



# HELP AND CONNECT

A **Discussion Paper** from The Centre for Welfare Reform published in association with Paradigm on a new form of community-brokerage - **Help and Connect** - a model which is being piloted by Skills for People in Newcastle.

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Kate Fulton, Paradigm & Kellie Woodley, Skills for People

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[www.skillsforpeople.org.uk](http://www.skillsforpeople.org.uk)



[www.paradigm-uk.org](http://www.paradigm-uk.org)



[www.centreforwelfarereform.org](http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org)

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

Skills for People is a community organisation based in Newcastle that has developed a low cost model for community-brokerage called **Help and Connect**. This model offers choice and control to local people by working to these principles:

1. Assume and encourage the capacity of people and families by enabling access to a wide information network
2. Facilitate peer support – connecting people to others who have used self-directed support and to other local people
3. Facilitate access to community supports locally
4. Enable and facilitate people to link directly with support services and explore their options safely
5. Ensure that professional advisors are available and are used when necessary to support people who require intensive support

The model not only offers real choice and empowering assistance but can be delivered at 25% of the cost of the brokerage model that Skills for People delivered in the past - a possible efficiency of 75%.

The **Help and Connect** model is currently being developed in Newcastle and is at this stage designed to support children and adults with learning disabilities and their families. However the approach could be transferable to all groups looking to direct their own support.

This paper shares our learning from developing the community-brokerage model with Skills for People. Paradigm and The Centre for Welfare Reform will continue to support Skills for People in this work and help to extend this approach to other social care settings.

## 2. COMMUNITY INNOVATION

As self-directed support develops in England we are learning from people, families and practitioners about the kinds of assistance that people require to really be in control and direct their own support. All local authorities are working hard to develop and support a local community infrastructure that advances the development of personalisation - but at the same time there are incredible pressures on cost. The best solutions are only possible if there is a genuine partnership with local communities, support for local initiatives and for the creative solutions of local community leaders.

Undoubtedly over the last 10 years there has been greater acknowledgement across all public bodies that genuine working partnerships with communities delivers better outcomes for local people. However, despite this, there is still a belief that managers in statutory services will ultimately shape the solutions to the problems that communities face. But it is a myth that innovation comes from budget holders who are far removed from those communities.

Innovative ideas come from those seeking solutions to barriers or problems faced by themselves or those they support first hand. It is for this reason that community organisations, voluntary sector agencies, peer support networks and people and families must be supported, encouraged and enabled to offer solutions in partnership with the local government.

### 2.1 SKILLS FOR PEOPLE

**Skills for People** is a community organisation based in Newcastle Upon Tyne. Skills for People was set up in 1983 to help people with disabilities and their families to:

- Speak up for themselves
- Have more power and control in their lives
- Have a real say about services that affect them
- Be confident
- Have friends and relationships
- Know their rights
- Let other people know about their lives

Skills for People has always championed people having choice and control; it goes to the core of their reason for being. They developed the innovative 'Reach for the Stars' project before person centred planning was on the radar of central and local government and also led the field with campaigning around Direct Payments.

More recently they have supported the development of self-directed support through involvement in the early work of projects such as Dynamite ([www.paradigm-uk.org](http://www.paradigm-uk.org)) enabling young people to direct their support. They have supported a family network to offer peer support and helped them create a guide to self-directed support for other family members called 'Finding Your Way'.

Skills for People have also tested out the professional support broker role in a pilot for the Valuing People Support Team. More recently they have supported the Individual Budgets Pilot in Newcastle Children's Services by training and mentoring a consortium of third sector organisations to offer assistance: including support planning, and supporting families who chose to do it themselves, as well as offering support planning to people and their families.

Throughout their work Skills for People have tried to learn from the experiences of people with learning disabilities and their families. They have discovered what works and what doesn't work for people and have seen (and sometimes played their part in) people being over-supported by a system that still seems to believe that professionals know best.

Recent experience shows that, with good information, peer support and access to professional help when needed, people and families are more than capable of doing things for themselves. This new approach has been designed with that in mind - using the community-based model of brokerage as a guide (see *Architecture for Personalisation* at [www.centreforwelfarereform.org](http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org)).

# 3. COMMUNITY-BASED BROKERAGE

Support Brokerage is a term that can be used to describe a range of different kinds of assistance that people may use when directing their support. This range of assistance can be thought of as an underpinning support structure for self-directed support. There are many different ways of providing each kind of assistance.

## 3.1 THE FUNCTIONS OF BROKERAGE

The following diagram (Figure 1) demonstrates the kind of assistance people may require as they walk through the process of self-directed support.

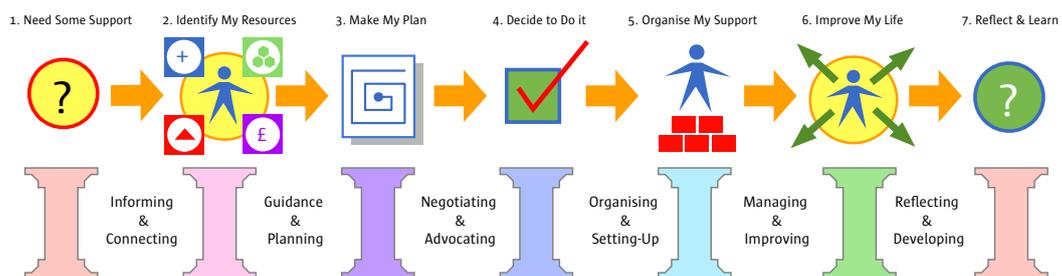


Figure 1. The functions of brokerage

There is no fixed model that dictates how these forms of support should be offered or how this support should be designed practically. This is an area that needs more innovation and experimentation - and less dogma. However it is important that any form of support really works for people and their families and that it makes the best use of all the available community resources.

The following table provides an overview of what each function of support brokerage could look like in practice (Table 1).

FUNCTION	IN PRACTICE
<p>Informing and Connecting - helping people find good information about local resources and entitlements, researching new possibilities, offering advice around self-directed support, helping people make useful connections.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Good information, advice and signposting to connect to networks and services</li> <li>● Good information about local resources in the community</li> <li>● Clear ways of connecting with others who have experience of directing their support</li> </ul>
<p>Guidance and Planning - helping people to think through their needs and desired outcomes, helping people to develop their support plan.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Templates and plans to help people think about their lives and their future</li> <li>● Easy to use support planning guidance or assistance to help develop a support plan</li> <li>● Clear support planning criteria to explain the approval process</li> <li>● Clear accessible information about the best approaches to manage the budget</li> </ul>
<p>Negotiating and Advocating – helping people to negotiate contracts and agreements with others and to advocate for their own needs when necessary.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Information about the range of ways to manage the budget which may include budget management services</li> <li>● Useful, accessible information about local support providers, their services and costs</li> <li>● Accessible contracts and person centred support agreements</li> <li>● Advocacy support for people who need it</li> </ul>
<p>Organising and Setting Up – helping people to organise their support systems, recruit supporters and agree guidelines.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Clear person centred plans that outline how supporters are expected to best support people</li> <li>● Information that assists people to get their support set up</li> <li>● Resources to assist recruitment and manage support systems</li> <li>● Accessible information to assist in exploring and developing good support</li> </ul>

FUNCTION	IN PRACTICE
Managing and Improving – helping people to manage their funding, supports and use expert advice to make improvements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Budget management services with clear costs and ease of use</li> <li>● Quality monitoring resources</li> <li>● Knowledge of expertise available locally for people to use i.e. OT, housing specialist</li> </ul>
Reflecting and Developing – helping people to review their needs and their support arrangements and to initiate change where necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Person centred review processes and guidance</li> <li>● Assistance and resources to review and develop the support plan</li> <li>● Encouragement to re-think if and where changes are needed</li> </ul>

Table 1 The different brokerage functions

## 3.2 COMMUNITY-BASED SUPPORT

There has been a tendency in the development of personalisation to treat brokerage as if it is a new process which needs to be set up and funded alongside existing systems. This is a mistake. Most of the support that people need already exists in our communities. We simply need to look for it. We do not need to create new, more complicated systems. If we look we will find a range of people, services and networks that can offer assistance. The challenge is to ensure these sources of support recognise their contribution and that people and families are aware that they can access them should they want to.

There are many different people and organisations capable of (and indeed currently offering) assistance associated with support brokerage. It is important that we do not ignore the strengths and current capacities already in existence within communities. The more sources of support we have in local communities the closer we will be to offering all citizens real choice about who they receive the assistance from – people and organisations that they believe best understands them and their individual situation.

**This community-based approach acknowledges the unique and different perspective that a variety of approaches offers to people looking to direct their support. It includes:**

- Information Networks
- Extending peer support
- Utilising community supports
- Enabling Support Providers to assist people
- Recognising that some people may require and want professional assistance



**Figure 2. Community-based support**

**A community-based model of support seeks to put in place these necessary functional supports (information, peer support etc.) by identifying how best they can build upon existing community assets and capacities (see Figure 2). The key principles of this community-based approach are:**

- 1.** Start by assuming and encouraging the capacity of people and families by enabling access to a wide information network
- 2.** Facilitate the early use of peer support for everyone
- 3.** Ensure access to community supports from organisations and associations within their community
- 4.** Enable citizens to work with support services directly and to explore with them what options are available
- 5.** Put in place sufficient professional advisors, such as social workers or other specialists, so that everyone can get the help they need

# 4. HELP AND CONNECT

Skills for People has been proactive in supporting the development of self-directed support in Newcastle both strategically and directly to people and families by offering many of the support brokerage functions. However this support has not been part of a community-wide coordinated offer to people and families to date; primarily because support brokerage is still at an early stage of development in Newcastle.

Over the last two years Skills for People has been commissioned to provide support brokerage to people and families - with staff working as Professional Brokers or Support Planners. Spot contracts were used to fund this extra support. Commissioning voluntary sector organisations to offer support brokerage in this way is not uncommon practice across England and for some people it may be right. However there is a danger that this simply replicates existing professional advice from the care manager or social worker. Moreover it does not encourage people to do more themselves nor make use of the skills and knowledge of the local community.

In addition, this approach is costly - whether paid for by the local authority via commissioning arrangements or paid directly by the person from their individual budget - it is an expensive and an unduly intrusive form of support.

Skills for People are passionate about working alongside people in a way that makes sense to the person and their family, so each family's needs and supports have been unique to them. However the average cost of support brokerage for each family has been approximately £520. In addition Duffy and Fulton have calculated that the average cost of care management is approximately £700 per person (see *Architecture for Personalisation*). These costs are not excessive when taken on their own - however if care management and brokerage are both being used then combined cost seems very high. Taken together then these costs would be 13% of a typical individual budget of £10,000. This cost become even more unreasonable when applied to lower level packages which are the norm for many. Paying for brokerage and care management at these levels is not sustainable and it is not necessary for most people.

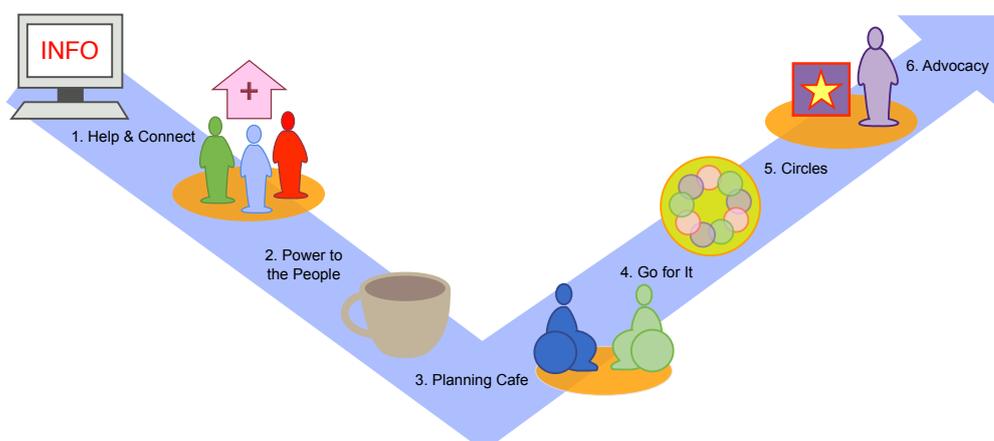
Reflecting upon these issues Skills for People began to explore how to create a different model - based upon the principles of community-based support. To do this they began by simply exploring what Skills for People would offer in response to each of the principles of community-support (see Table 2).

KEY PRINCIPLE	ROLE OF SKILLS FOR PEOPLE
<p>Start by assuming and encouraging the capacity of citizens and families by enabling access to a wide information network</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Believe that citizens can do this themselves</li> <li>● Offer an Accessible Information Centre both around support solutions and community resources</li> <li>● Redesign Support Planning processes to build on people's assets and resources ensuring money is only one aspect of the process</li> <li>● Develop local partnerships with other community interest organisations to ensure information is central, simple and easy to find</li> <li>● Make a guarantee to get the right information, or connect people to the information and or service they may need</li> <li>● Invest in people with learning disabilities so that they can deliver accessible training courses and workshops</li> </ul>
<p>Facilitate the early use of peer support for everyone</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Expect a contribution from people asking if they will assist one other person routinely so creating a bank of contacts</li> <li>● Provide space and support for new and existing self advocacy, peer and family networks</li> <li>● Develop and invest in peers using their wealth of talent and experience</li> <li>● Develop circles of support for any people who have few others in their lives (except those who are paid) providing facilitation and support for 1 year</li> </ul>
<p>Ensure access to community supports from organisations and associations within their community</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop a bank of community resources – what's on in the city.</li> <li>● Develop an accessible wall of information about the community – what's on and where</li> <li>● Provide an informal café space with support led by peers</li> <li>● Offer people a buddy or volunteer to go along to a community resource of interest to provide initial support</li> </ul>

KEY PRINCIPLE	ROLE OF SKILLS FOR PEOPLE
Enable citizens to work with support services directly and to explore with them what options are available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Develop good info from local providers and provide space for providers to advertise</li> <li>● Facilitate links with providers to explore their offer</li> <li>● Facilitate regular support planning drop-in sessions for people to explore providers offers</li> <li>● Create regular provider market place events for people and families</li> <li>● Create good local information to enable people to manage and monitor their choice support provider</li> </ul>
Provide sufficient professional advisors, such as social workers or other specialists, so that everyone can get the help they need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Provide workers where more specialist support is needed</li> <li>● Run informal planning sessions in the café space</li> <li>● Provide experienced advocates who can offer support brokerage functions where necessary assisting people to explore good support and assisting them to set it up</li> <li>● Create shared understanding between Skills for People and the Care Management team where people require additional support</li> </ul>

**Table 2.** Strategy for promoting community brokerage at Skills for People

Skills for People called this model **Help and Connect**. Early indications of the model suggest that average support costs could be as little as 25% of previous support costs - a possible efficiency of 75%. Figures 3 and 4 provide an overview of the model and how it will operate in practice.



**Figure 3.** Overview of Help and Connect

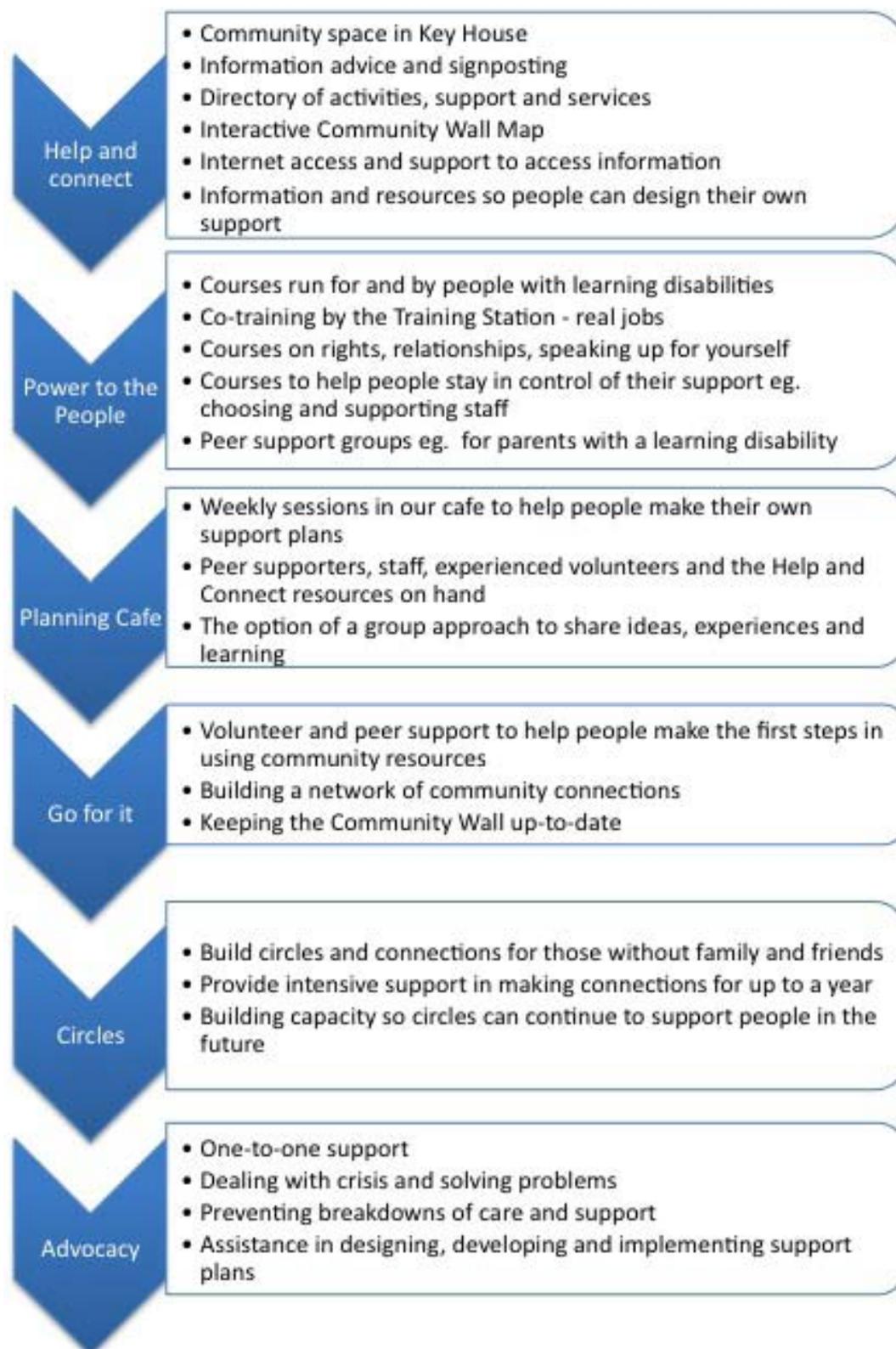


Figure 4. Help and Connect in detail

## 5. CONCLUSION

Skills for People are just beginning to implement the **Help and Connect** model. It is a brave and focused attempt to offer assistance that is not professionally dominated and that builds on a belief in the capacity of citizens themselves.

In partnership with the local authority the approach has the potential, if offered to children and young people with learning disabilities, to empower them to really be in control of their support.

Professionals, can be great allies, but they don't always know best. Most good solutions lie with citizens, friends and families - if they can obtain the right information.

Paradigm and The Centre for Welfare Reform will continue to support local community leaders, local organisations and local authorities to design cost-effective and empowering support solutions like this in order to assist the development of personalisation.

# BIBLIOGRAPHY

If you are interested in the detailed thinking behind the ideas set out in this paper then the best report to read is *Architecture for Personalisation* by Duffy & Fulton available to download directly from The Centre for Welfare Reform website ([www.centreforwelfarereform.org](http://www.centreforwelfarereform.org)).

Dynamite (2005) was the first national pilot in the UK supporting young disabled people to direct their support see [www.paradigm-uk.org](http://www.paradigm-uk.org).

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# PUBLISHING INFORMATION

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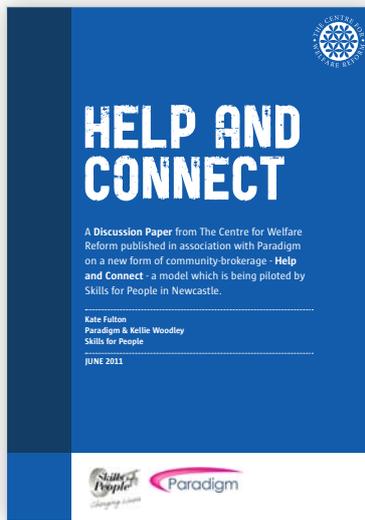
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The Centre for Welfare Reform  
The Quadrant, 99 Parkway Avenue  
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Sheffield  
S9 4WG

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design: henry iles & associates / [design@henryiles.com](mailto:design@henryiles.com)