

## Learning Snapshot: The Role of Connectors During Covid-19

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations about the changing role of Connectors as a result of Covid-19.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged 50+.

You can use it as a summary of the full [learning report](#), to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams, or include in your own presentations and briefings.

<p><b>1. Why focus on the role of Connectors?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 has brought some people back into social isolation and caused many more people to experience loneliness due to a loss of networks, groups and interventions.</li> <li>• The Connector Role (Ageing Better’s approach to connecting socially isolated people with activities and services locally) is fundamental to supporting the most vulnerable people; where social isolation is entrenched and embedded.</li> <li>• In the face of national and localised lockdowns, shielding, financial difficulties, health issues, bereavements and widespread uncertainty, Connectors have adapted their delivery models to meet the changing needs of people aged 50+.</li> </ul>	<p><b>2. What are the challenges?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Covid-19 has changed the ecosystem that people experiencing social isolation and loneliness can be connected into. Many of the interventions, activities and places that Connectors would usually draw on, have paused or become less accessible.</li> <li>• Far less connections can now take place face-to-face. What is possible physically, varies considerably throughout the country and with each individual.</li> <li>• The scope of the connector role has changed. There’s an increased demand for Digital Connectors - to address the digital divide. And a need for specialist Connector support to help those shielding back into their communities.</li> </ul>
<p><b>4. So what can we do with this learning?</b> Many ways of working created by Covid-19 will continue to be relevant to the next phase of the pandemic and in the future.</p> <p><b>Test and learn from services in your area:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Innovate connection opportunities and increase choice through digital groups, telephone-befriending, pen-pals, outdoor, garden and doorstep activities.</li> <li>• A person-centred approach remains key to relationship building and goal-setting.</li> <li>• Personalise the frequency, type and content of support to the individual.</li> <li>• Empower staff through training and supporting their personal wellbeing.</li> <li>• Maximise new partnership opportunities.</li> </ul>	<p><b>3. How Connectors are overcoming the challenges specific to Covid-19?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Digital tools have helped health and social care professionals coordinate cross-agency support quickly and responsively.</li> <li>• Connectors are innovating through a range of socially distanced activities, communication channels, and a flexible approach to ‘time-limited’ interventions.</li> <li>• They’ve adapted to the specific needs and ‘attitudes to risk’ of individuals by drawing on their person-centred approach to relationship building and support.</li> <li>• Applied knowledge of individuals and community connection opportunities, to develop emergency hub responses.</li> </ul>