support, or practical issues. The practitioner will discuss these with the individual and consider together how to address them. (This is done in more depth in

Step 6). Practitioners will also think about how Connecting People is going for themselves and will identify any challenges which they themselves have, such as time constraints, organisational buy-in, resources, or lack of inspiration.

More information on this step can be found in the practice guidance on pages 18 and 19.



Step 6

Working Around Barriers

OBJECTIVE: To make plans to work around any barriers identified in Step 5.

This step is all about thinking what could be done to work around some of the barriers that might hold the person back.

There are several barriers that people may face when working to improve their social networks. These include:

- Stigma or discrimination from other people, or from oneself.
- Being part of a minority group, and struggling to identify inclusive mainstream groups or activities to join.
- Personal barriers like physical health problems, lack of motivation, feeling that they do not have much to offer others, the side effects of medication, having unhelpful friends and connections or poor experiences of groups, activities or services.
- Structural barriers such as poverty, poor transport links, or lack of opportunities locally (especially in more rural or coastal areas).



ACTIVITY 9

In the group, explore some of the barriers that might prevent people from getting involved with activities, clubs, or groups, or, in their experience, have proven to be significant barriers. Ask the group to make some suggestions about how they could work around each of the barriers.

ACTIVITY 10

In the group, explore some of the barriers that practitioners may face in using Connecting People. Ask the group to think about how they could work around or challenge those barriers.



SUGGESTIONS

Guest speaker:

Ask a guest speaker from the third sector to talk about: some of the diverse activities and groups that are available in the local community; the challenges facing some of those groups (e.g. around eligibility or funding); and their views on what could be done to improve people's social connections.

What might be done about the barriers faced by the practitioner? Who else might be able to contribute?

Barriers that might face practitioners when implementing Connecting People may include:

- Feeling that they do not have the skills, knowledge, confidence and/or experience to work in this way.
- Activities not being accessible to service users, perhaps because of their location or cost.
- Not having enough time to try out new approaches or dedicate enough time to this work.

The Connecting People Implementation Manual (available online at www.connectingpeople.net) gives suggestions for how some of these barriers can be

worked around or challenged. However, it is important that locally identified barriers are met with locally developed solutions.

Having someone from the third sector will enhance local knowledge and engage other services from the start so that they are aware of what Connecting People is about and hopefully will be supportive if they receive more referrals.

More information on this step can be found in the practice guidance on pages 20 and 21.

ACTIVITY 11

Practitioners and service users have different experiences about the quality of activities, resources and services within their local community. Ask the group to look back at their map of existing services and activities and share their experiences of each of them. Then, adopting a traffic light approach, rate each activity, network, resource or service as green (if you would recommend them), amber (if you are unsure or experienced some issues) or red (if you would not recommend them). This could be facilitated by using coloured sticky notes and writing the name of each activity, resource or group on the respective colour. Group the sticky notes together and have a discussion about the reasons for each 'rating'. Ask the trainees to consider how a person's experience of a service or activity could be improved. Are there any which could be moved from red to amber, or amber to green? Share your responses in a large group discussion.



Step 7

Organisational Culture

OBJECTIVE: To encourage collaboration, sharing of ideas, and changes to working practices that could help the organisation to adopt Connecting People and better support service users.

This step is all about thinking how practitioners can adapt their approach and encourage their agency to: model good practice, share skills, engage with communities, build local knowledge, create welcoming environments, and change working practices. Practitioners implementing the model are encouraged to talk to their colleagues and managers about Connecting People, to encourage collaboration, sharing of ideas, and changes to working practices. Service users should also be encouraged to say how they think the organisation could better deliver services and support, including Connecting People.

CMHTs are often comprised of practitioners from different backgrounds and disciplines such as psychiatrists, psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, community psychiatric nurses, and support workers. Sometimes it can be difficult to change working practices, for example to adopt a new approach such as Connecting People, when colleagues are familiar with a more traditional linear approach.

More information on this step can be found in the practice guidance on pages 22 and 23.

For further information and suggestions around embedding Connecting People in the organisation, see the Connecting People Implementation Manual, available in the Connecting People pack and on the website.

ACTIVITY 12

Ask the trainees to imagine that they are introducing Connecting People to a colleague. In pairs, ask them to practice describing Connecting People and how it can fit within the team's usual working practices. Then consider how you could use the diversity within the team to help implement the Connecting People model.





Step 8

Reviewing the Process

Objective: To review the whole process associated with Connecting People from the perspectives of both the service user and the practitioner.

This step involves reviewing the whole Connecting People process. Practitioners may reflect on the costs and benefits for themselves, their organisation, and on the individual. Service users may also reflect on their experiences and on their perceptions of the practitioner and organisation. Consider what comes next: are service users moving on from the team, or will they re-enter the Connecting People process at one of the steps?

We suggest pinning a double-page spread of the Connecting People model on the team wall as a visual reminder of what Connecting People is and what the team could be doing.

More information on this step can be found in the Practice Guidance on pages 24 and 25.

Practitioners may wish to evaluate their Connecting People practice. There are several tools in the pack to assist this:

- Goal attainment scale: first used in Step 3, this could be used as part of the review process with a service user to identify the extent to which they have met their goals. It can subsequently be used to set new goals and keep the Connecting People process moving forward.

- Resource Generator-UK: this is a standardised measure of access to social capital. It could be used with a service user at the beginning of the process and at a review point to identify how their network may have changed over time.

- Social isolation scale: first used in Step 1, this could be used as part of the review process to identify the extent to which individuals have become less socially isolated.

These measures should be used as an aid to help service users reflect on their plans and their progress rather than as an assessment.

ACTIVITY 13

Introduce the Connecting People fidelity measure to the group. The fidelity measure helps practitioners to measure the extent to which their practice fits with the Connecting People processes. Ask the practitioners to complete the practitioner version and discuss their ratings with a colleague in the group. Ask them to consider what they can do to increase their fidelity to the Connecting People model.

SECTION III: TRAINING TIPS

Think about what difference the Connecting People training could make to service users, practitioners, and the agency; focus on this as you develop and deliver the training.

Prior to the training ask yourself:

- Who should attend the training?
- How long will the training session last?
- When will the Connecting People training be needed?
- How should I set up the Connecting People training room?
- What materials would be of use during the training?
- How will the trainer and trainees be selected?

Following the training ask yourself:

- How could the training be improved?
- What will I do to improve the training?



APPENDIX

Animation of the Connecting People model: The text

This is the Connecting People model. This model identifies all of the processes which are involved, and explains how they work together to reach the end goal - increasing a service user's connections with others. We hope it will be useful in services for people with mental health issues, disabilities, substance misuse issues or people with other care, support or housing needs.

The model provides a framework for practice in health and social care agencies. It was developed from a study of good practice so it is possible that practitioners may already be working in this way. What is new about the model is that it articulates a way of working which can be undertaken in a number of different settings and contexts to help people to connect with others.

The model is centred around the partnership of a practitioner and a service user within an agency. By 'agency', we mean the service provider or team. It is based upon the principles of co-production. Rather than a practitioner 'doing' and a service user 'receiving', practitioners and service users co-create the objectives and actions within the model together. This means that the model represents a shared journey of discovery with inputs being invested and outcomes being produced for both the practitioner and the service user.

Now we will look more closely at the different aspects of the model.

The agency (or the service provider) in which Connecting People is implemented - whether this is an NHS trust, Local Authority, voluntary or private sector organisation, a social enterprise, or something else - is really crucial. It is depicted on the model here in orange as an all-

encompassing factor that underpins and runs through the programme. This demonstrates the power that the agency has to support the rest of the process. Without a supportive agency, it is much harder for the rest of the programme to run smoothly.

There are a number of features that are typical of an agency where the programme works well. These include a modelling of good practice; skill sharing; community engagement and good local knowledge. This means that the agency will have a strong knowledge of local assets (such as activities, groups or resources) and the social networks available in the area, outside of the health, social care and wellbeing services.

The agency can provide a physical environment that facilitates social connections and can provide useful links with community resources, which practitioners may not have independently. Although the local community is extremely important, other communities - such as communities of interest, or online communities - should not be overlooked, as they can be extremely helpful to service users. The agency also plays an integral part in helping service users to access other community resources and networks through the way in which they provide their services, such as using meeting rooms in the local community, for example.

The agency is depicted as running up through the centre of the model. This demonstrates how the shared knowledge of the local community and the model held by the agency can prevent local connections or projects failing when practitioners leave. This can also help to reduce reliance on individual practitioners who may connections

within the local community.

The agency is key to holding the structure of the Connecting People programme together.

We next move on to the partnership of the practitioner and the service user.

At the top of the model are some pre-requisites which need to be in place before the programme cycle can start moving forward. The practitioner needs to have empathy, a 'can do' attitude and be a skilled networker, while the service user they are working with needs to have some enthusiasm for engaging in this process and ownership over it. Together, the practitioner and service user work in partnership which ideally needs to be an equal relationship. Both need to see what they can gain from the other, and what they can give back in order to ensure that the programme process is a success. Qualities within this partnership also includes the shared attributes of confidence, flexibility, lived experience or a comprehensive understanding of the service user group in which they are working. Other qualities include openness, hope, and trust.

The importance of this partnership is clear throughout the model. The green circle - which represents the practitioner's journey during the programme - and the blue circle - which represents the journey of the service user - overlap to symbolise that they are intertwined and interdependent. As you can see from these circles, Connecting People is not a traditional linear process of a practitioner doing something for or to the service user, and an outcome occurring as a result of this. We have used these two interlocking circles to represent the fluidity of the process and the uncertainty about

if, when, and to what extent social network development will occur.

The goal of Connecting People is to get the two circles moving in tandem – working together to support the service user to develop their social connections. It is down to a strong partnership to ensure that the practitioner can maintain a good relationship with the service user, and support them to continue moving forward into roles and relationships beyond the service.

Once again, the partnership is emphasised in the list of shared processes that occur during the programme. This is represented by the square in the middle – it is the true heart of the model because it represents the co-produced activities. When the practitioner and service user meet for the first time in the context of this model, they explore the aspirations and life goals of the individual and develop a realistic strategy together to support him or her move towards this.

The strategies may be in the context of what the agency provides or it may be additional to that. Some underpinning elements of these activities may include network and asset assessment; objective development; and inspiration – where the practitioner talks about new ideas or helps the person to develop their existing ones. Following on from this, facilitation occurs; as well as meeting expectations, meaning that the service user and practitioner both continue to fulfil their side of the partnership. At the orientation stage, the practitioner helps to ensure that the individual knows the facilities available to them. This links with sign-posting where they are shown how to access the ones that they choose to engage with, and are potentially supported to engage with them. Finally, skill recognition and feedback complete the shared processes.

A service user's journey (represented

by the blue circle on the right) is the focus of the process as it is where the social network development – seen here as 'enhanced social networks' – is expected to occur.

We expect every instance to be different, but in general the process should involve catalysing ideas and experiences – where the service user is exposed to new ideas and has their existing ones encouraged and developed; being introduced to new people and activities; the development of skills and interests – both new ones and existing ones; the development of social confidence; and ultimately developing networks with new people and organisations – in other words, developing positive social capital. This may also be referred to as the service user 'building currency'. We have deliberately omitted any details about what the service user and practitioner might do within this process as it is up to them to co-produce the activities. However, we believe that social network development may occur at any point in this process.

A key point to note is that the individual is free to leave and re-enter Connecting People processes as they want and need to. They may go away and come back at a different stage in their recovery journey, or as they develop more confidence in their ability to form relationships and links outside of services. They may not have liked the activities or groups they initially joined and so may choose to re-engage with a different organisation, group or network.

The agency and practitioner need to be supportive about this in order to make sure that the person is comfortable moving through the process.

The practitioner's journey (represented by the green circle on the left) is equally as important in the process. The Connecting People model assumes that

the practitioner will need to develop their own social network knowledge in order to support the service user on their journey. Practitioners will need to build relationships with both the service user and often their family, as well as with other local organisations, groups, activities, networks and communities. They will need to foster trust through their reliability and interpersonal skills; identify opportunities; engage with the local community of the service user; develop their own networks and resources and remember these for future use; adapt to new ideas; and utilise their contacts in the process of supporting the service user they are working with. It is important that the practitioner can think creatively and use their resources effectively in order for them to keep the green circle turning.

At any point, they may need to provide extra support or reassess their involvement, while the service user they are working with may also need to seek advice from them and develop their own self-awareness of their journey.

However, life is never easy. Even if the practitioner and service user work through the process, there could still be things that stop social network development. The possible barriers are represented as a smaller circle that turns against the journeys of the service user and the practitioner. They are not necessarily internal to the service user or the practitioner themselves, but all have the common factor of working in the opposite direction to the Connecting People programme cycle, and so potentially posing considerable challenges.

For the service user, these barriers may include:

- stigma, from external factors, the service user themselves, or their families and significant figures in their life;



- diversity factors such as minority groups feeling less able or willing to engage with mainstream activities, groups or communities;
- physical health problems;
- complicated external lives;
- unhelpful attitudes of self and the organisation providing the context for the programme;
- 'bad' social capital, where the service user's support network is not conducive to their recovery;
- and structural factors including a lack of information on resources available, lack of local activities or groups (particularly in rural or coastal areas, for example), poor transport links, or a lack of finances to access activities, for example.

These barriers will present the practitioner with a number of challenges, and are likely to be the most time-consuming element of their work. Practitioners and service users together need to challenge, where possible, and find ways to work around the barriers in order for the Connecting People programme cycle to progress.

The practitioner may also face barriers. These may include a

lack of local knowledge which prevents them from making new connections; and poor procedures or bureaucracy, compromising their ability to work effectively with a service user. They may also include a lack of resource such as time or funding to ensure that the best way of working with a service user is used. However, the attitudes of the agency, the practitioner and the local community can be one of the largest barriers faced. The 'can-do' mentality mentioned earlier is crucial in order for practitioners to find ways to work around these barriers.

It is believed that when the Connecting People programme moves in the dynamic way that is seen in this model, the outcomes will include an enhancement in the service user's social network – and therefore an increase in their levels of social capital. For the practitioner, an enhancement in their social network development skills may occur. In addition, the service user may increase their social confidence, and be participating in more social activities. These activities are ideally activities based on shared interests within the local community rather than being confined to NHS, local

authority, or other social care or health services. The service user would also have deepened their relationships, more closely aligned their activities to their talents, and increased their own contribution to the lives of others. On the other side of the process, the practitioner may have built up their knowledge of the local community, and improved the ways that they network and interact with others.

Again, we want to emphasise that this is not a prescriptive and linear process. The nature of social network development means that it can be quite spontaneous and may occur at any point of the service user's journey along the programme. This model brings together the factors which we believe are necessary to help make it happen.

We hope that this explanation of the model has helped you to better understand the components of the Connecting People programme. When thinking about the programme, we encourage you to see how your existing practice fits with Connecting People's processes. If you would like to know more about the programme, please go to our website www.connectingpeople.net.



Connecting PEOPLE



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