

Agency Tip sheet: How to be a “Connector”?

To support your staff to become “Connectors” instead of “Protectors” here are a few simple steps:

- Offer staff **training** on the person-directed approach, including person-centered reviews (individual Support Plan meetings). Some great champions exist and can be found online. For example: <http://helensandersonassociates.co.uk/person-centred-practice/person-centred-reviews/> OR <http://www.openfuturelearning.org/index.html>
- Change your **agency culture and adjust policies** to support “Dignity of Risk”¹.
- Implement reasonable **Safeguards to support** people to have real relationships in their community, including training and support in areas of abuse, boundaries, etc.

Now that you have set the stage to allow staff to be Connectors, here are some practical tips and examples for Connectors:

- When you attend community programs with people, only support them where they need support. This allows others to step in and fill the space with real relationships.
- Be a bridge to people’s relationships. For example, if you see potential relationships beginning to form, help them take the next step by inviting the person to coffee after the program.
- Be warm and welcoming when in the community. People will only approach you and the person you are supporting if you are approachable.
- The person’s neighbourhood and community offer great opportunities for relationships. Learn to be a good neighbour. Help the person to foster these by inviting neighbours over for coffee and barbecues.
- **Social media can be a bridge** to foster and maintain existing community. Support the person in reaching out to their chosen Network through Facetime, Facebook and other social media.
- If the person chooses, open the person’s home to celebrations. Their home should be viewed as a **place to gather and not a “staff workplace”**. It is their home to host friends, have Friday night gatherings, etc.
- **Foster** new potential connections through apps like meetup.com and Eventbrite. These apps provide opportunities for people to meet based on common interest.

¹ **Dignity of risk** is the idea that self-determination and the right to take reasonable **risks** are essential for **dignity** and self-esteem and so should not be impeded by excessively-cautious caregivers, concerned about their duty of care.