

Working together in community support

*Evaluation of the
Connecting for Change
programme from
Help on Your Doorstep*

March 2023



Commissioned by:

Authorship and acknowledgements

This report has been written by Charlotte Pace and Vita Terry, based on interviews and desk research carried out by the authors with the team at Help on Your Doorstep.

Thank you to the residents of Islington and the staff and partners of Help on Your Doorstep for giving up their time to take part in this project and for sharing their experiences and ideas so freely and openly.

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Terminology

HOYD – Help on Your Doorstep

GNS – The Good Neighbour Scheme is a scheme run by HOYD to offer residents opportunities to connect, socialise and participate in activities in their local community hubs. Three schemes operate in Bemerton, Kings Cross and New River Green.

VCSE – An acronym for Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (to encompass types of organisations in the charitable sector).

Resident – A person who lives in Islington.

Connect Service – HOYD service that 'connects' local residents to the support they need, e.g. health and wellbeing, debt or housing.

Connect Adviser – A trained guide/advice-giver working as part of a team in the Connect Service

Referral – A handover or transfer to another (healthcare) professional for specialist treatment or care, for example.

Social prescribing – A method GPs, nurses, link workers and other health and care professionals can use to refer people to a range of local services to meet their non-clinical needs. The aim is to take a more holistic approach to a person's health and wellbeing by focusing on what matters to them.

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Foreword

This report explores how Help on your Doorstep is evolving its work in order to make a difference to people living in an increasingly challenging socio- economic climate, for both individuals and the organisations that exist to serve them.

Support from the National Lottery Community Fund (NCLF) enabled us to engage the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) as a learning partner, supporting us to reflect on our work and to learn, for both organisational development and to share with others. I believe that the insights that Charlotte Pace and Dr Vita Terry have supported us to acquire over the past four years have a wider relevance to everyone providing wellbeing-related support in communities.

Help on Your Doorstep works in the London Borough of Islington, where there are significant inequalities. Social policy changes, economic trends and the Covid pandemic have all served to exacerbate the stark differences in people's lives, and have left many struggling with their finances, mental wellbeing and sense of connection to others.

With services stretched to the limit by the dual challenges of increasing and more complex need on the one hand, and inadequate resources on the other, our ability to resolve these inequalities is severely compromised.

We commissioned this work because we wanted to learn how we could do better in those areas that are within our control. Our focus has been on the relationships that we create with those who use our services, and with partner organisations. It is my belief that within these areas there is an incredible amount of strength and energy that can be unlocked to counteract the pressures elsewhere in the system, and more importantly to make a positive difference to people's lives.

This report has provided a set of valuable insights on which we will continue to build in the coming years. We are delighted to share this learning in the hope that others will also find it useful.



Ken Kanu
Chief Executive of Help on Your Doorstep

Introduction

Since May 2019, the Institute for Voluntary Action Research (IVAR) has been working with Help on Your Doorstep (HOYD) to evaluate their Connecting for Change programme, a four-year initiative funded by The National Lottery Community Fund (NLCF) as part of the Reaching Communities grant.¹

HOYD works with the residents of Islington, London, to improve their lives, enhance wellbeing and strengthen the community through various activities and programmes. This includes Connecting for Change, which provides ongoing support, advice and referrals into specialist services for residents.

Services like this play a vital role in the fabric of community support, particularly in this neighbourhood. Islington is a *'borough of contrasts ... a place where the gap between the "haves" and "have nots" is stark'* - according to the council's 2021 report into the state of equalities in Islington.² Pre-existing hardships are deepened by continuing austerity, welfare reform and the ongoing uncertainty caused by the Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis³. Residents are having to make radical budget adjustments which has serious impact on their wellbeing when added to the current challenges they face.

The programme aims to achieve three outcomes for vulnerable, disadvantaged and isolated residents in Islington:

- Reduced barriers to wellbeing.
- Increased personal confidence and capacity to successfully address the underlying problems that adversely affect wellbeing.
- Improved support networks and positive activities within their communities resulting in happier, stronger communities.

HOYD believes the way to achieve these outcomes is by identifying residents that are most at risk; providing responsive, early support; working alongside them to find solutions to the issues they face; strengthening residents' confidence over time to tackle challenges independently; and enabling people to improve their life chances. Understanding the lived experience of the issues is integral to HOYD's approach and is an important aspect of the collective skills and experience staff bring to local people.

Residents' level of need varies, with some requiring relatively short-term, immediate support and others a series of interventions over time. The programme was developed to better understand what it takes over the longer term to support people to reach their goals and develop the skills and confidence to do things for themselves. Insights from the programme have informed and shaped the development of the programme and broader organisational approach. HOYD work in partnership with other Islington providers and networks.

¹ <https://www.nlcommunityfund.org.uk/funding/programmes/reaching-communities-england>

² <https://www.islington.gov.uk/-/media/sharepoint-lists/public-records/communications/information/adviceandinformation/20202021/20210311stateofequalities2021.pdf>

³ [ibid](#)

This is integral to the approach and ensures vulnerable people are linked to the right support when it is needed most and contributes to the collective effort to improve the lives of Islington's residents.

About our approach and report

This report summarises what we learned about how and where the approach taken by HOYD, through the programme, has led to the intended outcomes for Islington residents. We also look at some of the key insights this work has surfaced about working with vulnerable residents, some of which may be applicable to community work beyond the Borough. In addition to this report, we have produced a series of printer-friendly A4 posters which set out key insights from Connecting for Change on supporting positive change in communities and a short film compiling interviews with staff members on their role and the impact of their work.

Our approach was to provide a developmental evaluation of the programme alongside learning support for HOYD. The aim of the evaluation was:

To understand the value of Islington residents being supported over a longer period, capturing resident goals and progress along the way.

To explore and understand how this way of working is moving people beyond crisis, towards higher aspirations of 'catalysing change'.

The findings in this report are based on the following evaluation activities conducted between May 2019 and January 2023 (See Appendix One for detailed methods and sample):

- Desk review
- 57 interviews with 25 Islington residents; 15 HOYD staff; 17 partners
- One focus group which included six Islington partners
- One resident reference group attended by approximately 12 local residents
- Participation in three partner network meetings
- Four learning workshops with staff
- Partnership and learning workshop with 59 cross-sector partners

The evaluation was partly conducted during the Covid-19 pandemic, which meant evaluation activities were a mix of in-person and remote delivery depending on government guidelines and the most appropriate approach at the time. We were keen to track change over the period and illustrate residents' stories of change, therefore, where possible, we aimed to repeat conversations with staff, residents and partners. All participating residents were offered a voucher in recognition of the time they contributed to the evaluation.

Since the programme began, we have analysed the data at regular intervals. In addition to evaluation activities, we held six steering groups to share back and sense check emerging findings. Anonymised quotations from interviews and workshops are used throughout the report to illustrate key points, and we obtained full consent from all participants.

The evaluation approach was formative, collaborative and helped inform and shape HOYD's future activity, while also generating learning for partners in Islington and the broader social sector.

Key findings

1. About the programme and its impact

Key insights

The Connecting for Change programme is open to all Islington residents looking for support, but with a focus on the most vulnerable and isolated.

Connecting for Change takes a person-centred approach, with each resident treated according to their specific needs and strengths. The programme aims to go beyond crisis support, helping to tackle the immediate barriers people face, but with the offer to stay with a Connect Adviser for as long as they may need.

Starting with the basics

Often residents do not know where to go to ask for help, how to ask for help, or know what support they are entitled to. Connecting for Change has helped residents to identify who to approach and *how* to approach them for support, e.g. what skills and language to use when talking to 'officials', and how to advocate for themselves.

Tackling the whole, step by step

Connecting for Change has helped residents to look at all the issues they are facing and then break them down into incremental steps. Going as fast or slow as residents require feels less overwhelming and provides manageable steps to address the challenges.

Building trust and boosting confidence over time

Connect Advisers don't dive in and talk about the big issues straight away. This enables residents to open up about the challenges they are experiencing when they feel ready and not feel pressurised to find quick solutions. It also helps residents begin to regain confidence in dealing with things that before seemed too overwhelming.

1.1 About the programme

The Connecting for Change programme is open to all Islington residents looking for support, but with a focus on the most vulnerable and isolated. They come to this support through self-referring or via referral from another agency. The team of Connect Advisers, known as the 'Connect Team', provide advice and hands-on support depending on residents' needs.

For those being supported over a longer period, an action plan is produced with them, setting out their goals and how they plan to meet them. Connect Advisers also signpost (and support residents to attend) other available support. For example:

- Welfare advice
- Good Neighbour Schemes (GNS)
- Health and wellbeing activities
- Specialist advice, e.g. legal support

The 'Connect Team' is typically made up of 6.6 Connect Advisers, 1 service support officer and 2 team managers (in total 9.6 full time team members). The service is overseen by a manager and the Chief Executive Officer and run from four main sites across Islington. The Connect Adviser's role is to engage and support vulnerable and disadvantaged residents with the aim of improving wellbeing and life chances. The Connect Adviser contributes to team activities including community outreach, client meetings, referrals to partners and follow-up, direct support and action planning. The role also includes office and administrative tasks and volunteer supervision as required.

Connecting for Change aims to take a person-centred approach, with each resident treated according to their specific needs and strengths. The programme aims to go beyond crisis support, helping to tackle the immediate barriers people face, but with the offer to stay with a Connect Adviser for as long as they may need. Many of the supported residents are also experiencing isolation, so Connecting for Change seeks to help them engage in other local activities and groups to help them feel connected to the community. The ultimate goal is to empower residents, so that they are confident enough to act for themselves and take back control of their lives. Residents often present with practical issues which can be dealt with quickly via the HOYD Connect service, e.g. to acquire white goods or address a benefit change. For others, an issue overlays complex challenges. In these cases, more gradual support over a longer period of time helps unpick and address a range of factors affecting their life. The programme is also reliant on a network of partners in order to meet the varied and complex needs of the residents it supports.

The HOYD Partner Network is made up of over 150 organisations offering advice and support on a wide range of issues, including family support, welfare benefits, debt, housing and health. There are regular referral partner network meetings to ensure partners are updated with what support is available to people in Islington, as well as the criteria for such support.



1.2 The impact on residents

In 2021, residents receiving Connecting for Change support were experiencing the following top three issues:

- **Mental health** - Some of the residents deal with mental health conditions including, but not limited to, anxiety, anger, schizophrenia and bipolar. Mental health presented various challenges to residents, including four out of the twelve residents we spoke to said they had considered taking their own lives. 23% of the residents HOYD has worked with since 2019 also stated that mental health was a primary or secondary issue. HOYD suspects that the number of residents they work with dealing with mental health issues is actually much higher, as their system only enables them to capture and record the primary and secondary issues identified.
- **Housing** - Poor or inappropriate housing; issues with other tenants; and a low standard of services to improve accommodation. These types of issue had led to residents feeling unsafe and unwell.
- **Financial** - Rising cost of living; inability to work due to illness or disability; barriers to accessing benefits; and debt.

These issues are present in the following anonymous accounts from residents:

During a Connect Adviser's interview with one resident, it became clear that they were homeless and had been sleeping on family members' sofas for years. They also suffered from depression and anxiety which had led to them not wanting to connect with people in the community and becoming very isolated. Through the programme, the resident was supported to seek the right medication for their condition. They were also supported by the Connect Advisor to get into accommodation.

A resident described how they were not able to work anymore due to their mental health resulting in them often feeling overwhelmed. Their mother had also suffered with dementia for several years, which was a struggle to manage. As part of ongoing support, HOYD made a routine catch-up call and signposted them to counselling services. This consisted of ten free sessions, and they found this incredibly helpful. Since then, the Connect Adviser has rung at various, intermittent intervals to signpost them to other support for their mental health.

Residents talked about how the issues they were facing were often compounded by the length of time they had been waiting for support from other services, such as a housing repair. For example:

'It is devaluing and people are becoming ill because of it, as well as their children being born into it.' (Resident)

Often residents do not know where to go to ask for help, how to ask for help, or know what support they are entitled to. Connecting for Change has helped residents to identify who to approach and *how to* approach them for support, e.g. what skills and language to use when talking to 'officials', and how to advocate for themselves.

However, Covid-19 and lockdown has left some residents feeling more isolated and it has been a further knock to their confidence to interact with the outside world. HOYD staff said that there were real highs and lows to supporting residents during this time. While they were able to help more people via a range of new digital methods, as well as through Connect for Change, Volunteer Befriending, Good Neighbour Schemes and Social Prescribing, the issues they were helping residents to tackle were often more complex, or further exacerbated, by Covid-19, e.g. finance issues.

Faced with a cost-of-living crisis and entering a recession, the after-effects of Covid-19 are still being felt. HOYD expects to see the need for support to increase. Food and fuel costs were repeatedly flagged in conversations with staff and partners, alongside concerns regarding the limits of the support they can offer. For example, demand for food bank vouchers is high, but vouchers are not endlessly available. In addition, the increasing pressure on public services, e.g. winter pressure on the health and care sector puts already vulnerable residents at even greater risk.

1.3 Tackling the whole, step-by-step

Residents said that one of the most valuable ways Connecting for Change has helped them is by looking at all of the issues they are facing and then breaking them down into incremental steps. Addressing the issues one step at a time and going as fast or slow as residents require feels less overwhelming and provides manageable steps to address the challenges. The experience also helps residents build confidence and makes them feel ready to tackle the next issue, as they have proof that the support makes a positive difference to their lives:

'Nothing that can't be sorted out. That was how she made me feel that day and thereafter. I trusted her.' (Resident)

Residents said that they feel listened to and cared for, which, in turn, helps them to vocalise the issues they are facing.

Staff bring understanding from their own lived experience and provide trusting, confidential and non-judgmental safe spaces for people. Trust is built over time and Connect Advisers don't dive in and talk about the big issues straight away. This enables residents to open up about the challenges they are experiencing when they feel ready and not feel pressurised to find quick or short-term solutions:

'My long-term illness means I get weak and am unwell and in pain and the stress makes it much worse. She [the Connect Advisor] shuts the door on them [the problems] and we open the door to them every now and then.' (Resident)

We explore this – and the power of empathy – in the following anonymous account:

The power of empathy and being listened to

In lockdown, things were piling up. I had lost my mum and my long-term illness and debt issues were overwhelming. I felt physically and mentally unwell. Things had become so bad that I made an attempt on my own life. Twice.

I was referred to HOYD by my GP and initially this was a phone call with a Connect Adviser. That first call started with the Bedroom Tax, and then my other struggles came through.

She was kind, I could hear empathy and I knew I was being listened to, especially as she checked back what she had heard to make sure she had understood what I was saying.

She pointed me in the right direction. I didn't know what I was doing and she spun it around for me.

I had become fearful, going straight to worse case scenarios. It got to a point where I could only imagine those and the support gave me confidence *to get into a good headspace.*

Today I am at university doing a BA Honours in Business Management. I wanted to see if I could. The University is providing support to me now too. It helps me get out of the house one day of the week and I drive there with a friend.

Things are under control now, so I feel calmer and I'm managing my condition better by taking my medication properly. I feel like I have things in order.

I didn't feel judged, or embarrassed, it was amazing.



1.4 Building confidence and self-esteem

Asking for help is hard. Residents spoke about feeling embarrassed and ashamed about being in their situation and needing to ask for help:

'I felt ashamed engaging with what was out there. Like a drain on society' (Resident)

Within some communities, asking for help is also not the norm, one of the things Connect Advisers do is look for ways to make asking for help more acceptable. For example, normalising and empathising with the resident's situation in order to remove or reduce the humiliation and restore a feeling of control. This helps ensure people don't fall through the net.

When they first come into contact with Connecting for Change, residents often report low levels of self-esteem and confidence, especially after feeling like they have not been able to access other support. By taking the time to 'hold' residents for a period and providing guidance over time, they begin to regain confidence in dealing with things that before seemed too overwhelming. For example, talking them through the process for obtaining a tenancy agreement and then encouraging them to go away and make enquiries rather than HOYD doing this for them: *'I took what she taught me and put it into practice'*. Supporting residents to take small steps at their own pace can help them gradually to feel ready to tackle greater challenges. One resident reflected that as their life started to improve, helped by the support from HOYD, they had the ability, confidence and strength to tackle more difficult aspects of their life, such as substance misuse.

Connecting residents to local groups and networks, e.g. Good Neighbour Schemes and WhatsApp groups (where they can meet other members of the community and access additional activities and support) is also part of building up their confidence and self-esteem:

‘Good Neighbour Schemes aren’t just events, it’s all-round support. If people are happier, then so much else will follow.’ (Connect Adviser)

Opportunities to connect also include residents being asked to take part in activities such as a HOYD led residents’ Reference Group. These provide opportunities for residents to give something back (to HOYD and partners) and be involved in how services are offered, emphasising the value of their experience to shape future support.

In the following anonymous account, we see the power of social connections and the positive change it can have in residents’ lives:

Building social connections to tackle isolation and lack of self-esteem

I came to be a part of the Good Neighbours Scheme because I knew someone who worked there. It was hard to be a part of it at first. Even though I knew about it, I didn’t go for ages, I just didn’t have the confidence. Eventually, I went in for a cup of coffee and I had to really make myself do that because of my anxiety and depression – going out of the house is really hard. It was difficult with friends and family too.

After I started going, I had some support from a charity to clean up the flat, also some new bedding and kitchen equipment, as well as help with my electricity bill and from the local foodbank. GNS staff were very patient with me, explaining things I didn’t understand. I am not very good on the phone, so in person conversations are better.

Now I do a lot more volunteering and go near enough every day, I am not sticking to where I live either. There is more of a routine – a coffee morning Tuesdays, arts and crafts Wednesdays, etc. and we fundraise and do door knocks.

My confidence is better. I walk to the other areas in Islington and have started going to the gym – just for an hour. Now I am busier, I am often out, I have more reason to be. Before volunteering I was just sat indoors.

I just don’t want to be sitting in my flat like I did for 10 years.

I enjoy helping others, then I don’t have to worry about myself.

2. Features of the approach

Key insights

Connecting for Change support is tailored to the resident. **Three key principles** characterise the approach taken by Connect Advisers:

- They take time to embed themselves within the community and get to know and be known by residents.
- They (and the wider HOYD team) understand the human cost of the difficulties and trauma people experience.
- They actively listen and don't judge.

Residents typically find out about the programme through a referral, word of mouth and outreach activity.

Key features of the Connecting for Change approach

A quick response. The simple act of a quick follow-up and Connect Advisers doing what they say they are going to do is a significant gesture.

Residents feel listened to and valued. Connect Advisers prioritise giving the time to listen to residents without judgement or trying to immediately come in with solutions. Regular interactions build trust, while also helping residents to avoid feeling overwhelmed, able to raise issues one thing at a time over a period of time.

Person centred approach. Connecting for Change provides an initial, single place residents can go to for help with tackling their issues. Advisers then respond to varying levels of readiness for support.

Empower residents to take back control with long term support. The Connect Advisers' approach is to '*give it a go and if it doesn't work, then we will try something different*'. A process of trial and error is adopted until something does work.

Support provided through the programme is open, incremental, and broad. It sits alongside residents for the time they require, and it harnesses support from services across the whole Borough:

*'I can sit with you – without interruption and work out what has been going on. Establish trust. I see you and I hear you. Not what's wrong **with** you – what's wrong **for** you.'* (Connect Adviser)

Reaching people isn't just about knowing where people are, making access easy, or having knowledge of the issues (although these are important, too), it is also about the way the support is delivered. It is tailored to the resident and there are a range of ways they can access and use that support. The three key principles characterising the approach taken by Connect Advisers are:

- They take time to embed themselves within the community and get to know and be known by residents.
- They (and HOYD) understand the human cost of the difficulties and trauma people have or are experiencing.
- They actively listen and don't judge.

2.1 Access, outreach and referrals

Residents typically come into contact with the programme through one of the following routes:

- **A referral**, typically from a partner organisation or via a GP. Residents do not have to be referred by a local partner and have the option to self-refer.
- **Word of mouth** from a friend or neighbour who has accessed the Connect service or heard about it.
- **Outreach activity**, in a local area or at one of the sites.

The Big Knock is a monthly outreach activity where a team from HOYD (and sometimes partner organisations or local funders) leaflet a specified area in Islington. The team knock on doors and have conversations with residents about how they are and what they need. A rota is shared with partners, so that they can book to attend. The Big Knock is not only a way to reach those people not yet being supported but also helps HOYD build relationships and a better understanding of local partner organisations.

Outreach, such as door knocking and leafleting, is regularly mentioned as one of the ways residents get to know about HOYD. This is particularly the case for residents not accessing any support at all, either because they don't think the support is for them, or because they aren't aware of it:

'It's all about going to the doors. The door is a barrier for lots of reasons – this approach breaks down barriers; people don't know where to start, they don't have the confidence and bury their head in the sand.' (Connect Adviser)

There is limited resource and capacity for outreach, but it is powerful and effective when it happens. Outreach has also been a fantastic way for partners to reach people too, and to join HOYD staff in connecting with people on the doorstep. The visibility in the community has also led some residents to be proactive in asking for help and participating in services.

During the initial wave of Covid-19 (2020-21), support options weren't available in the same way as they were previously due to necessary safety restrictions. Speaking to residents and staff in 2022, we heard that being able to go back to providing in-person support was welcomed, but that providing remote support as well has enabled them to meet demand and reach more people. Connect Advisers now decide with residents on the best communication methods to use, e.g. phone calls or WhatsApp which may be preferred on some occasions.

Changes have also been made in how support is accessed and local residents are now able to book an in-person meeting if there is a specific request or need that can't be met over the phone, e.g. where there are language issues or a hearing impairment. The access can have a big impact on how the service is received:

When you are in my shoes you need some kind of charity work like this – someone like [Connect Adviser]. We feel trapped, we feel low and invisible. It's so hard to pick it up. Not speaking English and the trust issues, you are just on your own. The work [Connect Adviser] does is amazing to me – they [Connect Advisers] help people come out of the darkness – and help them to breathe. One step at a time really helps me, I don't feel ashamed now. We need encouragement to tell our story.' (Resident)

2.2 A quick response

When a resident first reaches out for support, a Connect Adviser makes immediate contact with them, usually via a phone call. The resident is welcomed into the service, is asked to describe what they need help with and is informed about what to expect next. They may be identified as suitable for help over a longer period, to tackle more than one problem through intermediary support and signposting.

Residents said that they didn't mind waiting for their immediate issue to be tackled because the initial contact is handled so well and they feel reassured that support is on its way.

There is also recognition that there are varying levels of readiness for support. For some residents, Connect Advisers can respond to and sustain the support pathways identified; for others, it requires a more paced approach. As residents come into the service, a decision is made about the type of support they need. Assessing need carefully is vital and, recently, a new triage system has helped manage the capacity of a small team to respond, and to maintain that responsiveness, although it may not always be with the same Connect Adviser.

This simple act of quick follow-up and Connect Advisers doing what they say they are going to do is a significant gesture. It is the first step in HOYD demonstrating its concern for the person and providing the reassurance people need, even if it's just letting a resident know it's OK to ask for help.

The following anonymised account shows the value of quick and reliable communication for residents:

Building trusting relationships through regular and reliable contact

I was in temporary accommodation following a stay in a women's refuge and then the pandemic [Covid-19] came along. It was then that I started to become very scared of the virus. I had not been anywhere for a long time, so to move house was a big thing. I had been shielding too, so was feeling isolated.

Via a GP referral to HOYD, I was connected to a befriender and I also got involved in GNS fitness on Zoom, and on the WhatsApp group.

One of the things HOYD helped me with when I left my home was to get me a winter coat (because I had had to leave everything behind). I was also advised on the benefits I could claim, including those that could support the barriers I face due to some health issues.

Being isolated was one of the most difficult things. The befriender support stays with me as the most supportive aspect, they helped me to get the courage to go for my vaccination (I was afraid of going out).

From the day I met the Connect Adviser she kept in touch with me. She was regular and reliable, things were done and followed up at HOYD. It was efficient.

HOYD supported me to get help from the council to pay my rent arrears, supported by a Citizen's Advice advocate. We exhausted the entire complaints procedure but I got the result I wanted. I can do things myself.

Eventually I moved home but it's hard trying to find a home where I feel safe.

I am tackling things one by one. I know I can send her a message or call.

Now I want to go back to work. I had to take long leave because of my circumstances. I might take up a voluntary role and take that next step.

2.3 Person-centred

Residents are not always sure what they need when they first access support and can be sceptical if they have struggled for a while to obtain support. Connecting for Change helps residents to feel valued and listened to and provides an initial, single place they can go to for help tackling multiple issues:

‘Being able to speak to her about anything, to sort the muddle in my head. I was late with my gas bill and she showed me better ways to manage and that it isn’t the end of the world.’ (Resident)

Connect Advisers check in with the resident seeking support on a monthly basis (or more frequently if needed), even if this is just a two-minute call to update on progress and to enquire about their wellbeing. Each of these interactions help to build trust. The resident also feels reassured knowing that support is there if and when needed, helping them to avoid feeling overwhelmed.

For example, one resident talked about the importance of having a Connect Adviser advocate on their behalf for their right to access welfare support during a period of severe illness. They were then able to concentrate on their recovery.

Residents said that the accessible language and body language of the Connect Advisers makes a difference. It is described as *‘gentle’*, *‘warm’* and *‘empathetic’*. The initial in-person contact experience is also regularly spoken about – it is powerful in its calming effect, and often quite unexpected due to residents’ previous experience where they might have found getting help hard, for example, not speaking to the right person for support. Expectations can be low at the start and this approach can turn things around for the resident.

Staff often live in the Islington area and some have previously been service users of HOYD. This means they bring a sense of empathy and lived experience which is relatable and comforting to the resident. Conversations are often a mix of talking about issues and informal conversation. They are confidential and take place in spaces where the resident feels comfortable, e.g. in places where they live.

Connect Advisers encourage residents to ask any questions they have and do their best to answer these. Connect Advisers also ask questions (although this may happen over a period of time) to try and understand what might sit beneath the resident’s presenting issues.

In addition to providing practical advice and support, staff and residents talked about the emotional support that was offered to residents. This was often due to residents not having other avenues to offload, especially when living in isolation, so developing a trusting relationship with the Connect Adviser is something they may not experience anywhere else.

In this anonymised account, one resident shares their story:

Empowering residents to try things out and do things for themselves

I was completely on my own when I received a HOYD leaflet from my GP before lockdown. I wasn't sure if it was meant for me but she assured me: *'They ARE for you'*. I didn't want to call at first but when I heard the Connect Adviser on the phone, it was okay: *'It was the way she answered the phone, I will never forget that'*. Had the person on the other end of the phone been cold or uninterested I would have put the phone down, even harmed myself. But instead, I felt safe and supported.

For someone like me who is so isolated and struggling with mindset – she doesn't pull away but others do.

Before I felt like I had been referred to literally everything, and was still isolated – it's how my life is anyway. Over time, I had lost friends and had housing issues with abusive neighbours, I have been feeling unsafe.

Last year, I felt like I was breaking down again and the Connect Adviser did a check-up call and made a referral. The next day I was called by a debt adviser with a full hour debt consultation on the phone – this reassured me. I also saw an amazing counsellor that really helped. I didn't realise until then how much I needed this type of support.

She's so efficient and the fastest ever worked with. It's incredible – makes you feel really supported and understood.

They also helped me with a grant for materials to do a textiles course and now I am doing a childcare course and getting support there too.

Before this help, I would not have known about the benefits I was entitled to, this was a turning point for me. Knowing she is there makes me feel better, she is a listening ear.

I hadn't realised I was in such a low position. Making that call is a huge step. When you are home on your own, you just don't know who will be on the end of the phone (and how they will treat you). Others brush you off while you are trying to connect to the right places. You need someone to take you under their wing.

People aren't belittled at HOYD. If you are crying on the phone – other [organisations] don't know how to take it.

2.4 Empowers residents to take back control with long-term support

For some residents, healing is a long process, and the programme is able to respond to this and stay with them through the journey. The Connect Advisers' approach is to *'give it a go and if it doesn't work, then we will try something different'*. A process of trial and error is adopted until something does work. They are valued by residents and partners alike for sticking with their clients.

Residents aspire to move away from a dependency culture and being reliant on service provision. The Connecting for Change approach builds residents' confidence and self-esteem over time and helps connect them with their community.

The following anonymised accounts share how long-term support has helped them take control of their lives:

A resident phoned because the GP had taken them off their medication. Instead of talking to the GP, they rang a Connect Adviser first to talk through what had happened, to calm themselves down, and put them in the right frame of mind to then contact the GP to get it corrected. Even though some clients have a support worker, they still call HOYD for reassurance because they are very approachable.

A resident had secured a solicitor for housing support but still wanted to talk to someone from HOYD. The Connect Adviser were able to point them toward additional advice about what else to do to build a case. This not only put them in a stronger position when going to court, but also built their confidence because they had the necessary information, which otherwise could have been a barrier for the case to move forward.

Lack of confidence is often an underlying barrier for the client. Connecting for Change focuses on recognising the client's strengths and helping them realise what they can do, not what they can't. Connect Advisers often start with small, practical tips that enable the client to take control of their lives, e.g. how to organise and keep a calendar. Residents are encouraged to try things out on their own and to share how they got on, for example, during a call-back with Connect Advisers.

3. Working in Partnership

Key insights

Working in partnership across both the voluntary and statutory sectors in Islington is fundamental to meeting the needs of local residents and providing them with a quality experience. The HOYD Partner Network is made up of over 150 organisations offering advice and support on a wide range of issues, including family support, welfare benefits, debt, housing and health.

HOYD's extensive knowledge of the services (and specialist support) being provided in the local area (and who is providing what), as well as in-depth insight into the needs of the residents, means they are often able to effectively match residents to services.

Key benefits to being part of the Partner Network

- Information is shared effectively and swiftly via the mailing list
- Enables quick and effective signposting
- Strengthens the referral process
- Supports effective communication between HOYD and partners
- Enables residents to receive holistic support.

Features that partners, and HOYD, felt have contributed to the network's effectiveness to date:

- Recognition of the value that partnership working and networking can bring
- A shared understanding of each other's knowledge, expertise and role
- A shared value base and approach
- A commitment to sharing systems, data and learning
- Resourcing the right roles

Working in partnership across both the voluntary and statutory sectors in Islington is fundamental to meeting the needs of local residents and providing them with a quality experience. This 'live' way of working keeps things current and connects partners to HOYD and each other.

Partners respect, recognise and value HOYD's reach, as it supports the services of partner organisations to offer assistance to the right people. HOYD's extensive knowledge of the services (and specialist support) being provided in the local area (and who is providing what), as well as in-depth insight into the needs of the residents, means they are often able to see who fits where. Such a role is often referred to as 'system stewardship'⁴ or navigation— a way of getting people to a best fit (and often specialised) service:

'It's the connectivity of working with different partners and HOYD having this massive knowledge of what's out there and who is still providing it.' (Partner)

⁴ <https://www.ciacic.com/system-stewardship>

3.1 Getting people to the right place

Over time, HOYD have established the Partner Network to connect and collaborate with a range of different organisations working across Islington and is mutually supportive. The aim has been to ensure that residents can be linked into the support they need,

'We strive to collaborate with high quality partners and represent their offers accurately and appropriately.' (HOYD)

There are some key benefits to being part of this collaboration:

- **Information is shared effectively and swiftly via the mailing list**, e.g. information about partner roles/offers and changes to staff.
- **Enables quick and effective signposting**: Highlighting what is available and who it's for/can help most.
- **Strengthens the referral process**: Enabling HOYD to refer residents to organisations and specific programmes of support and others to refer into HOYD. At HOYD's end, referrals are processed through its database which sends an automated email to the partner and checks the database for a new referral.
- **Supports effective communication** between HOYD and partners, which, in turn, helps with smooth transitions between services for residents.
- **Enables residents to receive holistic support**.

The impact of a holistic approach to support is explored in the following anonymised account:

HOYD referred a resident to the Bridging the Gap service which provides a mentor. While the resident was waiting, the Connect Adviser held weekly Zoom meetings with them to make sure they had some support during this time. The resident felt the Connect Adviser was warm and non-judgmental. The Connect Adviser listens and remembers things from before, and they talk about everyday things. The mentorship service has been really important for the resident, but also knowing that they can call the Connect Adviser who will be supportive and will always ring back if they leave a message.

Partners join the network in a range of different ways and the criteria are simple in that they just need to be operating and supporting residents in Islington. Some have inherited their role in the network from when they joined their role/organisation, others have been invited through first contact with HOYD, e.g. when seeking information. It has been built over time and there are some well-established and long-term relationships, as well as newer ones – all are made welcome. Network meetings take place monthly and these regular opportunities include partner presentations and discussion as well as peer support to the network members too.



3.2 Features of the partner network

The Partner Network is highly valued by partners and HOYD. The time invested in this (as yet, unfunded) partner network has been (and will continue to be) essential: to build and mature relationships between partners and to understand the different services that are available at any particular time. More collaborative networks result in a better experience for residents because of a joined-up approach to referrals and services. HOYD's role in convening a network has created an invaluable resource with potential across the Borough:

'Residents need to know where to go to be able to access services – this partner network helps that to happen.'(Partner)

Features that partners, and HOYD, felt have contributed to the network's effectiveness to date include:

- **Recognition of the value that partnership working and networking can bring:** Partners believe that taking a networked/collaborative approach fundamentally leads to more positive outcomes for the residents they are seeking to support.
- **A shared understanding of each other's knowledge, expertise and role:** When referrals work, it is because there is a good understanding of HOYD's role and the process, as well as the partner's area of expertise and experience. Following up on the support is critical, not only for the resident's benefit but also to learn about what is working and what is not, so things can be fixed.

- **A shared value base and approach:** For example, partners have a shared belief that taking a person-centred and relational approach is the most effective way to bring about change for vulnerable residents. Partners also share HOYD's commitment to an approach that is focused on early intervention, active listening, empathy and non-judgmental support, and also believe in empowering residents to take back control of their lives over time.
- **A commitment to sharing systems, data and learning:** Tracking residents' progress together worked well during Covid-19 and has remained part of the referral system. The criteria for referrals can be restrictive and the partner network is integral, not only to understanding the practical application of criteria but addressing changes to criteria when it isn't working for residents.
- **Resourcing the right roles:** Navigating the system remains challenging for people. An essential part of the general enquiries and Connect Adviser's role is their ability to access the appropriate support for residents by using their in-depth knowledge and expertise.

The partner network also faces challenges in addressing some very difficult capacity issues being experienced in each organisation. A collective approach and voice provide a space to tackle some of these together, including how to manage rising demand and still meet the needs of Islington residents. There are some tough questions to respond to, and partners recently debated: what can we do together to make sure we maintain access to services without turning people away?

Below are two A4 posters with key messages for partnerships. You can print these pages out to pin to notice boards or use as a learning resource.

Working in partnership for community support

Community support organisations provide critical support to vulnerable and isolated residents across UK communities. They have a big impact on the health and wellbeing of people – as listeners and guides, as connectors into services and activities, and a lifeline for people. What they achieve is impressive, especially in the context of sustained uncertainty, increasing need, and strain on the systems in which they operate.

Through IVAR's work with Help on Your Doorstep, we've seen that partnerships with other local organisations play a central role. We want to share three key messages which we hope will resonate with organisations working in partnership to support local residents and contribute toward nurturing your collaborative work.



'We are small. We can't help everyone, so the network works very well.'

Local partner



Work together on the local vision and awareness

Simply knowing that there is support out there is powerful for people – and should not be underestimated. But this requires organisations to actively raise awareness of their services. Shared goals and values between partners leads to mutually supportive and joined-up approaches where, not only are people's needs understood and cared about, but organisations have better understanding of the roles they play – tapping into each other's expertise and resources and mobilising action to better support communities.



Ensure consistency in support

As each individual moves between services to get the right (often specialised) help, the transition requires a careful and well-organised handover or referral to ensure the person receives a consistently relational approach from all partners along the journey that empowers residents.



Holding people

In addition to a connected approach, people should feel held throughout the entire process, including any waiting times to receive the right help. This can be the line between helping and not helping, especially for those that are the most vulnerable, at the sharp end of austerity and reliant on support. Simple things like call backs or regular check-ins can make a huge difference to someone dealing with big life challenges, and can prevent people from falling through the net.



Read the report: Working together in community support

This learning is based on IVAR's evaluation of the Help on Your Doorstep's model: Connecting for Change. The model focuses on a person-centred approach that aims to go beyond crisis support by reducing barriers faced by people, increase their personal confidence and capacity to address problems, as well as improve the networks and activities within Islington to support a happier and healthier community.

Where next?

Through IVAR's work with HOYD, we've identified useful prompts that may help partnership networks to further embed collaboration in the community support system.

Develop shared understanding of...



Purpose

Come together to agree what a shared purpose is: What do you have in common? How can you collectively work towards the same goal?



Vision of success

If you work in this way, what will be the measures of success? How will you know that the changes you make work? What will be happening that is different than before?



What can be achieved and learned together

What are realistic expectations of working together, and how will you set these and be accountable? How will you learn together to strengthen your work in the future?



Balancing individual and collective interests

How will you hold your own identities while working collectively? What will prevent you from working together and what can you do to mitigate these challenges?



Meaningful buy-in from senior leaders (in system)

Who will be listening? How can you gain support in the wider system? Who are you already connected to and who do you need to connect with?



Adaptable support for complex lives

People's lives are complex and messy, and so that means the solutions may be too – not everything will work to a strategy or plan. How do you hold this?



Regular reviews and spaces to take stock

Think about the way you come together: to step back, reflect and share ideas and experience that builds learning as well as practice.



Funding and support

What opportunities are there to work together and sustain this work? How can you advocate and show that this way of working is important?



For more information on collaborative working

Visit: ivar.org.uk/collaboration/

Adapted from IVAR's getting started with collaboration framework

4. Supporting the Connecting for Change workforce

Key insights

HOYD has identified ways to better support staff wellbeing through conversations with staff and learning about what they need to feel equipped and supported to help others.

Staff told us what they feel helps them to help others:

- **Staff and clinical supervision** and regular support from line managers that is not target or numbers related.
- **Recognition by the senior leadership team** of the challenges Connect Advisers face and validation of their positive work and commitment.
- **Peer support** and reflective spaces for staff to offload and discuss challenges – creating a talking culture.
- **Up-to-date training and information**
- **Encouraging self-care** and wellbeing practices and being pro-active and having autonomy over those.
- **Gathering success stories** as a tool for inspiration as well as to influence funders/others.
- **Support to maintain boundaries** about what it is and isn't OK to expect from Connect Advisers.

HOYD have introduced a series of initiatives and processes to support their staff's wellbeing including an employee assistance programme and managing caseloads.

In recognition of the growing pressure on Connect Advisers a review cycle is necessary to keep abreast of the pressures: to understand what works best; encourage a regular and ongoing dialogue around how people are feeling and what they are experiencing; and ways of managing the impact on their own wellbeing.

It is critical to pay attention to the emotional welfare of staff in light of the type of support the HOYD team are providing. Residents' troubles can be traumatic to listen to *and* a number of staff have lived experience of the issues. It is in everyone's interest to have the right support in place (which is regularly reviewed) for a more productive, engaged and motivated team and importantly to protect them from any harm that may result from the impact of their work.

4.1 Factors affecting staff wellbeing

Connect Advisers spoke about two, interrelated factors that risked impacting their wellbeing – the emotional burden of the work; and the difficulty of maintaining boundaries around the support they provide.

Emotional burden

Connect Advisers regularly hear difficult and emotionally heavy stories from residents. These can take their toll or be triggering where they have experienced similar issues themselves:

'We do hear some really horrifying stories from people ... You're taking all of this on ... several times a week from different people ... It's a big responsibility and it's important to have somewhere to go to be able to share that responsibility.' (Connect Advisor)

During Covid-19, the rising need and growing complexity of residents' issues – alongside the shift to remote delivery (e.g. outreach by phone) – further heightened the emotional burden on Connect Advisers:

'Sometimes it was overwhelming. I would be on the phone helping someone and I can see there are other people on the line waiting. It was very tiring.' (Connect Advisor)

'I came across a lot of clients with poor mental health and suicide problems which is difficult to hear when people are so distressed – it was a challenge not being able to see them face-to-face.' (Connect Advisor)

Maintaining boundaries

There are challenges around helping people and being able to draw a line under what can be offered. It is a skilled interaction that has been well-developed by HOYD through experience, learning and practice over time. Staff put great pressure on themselves to resolve people's issues and found it harder during lockdown to switch off and keep a work-life balance, *'We are having to live through this pandemic too'*.

There is pressure on Connect Advisers to problem solve and it is important to create boundaries on their time and energy.

4.2 Addressing staff wellbeing

HOYD has taken several measures in the last few years to identify ways to better support staff wellbeing. For example, putting in place an employee assistance programme that provides a safe space to talk through things and help manage stress at work. As well as having regular support to discuss what they are hearing and sharing ways to manage those conversations (and the time they take) is also key. Management of 'caseloads' ensure there is a limit in place in any one day and there is encouragement for staff to take regular breaks in-between resident conversations.

Staff have also found that collaborating internally with colleagues and with external partner organisations, rather than operating in silos, can really help share the load. Not only does it help to strengthen what individual Connect Advisers can offer to residents – tapping into the resource and knowledge of a wider team – but it also lessens the sense of burden on the Connect Adviser to come up with the solutions on their own.

Staff told us what they feel helps them to help others:

- **Staff and clinical supervision** and regular support from line managers that is not target or numbers related.
- **Recognition by the senior leadership team** of the challenges Connect Advisers face and validation of their positive work and commitment.
- **Peer support** and reflective spaces for staff to offload and discuss challenges – creating a talking culture: *'We really need to make time to reflect, learn and implement changes'*.
- **Up-to-date training and information**, e.g. what grants and out-of-Borough services clients can access to keep ideas fresh (however small).
- **Encouraging self-care** and wellbeing practices and being pro-active and having autonomy over those.
- **Gathering success stories** as a tool for inspiration as well as to influence funders/others. Staff have found that hearing feedback and stories from residents has become an essential part of maintaining their motivation and energy, as it helps them to see the difference they are making.
- **Support to maintain boundaries** about what it is and isn't OK to expect from Connect Advisers.

As HOYD continues to weather hard times (the most recent being the impact of the cost-of-living crisis), it will be important to recognise the growing pressure this will have on Connect Advisers who are also living through this. A review cycle is necessary to keep abreast of the pressures: to understand what works best; encourage a regular and ongoing dialogue around how people are feeling and what they are experiencing; and ways of managing the impact on their own wellbeing:

'In the last couple of years, and especially since the pandemic [Covid-19], it's been more apparent that health and wellbeing is really important to the staff. So, there are things where staff can take time out if they need to. If you need to go for a walk, being told you can do that is a really big thing.' (Staff member)

Below is a A4 poster with key messages for community support advisers. You can print this page out for notice boards or use as a learning resource.

Supporting and empowering our community

Community support organisations provide critical support to vulnerable and isolated residents across UK communities. You have a big impact on the health and wellbeing of people – as listeners and guides, as connectors into services and activities, and a lifeline for people. What you achieve is impressive, especially in the context of sustained uncertainty, increasing need, and strain on the systems in which you operate.

Through IVAR's work with Help on Your Doorstep, we've seen the power of the work you do. We want to share three key messages which will hope will resonate with the work you do.



'Supportive and empowering approaches are the catalyst for change in people's lives.'

Connect Advisor



Centring people in the process empowers them

When those in community support roles create spaces built on trust and non-judgement – which recognise the strengths of clients – people feel valued and safe to explore their challenges. Lack of confidence is an underlying factor for poor wellbeing, so building client confidence through practical, reflective activities and encouragement is key to helping people regain control of their lives and their challenges. But people can only reach a place of transformation when they are held and reassured throughout the process, from a warm introduction to regular follow-ups. It requires whole teams, organisations and networks to embed a person-led approach in everything they do.



Big vision, small steps

For residents, tackling all the challenges they face at once can be daunting, particularly when they are at the sharp end of austerity and may come to organisations at points of crisis. Once advisers have established trust, they can look at all the issues together, but take small steps at the client's pace to make positive changes. Sometimes even the smallest step can be life-changing, leaving residents in a better position to cope with the next issue.



Manage emotional burden and maintain boundaries

Working as a first point of support can be tough. It's key for those doing this kind of work to strike a balance between helping people and looking after their own wellbeing. Organisations and their teams can work together to support each other. For staff it's about creating opportunities to check-in and connect with each other. And for organisations it's about responding to staff needs, making the case and space for their wellbeing and developing staff support methods that really help.



Read the report: Working together in community support

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5. Funding the future of community support

Key insights

Islington VCSE partners seek opportunities to work together and secure joint funding. Partners have a strong appetite for collaborative work which focuses on prevention and early intervention – with the hope they can make bigger changes together.

The partner network is an essential part of being able to identify, discuss and progress opportunities for working in partnership that benefit the community.

Support, investment and grantmaking relationships rooted in trust, as well as a deeper understanding of what realistically can be achieved with limited resources in a challenging context, will make a huge difference to organisations and the people they support.

Connecting for Change has emphasised the importance of relational, person-centred and community-based approaches and the difference that working in this way makes to people's outcomes. Partnership working has been highlighted as fundamental to getting people to the right support. The extension grant from the National Lottery Community Fund approved in December 2022 will focus on how better partnership working can protect and extend these principles when financial resources for services are limited and there is greater and more complex need to presenting to HOYD services.

As well as continuing to strengthen their individual organisations and services, Islington VCSE partners are also looking for opportunities to work together and secure joint funding. Partners have a strong appetite for collaborative work which focuses on prevention and early intervention – with the hope they can make bigger changes together. Ideas generated from our evaluation activities have led to discussions around what activities and action would benefit the most from being delivered in partnership.

Across the Borough, help must be shaped, funded, and delivered in ways that supports residents to be healthier, more informed, empowered and feeling a part of their local community. Funders and the wider system have a key role to play in this development. Support, investment and grantmaking relationships rooted in trust, as well as a deeper understanding of what realistically can be achieved with limited resources in a challenging context, will make a huge difference to organisations and the people they support. As well as recognising the value in funding spaces and processes that allow organisations to come together and hold space, such as the partner network, as they are an essential part of being able to identify, discuss and progress opportunities for working in partnership that benefit the community.

Below is a A4 poster with key messages for funders. You can print this page for notice boards or use as a learning resource.

The role of funders in community support

Community support organisations provide critical support to vulnerable and isolated residents across UK communities. They have a big impact on the health and wellbeing of people – as listeners and guides, as connectors into services and activities, and a lifeline for people. What they achieve is impressive, especially in the context of sustained uncertainty, increasing need, and strains on the systems in which they operate.

Funders have a key role to play in supporting their work and, as a result, better supporting communities. IVAR's evaluation of Help on Your Doorstep's experience highlights three key messages for funders, which will be familiar to those working with organisations providing community support. We have pulled them out to ensure they stay front of mind in how you work with your grantees.



‘To have a human approach and to not see clients as a number for monitoring but instead seeing them as a person [makes them feel] valued and they are likely to have better outcomes.’

Connect Advisor



Small changes are big change

Even small changes can have a significantly positive impact on people dealing with complex issues. Residents they support are often at the sharp end of austerity and may come to organisations at points of crisis. Support organisations not only help in the immediate but leave residents in a better position to cope with subsequent challenges. We must all work together to manage expectations around support services – not only for the client themselves but also on what we ask of community support organisations who deliver it.



Funding community support cannot be a numbers game

People's lives are complex: there is not always a quick fix and approaches will need to vary. What's more, building trust with people to make changes in their lives takes time, but the results are worth it. Funders need to recognise this in how they work with community support organisations to understand the difference they're making.



Listen and respond

Continue to listen to the expertise of community support organisations on what local residents need, the best ways to provide this and how to sustain their work, particularly as demand increases. Create funding opportunities that allow these organisations to adapt to challenges as they come. See IVAR's [Open and Trusting Grantmaking](#).



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Conclusion

Connecting for Change shows the significant impact that locally based organisations using a person-centred approach can have when working with and in communities. This work is vital. It moves beyond crisis intervention to services that work relationally with the people they support: listening and responding to what people need and pointing them to the right support before they get to the point of crisis (or recurring crisis). Residents have shared what difference this makes in their lives; staff have expressed what it takes to work this way (and the support they need to deliver) and partner organisations have identified how it helps them reach the right people with their specialist service.

The way people are supported through Connecting for Change is as important as *what* they are supported with. Connect Advisers focus on incremental steps to help people break down their challenges, but gently approach the bigger picture, guided by those they support. This helps give individuals the time and space to see and celebrate the positive changes they're making and then feel more ready to tackle the next challenge.

Residents highly value the simple things like Connect Advisers taking time to listen, showing empathy, and being non-judgemental. This helps them to build trust, talk openly about their experiences and think about the steps forward. What really helps, especially for the more vulnerable and isolated, is the recognition that **small change is big change for them**. Research has shown how relational working ultimately improves the outcomes and happiness of individuals and the job satisfaction of those who support them⁵ That's because when people feel seen and heard, they engage with services and work actively with advisers to find solutions that help them and prevent recurring issues.⁶

The power of HOYD's approach is that it is **person-centred** - it does not attempt to prescribe a one-size-fits-all route for supporting residents and HOYD recognise the importance of residents being held in the process. That said, there are also other common and significant features of the approach that all the residents we spoke to appeared to value and have benefitted from:

- The availability of **multiple referral pathways** (including the ability to self-refer)
- The **quick response** residents receive when they first seek help
- The reassurance of having **support on-hand over a period of time**, beyond the immediate response.
- **Being empowered to take back control** over their own lives and the boost in confidence this provides.

⁵ <https://www.hownotwhat.org/what-2>

⁶ <https://www.hownotwhat.org/what-2>



In this report, we have tried to understand what it takes in practice to support positive change for residents through the Connecting for Change programme. We have drawn out key learning from the three years of evaluation, and emphasised what HOYD and partners need to pay attention to for the future to sustain and even protect this way of working in a context of reducing levels of resource. A strong partner network continued to be identified as a vital element for successful community support: one which works together to create a seamless journey for residents. Partners agree that a united approach from all services is needed to strengthen communities overall. This will include identifying opportunities for partners to work together more cohesively, the things they'll need to do this well (including funder and system support) and holding onto the unique role and value of Connecting for Change for the community in this work.