

Supporting people with profound and multiple learning disabilities to be involved in their communities

People who have profound and multiple learning disabilities have a better lifestyle when they have opportunities in their communities and develop relationships with people other than paid staff. Being part of your local community does not just mean going out and about to local places - it also means having connections to people and being appreciated for who you are and what you bring.

'Life in the Community' project

The Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities has worked with a number of third sector service providers over the last three years to develop more opportunities for people with high support needs in their local communities. An important part of this has been to develop community connections.

Some of the key messages from the 'Life in the Community' work are:

- Circles of support, where a group of people come together to plan around a person and implement ideas, offer an effective way of finding out what a person with high support needs might like changed in their life.
- Having their own pot of money (and the support to use it) leads a person with high support needs to have more choice and control about what they do, when they do it and how they do it.
- For people with high support needs to meet and spend time with people, other than paid staff, support staff need to work in a different way and develop skills to be good community connectors.
- Commissioners and care managers have a key role to increase these opportunities through personalised funding as well as funding services that have a community connecting role.

Community Connecting

The Foundation's work with the service provider organisations highlighted the need for staff to develop the skills of a 'community connector'. Staff working in this role helped people with high support needs and their families to turn plans into action by getting to know their gifts and interests and then looking for opportunities to use these to link with other people in their local communities.

Booklets and videos

The Foundation has produced [a booklet about the 'Life in the Community' project](#) and [the video](#) showing the work of the service provider organisations

The Foundation has also produced [a booklet about community connecting](#) that accompanies [the video](#) of Grapevine's work. These include the stories of people with high support needs. The booklet was written by Clare Wightman

and both products are based on the work of Grapevine which participated in 'Life in the Community'.

The DVD tells the story of Anne, who was supported to have a magazine swapping service amongst her neighbours. This resulted in them seeing Anne in a very different way and Anne enjoying the contact with them.

There is also a [briefing paper for commissioners and care managers](#) that sets out information and ideas based on the findings from 'Life in the Community'.

What is happening next

The Foundation is developing the work on [community connecting](#) through funding from the Department of Health's Third Sector Investment Programme. The aim is to develop community connecting services in several areas in England and to promote this as a service that local areas should have on offer.

Get in touch

If you would like to find out about our training and consultancy work to enable people with high support needs to be involved in their communities, please contact Molly Mattingly on 07787 500184 or mmattingly@fpld.org.uk