



A year 2 evaluation of

# connect

HELP ON YOUR DOORSTEP

2010-2011



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# Foreword

Two years ago Help on Your Doorstep published a summary of the first phase Forster evaluation. The evaluation examined the organisation's impact in its first full year and concluded that our outreach and referral approach was effectively reaching marginalised Islington residents and linking them with agencies that improve their health and wellbeing. A phase 2 evaluation, carried out the following year, confirmed these findings and helped us understand the significant impact of the service approach on people with multiple needs and those who are isolated.

At Help on Your Doorstep we are conscious of the barriers that people face in getting the help they need to overcome social problems. We have drawn on the experiences of the communities we work with to shape the service in such a way that is designed to negate these barriers.

Our **outreach door knocking** in neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation takes the 'frontline to the front doors' of those who are often thought of as 'hard to reach'.

The **network of committed referral partners** we work with enables us to link people into a wide range of services that address a variety of social welfare needs in a joined up way that reflects the complexity of people's experiences.

Our **local focus** (local staff and volunteers and neighbourhood based offices) and our **independence** means that we are trusted and client focused.

And finally, our **referral follow up processes** enable us to track each and every one of our 3000 referral for support and advice each year and take further steps where issues are not resolved.

All of these services features contribute to our success in engaging people who would otherwise not get the help they need and, with our partners, improve the likelihood of positive outcomes.

*“We have drawn on the experiences of the communities we work with to shape the service...”*

Going forward we will continue to support the most isolated and vulnerable to take more control of their lives, tackling issues such as financial hardship, isolation, debt, poor housing and poor health. We are also doing more to support people into work in recognition that this can be one of the most effective and sustainable ways of tackling disadvantage. We also recognise

that our reach and knowledge of the communities that we work in provides us with the ability to share local intelligence with our strategic partners so that they can, in turn, address needs in a more effective way.

The evaluation has shown that the Help on Your Doorstep Connect model is effective. We are sharing this summary because we also believe that it is replicable and scalable. We would encourage anyone interested in getting services to those who need it most to come and talk to us. I hope you find this report useful and interesting.

Ken Kanu  
Director

# Executive summary

This report contains the findings of an evaluation of the Connect outreach and referral service, which delivers face-to-face support to isolated and vulnerable people. It aims to support people to help themselves and take control over their lives.

Connect is delivered by Help On Your Doorstep, a charitable organisation established in 2009. Its advisers knock on doors and engage with people face to face. In this way the organisation manages to reach people who are excluded from local service delivery or have fragmented and often negative experiences of dealing with services. Connect's advisers win the trust of their clients and refer them to the support they need, provided by a network of partner agencies.

## The year 2 evaluation had the following objectives:

- To see whether the profile of people receiving help from Connect have changed.
- To investigate whether the service is providing clients with the support they need.
- To show to what extent the positive outcomes experienced by clients are a result of the support they have received from Connect.
- To assess how successful the service has been in reaching clients suffering from some form of isolation.
- To show if Connect is focusing its resources where they can have most impact, and on people who have multiple needs

This report is an evaluation of Connect's second year: April 2010 to March 2011. An evaluation of year 1 is available here:

[www.helponyourdoorstep.com/SummaryReport.pdf](http://www.helponyourdoorstep.com/SummaryReport.pdf)

The evaluation sought to give Help On Your Doorstep a better understanding of the impact Connect was having on people experiencing isolation and with multiple needs.

The findings demonstrate clearly that Connect is continuing to successfully reach these kinds of clients, and is providing them with the help they need. It also shows that Connect's support is having a positive impact on people's lives. The evaluation showed that most of Connect's clients are from the groups most likely to be deprived and excluded in Islington, including BME groups and people who are unemployed.

The evaluation found that although the profile of Connect's clients appears relatively unchanged since year one, the worsening economic climate is affecting the types of issues that Connect's clients are facing, as well as threatening the service providers that it refers people to.

Connect's database shows that 56% of its clients have multiple needs. This is a bigger proportion than in year 1 but staff believe the real proportion to be much higher still. Advisors report seeing increasing

numbers of people who have multiple needs, including employment, finance and housing issues.

People living in isolation lack friends, family and any kind of support network. An indicator that a client might be living in isolation is if they have not previously accessed any local services. This applies to up to 50% of all Connect's clients.

Clients who were interviewed for the evaluation spoke about the negative effect that isolation had on their mental health, and how much better they had felt since receiving support from a Connect adviser. Follow-up data shows that after three months, over three quarters of Connect's clients have either had their issue resolved altogether or are receiving ongoing help for it. This data also showed that the outcomes for people with multiple needs were equally positive as those experienced by other clients.

Clients were overwhelmingly positive when talking about Connect in interviews and surveys for the evaluation. Most report experiencing real improvements to their situations that would not have come about if not for the support they have received from Connect. A common statement from clients is that they felt unable to seek help for themselves before meeting their Connect advisor, and the support they received from Connect has given them the confidence to access other services.

# Introduction

## Background

Connect - Help on your Doorstep was set up as a charity in 2009. It aims to improve the health and wellbeing of Islington residents who are isolated, excluded or vulnerable. The service aims to reach people who don't access services by visiting them at their homes. During the period of the evaluation it worked in four areas of Islington:

- Canonbury
- Caledonian (since 2010)
- EC1
- Finsbury Park

In 2010 Connect commissioned researchers from Forster to carry out an evaluation of its first year that would measure how well the service was doing in meeting its objectives.

A second phase of evaluation research was commissioned from Forster in 2011 to look at the period from April 2010 to March 2011. This document is a summary of the report from this phase 2 evaluation. In this second evaluation Connect has sought to better understand the impact its service has on:

- People who are facing a mixture of different issues, described as 'multiple needs'
- People experiencing some form of isolation

## How does the service work?

The Connect service model is unique in Islington in incorporating a series of elements designed to reach vulnerable people and

### Connect's services target people who are often defined as hard to reach. These include

- Residents in deprived areas who might be unaware of the help available to them or lacking the confidence to go and find it themselves.
- People from ethnic minority communities, particularly those who have English as a second language
- People with physical and mental health issues
- People with drug and alcohol issues
- Carers and older people

improve their life opportunities. A team of advisors each work in their own designated area of the borough, knocking on the door of every household to see if the residents need their help. When an advisor meets somebody who they think could benefit from support they refer this person to a partner organisation that can help them. Connect supports clients to access support themselves, where previously they might not have felt able to.

After three weeks the advisor checks back with the client to see how things are going, and to make sure that they are getting the support they need. At this point the advisor invites the client to an appointment at the Connect offices to discuss what other needs they might have and plan how these can be addressed.

Other support that Connect advisors provide to clients includes general advice and information; help with form filling and arranging support from services on their behalf.

## Deprivation in Islington

Islington is the fifth most deprived borough of London, and parts of the borough are among the 20% most deprived in Britain. As a borough, Islington's national deprivation ranking has improved since year 1 however. It was previously the eighth most deprived borough in Britain but is now ranked fourteenth.

The borough has the second highest rate of child poverty in the country, with 46% of children in Islington living in poverty. Islington also has the UK's second highest number of children living in households on benefits.

**8.9%**

2010 unemployment rate in Islington, compared to 5.5% the previous year

**17%**

of Islington's working age population claiming out of work benefits (compared to London 13%, England 12%). This rises to as much as 22% in Finsbury Park ward.

# Methodology

## How was Connect evaluated?

Connect advisors log all the contacts they have with their clients on a database. This includes basic information about each client and a summary of the referrals and support they have received. The evaluation research began with a complete analysis of this database.

This analysis was followed by consultation with clients and other stakeholders:

- Face to face interviews with 15 clients in each of the four areas of Islington that Connect works in
- A telephone survey of 120 clients
- Telephone interviews with eight referral partners and six members of Connect staff.



## Case study

### Matthew\*

Matthew is in his 80s, lives on his own and suffers from prostate cancer. Since his wife died he no longer has contact with his children or grandchildren and does not know where they live. As a result, he leads quite an isolated life and is often in a great deal of pain because of his illness.

Despite having lived in the area for 30 years, Matthew was unaware of local services available to him prior to meeting Connect, and did not know how to begin approaching any. Therefore, when Connect knocked on Matthew's door two years ago he was very pleased

found the advisors very friendly. As a result of Connect's support he was able to get help with his phone bill charges and was able to get a new bed which meant he was no longer in discomfort.

Connect have also helped Matthew with reading and writing in English which is something he has found difficult in the past.

\*Please note that names have been changed to preserve interviewees' anonymity. As such, we have not specified which Connect service the client used.

*"I don't get support from anyone else as I'm not in touch with my family and my wife is dead so for me Connect is a vital lifeline."*

# Findings

## Has the profile of Connect's clients changed in the last year, and is the service providing them with the support they need?

### Who uses connect services ?

Connect is reaching more people. The service supported 1457 clients in year 2, compared to 1158 the previous year.

Despite this increase, the evaluation found that the profile of these clients was largely unchanged. Connect's target clients continue to be people who are falling through the net of local service delivery or have fragmented and often negative experiences of dealing with services. Knocking on these clients' doors is the most effective way of reaching them.

In the two years that Connect has been operating the area where the highest number of its clients have been receiving a service from Connect is EC1, where the service has been running longest. In the year 2 evaluation clients from EC1 accounted for 35% of the sample.

One change that the evaluation found was that Connect was now reaching more people with multiple needs. Many of the needs experienced by these clients were a direct result of economic pressures. For example Connect staff report that more of their clients are facing housing issues and suffering mental health problems as a consequence.

Connect advisors reported seeing increasing numbers of clients seeking employment and financial help, including debt advice.

The economic situation is not just affecting Connect's clients but also their referral partners. Several services that Connect previously referred clients to have been forced to close due to funding cuts.

Consultation with existing referral partners showed that Connect is highly valued by these services. Connect's brokerage enables them to reach clients that they otherwise would not be able to.

Clients with multiple needs often require support from several different partner organisations, and this can increase the workload for Connect advisors. However, analysis showed that this was not having a negative effect on the outcomes that these clients were experiencing. Data from follow-up calls showed that equally positive outcomes were being experienced by clients regardless of the level and variety of their needs.

#### Key characteristics of Connect's clients are:

- Aged between 19 to 50
- 67% from black and ethnic minority communities
- Around half are unemployed and 17% are retired



*“Connect need to continue to maintain their knowledge of local referral partners because services are changing rapidly and a lot are disappearing.”*

Referral partner



## Case study

When Connect knocked on Gillian's\* door her husband had just been diagnosed with stomach cancer.

Gillian admits that she was reluctant to engage with the service at first and was quite sceptical of what Connect were offering. She also didn't feel up to talking to strangers at that point. It was about a week later when Gillian rang Connect to make an appointment with them, having read the information leaflet the advisor had left behind. Having been busy caring for her husband Gillian had accrued a number of debts and was in need of some financial assistance.

Connect were able to help her with this and they "put me in touch with the right people." Gillian says that she was and still is in need of emotional support which she consistently gets from the Connect advisors. She says that she has come to rely on their support during tough times. Gillian appreciates that this service is local and says

this is a 'real bonus' for her because she can't leave her husband in the house alone, as she is his primary carer.

Gillian says: "Connect have always been really supportive towards me and had their door open at any time which is really vital for me at the moment."

\*Please note that names have been changed to preserve interviewees' anonymity. As such, we have not specified which Connect service the client used.

*"Connect have always been really supportive towards me and had their door open at any time, which is really vital for me at the moment."*

## Is Connect supporting people to achieve the outcomes they need?

### Outcomes experienced by clients three months after Connect support

Outcome	Canonbury	EC1	Finsbury Park	Caledonian
Issue has been resolved	47%	48%	47%	43%
Issue not resolved but has improved	13%	15%	13%	17%
No change but ongoing help being received	26%	18%	22%	21%
No change - no ongoing help	13%	18%	17%	18%
Issue has worsened	<1%	1%	1%	<1%

Connect advisors conduct follow-up contacts with clients after three months, to find out what outcomes they have experienced. Since July 2010 Connect has been recording this information, and outcomes data exists for just over half of the clients that Connect has seen in this time.

The evaluation showed that over three quarters of these clients have either experienced an improvement in their situation, or are receiving ongoing help with it. An average 61% of all clients said that their issue had either been resolved or had improved, when they were contacted three months after Connect's intervention.

This is an encouraging result given that many clients (56%) have multiple issues and are often those people who are most vulnerable and isolated and who therefore often need on-going support.

Even clients who had not had their issue resolved spoke very positively about the service they had received from Connect. When asked if they would recommend Connect to friends and family, 95% of people who were surveyed and 100% of people who were interviewed said they would.

For clients whose situations have not improved, the three month follow-up contact provides Connect with an opportunity to suggest alternative support and review other referral options.

**71%**

of clients gave a maximum '5' rating for satisfaction with Connect

**Over 75%**

of clients experienced an improvement in their situation three months after Connect's intervention

**95%**

of clients would recommend Connect

## On a scale of 1-5, has contact with Connect helped you in any of the following ways?

Outcome	1	2	3	4	5
Benefited your physical and or mental health	6% (3)	6% (3)	6% (3)	13% (6)	68% (32)
Helped you secure employment	12% (3)	15% (4)	15% (4)	12% (3)	46% (12)
Helpedh you increase your income through getting a job, getting benefits or changing the benefits you receive	18% (7)	5% (2)	16% (6)	8% (3)	53% (20)
Helped you manage any debts	12% (2)	0% (0)	0% (0)	18% (3)	71% (12)
Improved your housing situation	13% (5)	8% (3)	15% (6)	28% (11)	38% (15)
Encouraged you to get more involved in your local community	17% (4)	4% (1)	21% (5)	21% (5)	38% (9)
Helped you enter/continue education/ training	7% (2)	7% (2)	7% (2)	10% (3)	71% (22)

The evaluation asked clients to rate the service they had received from Connect. The results are shown in the table above.

When asked to give a mark out of five for how pleased they were with Connect 71% of clients gave a maximum '5' rating, and 18% gave a '4'.

The type of support that clients rated 5 with the highest frequency was help with accessing education and training.

The type of service receiving the joint-lowest number of 5 ratings (38%). For 21% of housing clients this was because their housing situation had not been resolved since their referral to a partner service, with some clients acknowledging that this was because they had not had time to follow up with the referral agency. It should be noted that the chronic shortage of social housing in Islington means housing issues are often the hardest to resolve.

Many of the benefits that people reported as a result of their support from Connect were related to having more confidence and 'feeling better' or 'less stressed'. Several clients talked about how they appreciated having someone who would listen to their problems.

Both clients and partners stated their belief that Connect's delivery method of knocking on people's doors was crucial to the service achieving positive outcomes. Speaking to clients face-to-face helps to build trust between them and their Connect advisors.

Throughout the research, people frequently spoke of their trust and respect for Connect and the importance of their relationships

*"It's good to know that there are people there to help and listen to you."*

with Connect advisors.

The evaluation clearly showed that most of Connect's clients felt their situation had improved as a result of their contact with the service. As found in the phase 1 evaluation, many clients reported that their contact with a Connect advisor had made them feel more confident, and said that without it they would have been unlikely to seek help from other services.

*"I could trust them. When they said they were going to do something, they did. They sent information, contacted me again to see if I needed more help."*

## Are positive outcomes a result of Connect's support?

There can be no doubt from the research that overall, clients felt that their situation had improved as a result of their contact with Connect. Evidence for this came across most clearly in the results of the qualitative interviews.

Clients felt that the support provided by Connect advisors was invaluable, and that positive outcomes could be attributed directly to their interaction with Connect advisors. In many cases clients said that this interaction had improved their confidence and that without this they would have been unlikely to have sought help or accessed other services.

In interviews, many clients talked about not being in the 'right state of mind' to look for help when they were first contacted by Connect, and that it took several visits from an advisor before they felt confident enough to access other services. This was particularly true of people suffering isolation and multiple needs.

Evidence of the strength of people's relationship with Connect is that respondents were very open and easily able to express their opinions on Connect and the help they had received. They could clearly remember the names of advisors at Connect who helped them. For many people this was in contrast their experiences of using other services in the borough which tended to be less positive overall.

Referral partners also expressed their belief that Connect's support enabled people to access their services who would otherwise be unlikely to. Connect's referrals therefore are enabling these partner organisations to reach more clients.

As well as referring clients to other services, Connect advisors themselves give support to their clients (known as 'non-referral support'). Clients praised this type of help very highly, and described the important part it played in bringing about positive outcomes for them.

Particularly vulnerable clients and those with multiple needs were particularly grateful for the practical support advisors gave with things like form filling and writing letters. There have been cases where Connect has helped clients draft letters to legal services when facing legal action over unpaid bills, or eviction from their homes.

Connect staff spend a lot of time on non-referral support but all feel that it is an essential part of the service that Connect delivers, and contributes greatly to positive outcomes for clients.

*"I wasn't in the right state of mind to help myself... If Connect hadn't visited I don't think I would have done anything about the situation I was in."*

*"They [Connect] have helped me to express myself right, for example through helping me write formal letters and using language that's better, that will make other people listen to you."*

*"Connect brings in clients who are often outside of the system – they connect with people who don't have the experience or courage to access resources. They do this through door-knocking and through the fact that they are a local service who people trust."*

**Referral partner**

## Case study

Now a retired carpenter, Vince\* spent a couple of years in and out of hospital because of a bad fall he had at work.

Vince came into contact with Connect when they knocked on his door and made him aware of the help he could get through local services. This offer of support was vital for Vince because at that time he had accrued some large debts through being unable to work and therefore unable to pay some of his bills. All of this was causing Vince a lot of stress and making him unhappy.

Since their initial meeting Connect has put him in touch with services who have helped him in a number of other ways including: getting support in tackling a legal battle; getting the equipment he needs to get in and out of the bath; getting a new bed to replace his old one (which had been stacked up on old milk crates) and putting him in touch with the DLA when he started to lose his hearing and required an operation.

For Vince, one of Connect's biggest merits is the fact that they were able to offer continued support in different areas of his life, and rather than just telling him where to get help they actually enabled him to make significant changes in his life.

Vince says: "I feel a lot better having met Connect, it's taken away a lot of stress from my life and I'm now much more aware of my rights and where I can go to access services."

\*Please note that names have been changed to preserve interviewees' anonymity. As such, we have not specified which Connect service the client used.

*"I feel a lot better having met Connect, it's taken away a lot of stress from my life and I'm now much more aware of my rights and where I can go to access services."*

## How successful is Connect in reaching isolated people and those with multiple needs?

In the year 2 evaluation, Connect particularly wanted to focus attention on people those living in isolation and those with multiple needs. Connect wanted to understand better the impact its service was having on these types of clients.

Connect defines isolation as ‘the persistent lack of the relationships that can positively impact on the wellbeing of an individual.’ These relationships could include family relationships, friends, neighbours/ community, and local services. It is about being disconnected from a sufficient support structure that would help deal with the challenges that people face in their day to day lives.

An indication that somebody is isolated is when they have not previously accessed any other local services. The evaluation found that this applied to up to 50% of the clients on Connect’s database . Many of the clients who were consulted said that they didn’t have any kind of support network before they met their Connect advisor. Most of these reported a major improvement in their mental and physical health since receiving support from Connect.

*‘Most, if not all clients that come through as a referral from Connect are isolated or have multiple needs or both’.*

### Referral partner

Many clients who were previously suffering isolation are now in regular contact with Connect. When consulted for the evaluation they all spoke very positively about their relationship with Connect. Even those clients whose issues are still not resolved all felt strongly that their situation had improved as a result of Connect’s support.

The evaluation showed that Connect had seen an increased number of clients with multiple needs: 56% compared to 52% in year 1.

The table below shows a comparison of the numbers of people with multiple needs in each area that were supported by Connect in its first and second years (the Caledonian office was not open in year 1).

Although analysis of the Connect’s database showed that 56% of its clients had multiple needs, Connect staff and referral partners felt that this figure is actually much higher – as much as 80% of the clients they saw.

Clients with multiple needs can create additional work for advisors; both in multiple referrals to different partner organisations and increased non-referral support. Analysis of outcomes data however showed that people with multiple needs were experiencing equally positive outcomes to other clients. The additional pressure of supporting clients with multiple needs does not therefore seem to be reducing the quality of the support that Connect is providing.

Over all, the evaluation shows that Connect is prioritising its support and resources in the right ways. Connect’s unique method of door-knocking and supporting people with multiple needs and issues is delivering real outcomes. The challenge for Connect is to continue to provide such a high quality service in a climate of increasing disadvantage.

### Clients with multiple needs in years 1 and 2

Area	Total number of clients with multiple needs		Percentage of all clients who had multiple needs	
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 1	Year 2
EC1	280	281	52%	61%
Canonbury	253	194	57%	56%
Finsbury Park	68	166	40%	55%
Caledonian	N/A	111	N/A	49%

## Acknowledgements

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