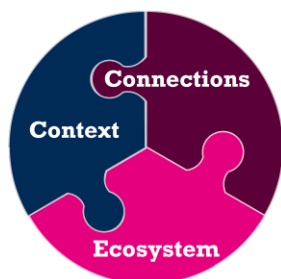


Ageing Better: Understanding Connections



Ageing Better national learning can be segmented into three clearly defined areas: **context**, **connections** and **ecosystem**.

These three interconnected segments build a picture of the macro and micro factors, services and support systems, that help us to better understand loneliness and social isolation in people aged over 50.

What is a connector?

- A connector helps make connections - within Ageing Better it is a means to help reach socially isolated people and through a person-centred approach connect them to activities and support that is right for them in their local area.
- Social prescribing is a model of connector work usually linked to the health sector.

Why is understanding the role of a connector so important?

- The first connection is vital to understanding an individual's specific situation and starting to build a relationship. Invest adequate time in the initial meeting which should take place in a safe, comfortable environment (ideally their own home).
- Once trust has been established, further connections into groups or activities can be explored focusing on an individual's wants and needs.
- If an individual is being referred into a group, activities need to be appropriate and inclusive whilst more complex cases will require professional support from paid staff.
- For the most socially isolated (where isolation is entrenched and embedded) there needs to be one-to-one, person centered support to produce a tailored plan to meet wellbeing needs. This can involve befriending, activities, sport or exercise as well as debt, housing advice or mental health support.

Summary of key learning from 14 partnership areas

- Making connections is not a linear path and life will continue to happen to people. It is important to accept that people need varying levels of involvement at different times.
- It takes time, energy and a variety of approaches and repeated connections to reach the most isolated.
- One organisation alone cannot solve the problems of social isolation and loneliness, meaning partnership work across the public, third and private sectors is vital.
- Delivery partners need to listen to each other and work together to ensure an individuals' needs are at the heart of delivery.

Applying learning in your area

Offer as varied a supply of activities, networks and possibilities as possible to reflect the variety of strengths and wishes that we all have as individuals. Consider and apply the findings from all Ageing Better Learning Reports.