

BRIGHTER FUTURES
COMMUNITY CONNECTOR
AUTOETHNOGRAPHY



Learnings from the Field: an Autoethnography of the Community Connector Role

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Purpose

This document seeks to define and unpack the operational elements of the Community Connector role in the Brighter Futures Transformation Pilot and share learnings from the perspective of a Community Connector, gathered over the course of 21 months. It is written in a reflective style and is intended to be used as a guide by future Community Connectors and those interested in connection work.

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About this autoethnography

This autoethnography has been written by Natalia Sopelario, Brighter Futures Community Connector for Brighter Futures Outer East 2018-2020.



Executive Summary

This report is an autoethnography of my experiences as a Community Connector for the Brighter Futures Transformation Pilot from October 2018 to July 2020, when this report was finalised. In it you will find my reflections and analyses of the various aspects of the role and how it interacted with the different elements of the pilot as well as the community more broadly. The report ends with my personal reflections and advice for anyone seeking to undertake this work.

The pilot began in 2018 with two full-time Community Connectors, and in its second year comprised myself working full-time and Aleksei Bondarenko-Edwards and Chris Waixel working part-time, supported by program manager Peter Dinsdale.

Throughout the course of the project the Community Connector role has evolved in numerous ways, responding to the needs of young people in the pilot as well as the pilot itself, within the *try, test, and learn* model of the project. This evolution led to the beginning stages of embedding Advantaged Thinking in the community in parallel to the work that was being undertaken within the Out of Home Care (OoHC) system.

Collaboration has been the foundation of this work, and Community Connectors have learned a lot about the nature of systems change work from collaborating with practice champions in the nine organisations involved in the pilot; namely, what it takes to create an authorising environment for change.

The community response to Brighter Futures has been overwhelmingly positive, with many individuals, groups, and businesses valuing the opportunity to welcome young people into their environments. In this report you will read about how community connections were sourced, the metrics used to assess the suitability of connections, and the ongoing support that Connectors have provided to the community to support their connections with young people.

The key question of the pilot's evaluation is, *"How and under what circumstances does community connection happen?"* This report attempts to provide one perspective on this, through the lens of readiness and the variables that contribute to the readiness of each player within the Brighter Futures framework.

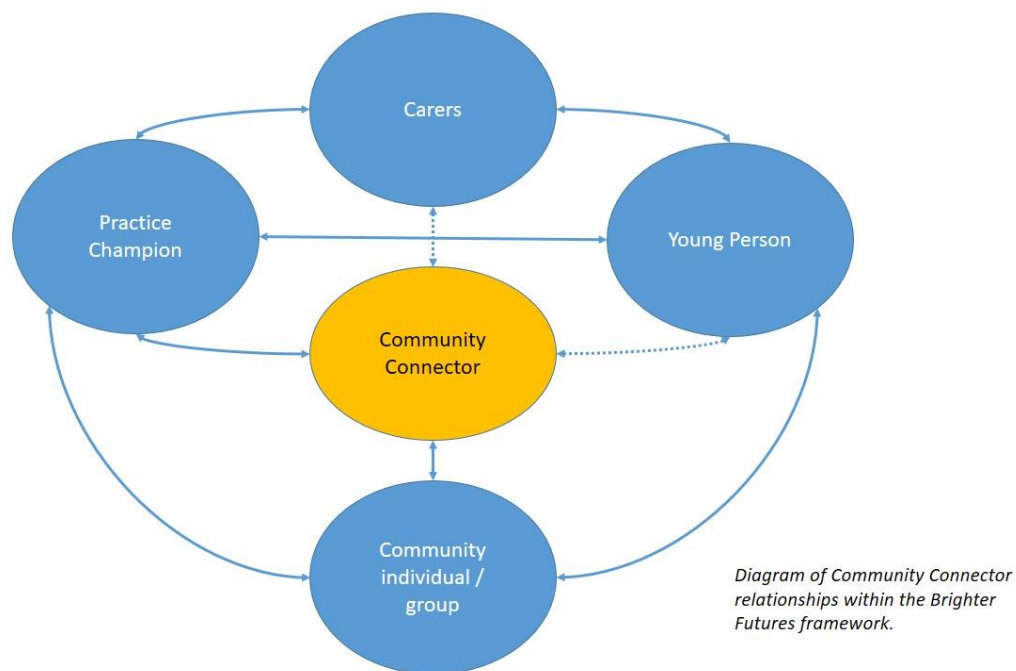
One unforeseen but positive outcome of the pilot has been the engagement with mature care leavers and the impact that connecting with a mature care leaver can have on both the young person and the older care leaver. Three mature care leavers who have gone on to live happy lives post-care provide inspiring examples for the young people with whom they're connected.

Finally, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge Positive Psychology, and the work of Otto Scharmer (*Theory U: Leading from the Future as it Emerges*, 2007) as deeply influential in my approach to this work. Positive Psychology provided a framework for understanding character strengths and how to utilise them in myself and others to bring out the best in everyone. *Theory U* posits that awareness of oneself is the fundamental trait one needs to be a positive and successful change-maker. Together, these principles have helped me develop the mindset that has supported me to undertake the challenging work of culture and systems change. I have articulated the key traits of this mindset, as I see them, at the end of this report.

The role of Community Connector

The role of the Brighter Futures Community Connector is to act as a conduit between the Out of Home Care system and the community. The goal is to establish an open and sustainable relationship between the system and the local community over time, thereby transforming the social network of young people in care, from one predominated by system workers to one populated by the young person's local community.

In the Brighter Futures framework, the players with which Community Connectors engage are: practice champions, community members, and young people (primarily indirectly through the practice champion, sometimes directly where necessary). Where appropriate, Community Connectors also engage with young people's carers.



The evolution of the role

The original model of engagement saw the Community Connector working with practice champions to understand the interests and aspirations of young people without direct involvement with young people. This model evolved over time in response to various challenges within the system requiring flexibility of the Community Connector role to allow for working with young people directly, facilitating connection opportunities and coaching them in Advantaged Thinking.

These challenges include: needing to step in when a practice champion became unavailable for a connection meeting, young people being exited by a service and no longer having a practice champion, practice champions requiring significant support with their young people.

Over time, the Community Connectors also evolved to become practice champions ourselves, coaching and supporting practice change, and delivering adapted Advantaged Thinking training when the need arose and a Brotherhood of St Laurence-led training was not available.

Collaborating with lead agencies

As this pilot is a collaboration between numerous agencies, in addition to building relationships with partner organisations, the Community Connectors have needed to develop and maintain strong

collaborative relationships with lead agencies, the Brotherhood of St Laurence, CREATE Foundation, and Anchor Inc., where Community Connectors are hosted.

The key inputs required by each agency have been:

Brotherhood of St Laurence:

- Referral and connection data for monitoring and evaluation purposes.
- Support planning of Communities of Practice.
- Support engagement with practice champions, team leaders, and managers.

CREATE Foundation:

- Provide pilot updates to Youth Ambassador Group and seek feedback.
- Provide connection opportunities.
- Support engagement with practice champions, team leaders, and managers.
- Support YAG priorities of increasing membership and connecting with pilot participants.

Anchor Inc.:

- As the host organisation for Community Connectors, the key requirements have been to report to governance bodies such as the Project Control Group and,
- To work closely with the Principal Adviser to the Brighter Futures Collective Impact Partnership to ensure each element of the pilot is working together and progressing as planned.

See Appendix A: Additional Activities for further details on activities of Community Connectors.

Collective impact: the role of local government

The local governments of Maroondah, Knox City and the Shire of Yarra Ranges have played a key role in supporting Brighter Futures' connections work, specifically the team leaders and coordinators of the youth teams within these Councils.

Acting as funder, community organiser, community connector, and connection itself, these Councils have been proactive supporters of Brighter Futures, mobilising staff and community members in aid of the project.

Given Councils' role in community, their strong support of the pilot has been invaluable, particularly in the early stages of the pilot's implementation. Their knowledge, and funding of community resources, and ability to mobilise community assets positions them as key supporters of the pilot, without whom this work would be near impossible to undertake, highlighting the necessity of a collective impact approach.

Engaging practice champions

Effective engagement with practice champions is fundamental to the Brighter Futures model, and one of the biggest learnings since the beginning of the pilot has been the absolute relational nature of not only the Community Connector role, but culture change work in general. Because of this, a key priority for Community Connectors is to build strong relationships with practice champions and their team leaders.

Understanding the context in which practice champions are working, and working alongside them using a coaching approach is the only way this work can be done effectively. With this in mind, a table of engagement challenges we have experienced and our strategic responses to them has been included in the Appendix.

See Appendix B: Engagement challenges and corresponding engagement strategies.

Different types of community connection

The different types of community connection that have been facilitated throughout the course of the pilot can be broadly categorised into three types:

1. **One to one:** mentoring-style connection through shared interest, aimed at enhancing a young person's aspirations.
2. **One to group:** connection to a group such as a neighbourhood house or arts class.
3. **One to organisation:** structured in nature, such as a job or volunteer placement.

The metrics used to assess the suitability of potential connections in each of these categories, as well as the initial and ongoing support needs of different types of community connections are outlined in the Appendix.

See Appendix C: Assessing and establishing different types of connections.

Factors that enable connection

The question of readiness has been a key theme throughout the pilot – a young person's readiness to engage with an opportunity, their readiness to meet a new person etc., however, what has emerged is that the readiness of the young person is just one factor in a confluence of readiness factors that determine the likelihood of a connection being made and sustained.

In considering the factors that enable connection, we must consider the readiness of all of the players involved. Below are five scales illustrating readiness as it applies to each player in the pilot's connection framework: the young person, practice champion, and community member. Based on these readiness factors, an assessment can be made by the Community Connector about the potential connection (i.e. how much support the connection can be anticipated to require, and the likelihood of the connection being sustainable).

These scales can also be used as a diagnostic tool when analysing why some connections worked and others didn't, as is demonstrated in two case studies in Appendix D.

Factors that enable connection



Further enabling factors can be considered, such as:

- 1) The relationship between the community connector and practice champion;
- 2) The relationship between the community member and practice champion;
- 3) The relationship between the young person and their carer;
- 4) The relationship between the community member and the young person (can be assessed at a 6 month check-in point),
- 5) The readiness of partnering organisations, e.g. the culture of the practice champion's team and organisation as a whole.

Experience has shown that possibly the most important factor is time. What we have learned is that each of these enablers require an investment of time in order to build and cultivate. It takes time to build trust, demonstrate the efficacy of the model through outcomes, and generate investment back by practice champions, young people, and the community.

NB. The author would like to acknowledge Heidi Tucker for providing the conceptual framework for the factors that enable connection and Meg Beilken for providing the sub-enablers.

See Appendix D: The enabling factors in actions: unpacking the factors through two case studies

Sourcing community connections

At the beginning of the pilot's implementation, Community Connectors began by sourcing connections from their own networks. It became quickly apparent that an efficient and sustainable model would require the building of an opportunities bank that spanned the breadth of interests that young people have. This approach involved working with supporting organisations such as local councils to identify opportunities as well as other *natural* connectors in the community who could act as connection hubs (community groups and neighbourhood houses, for example).

As the pilot grew, Connectors began recruiting businesses passively by attending networking events, and then actively by hosting events to promote Brighter Futures as a viable corporate social responsibility initiative. The spread of Brighter Futures throughout the community led to the need

for education about the Out of Home Care (OoHC) sector and capacity building to support connections and the Connector role evolved to support this.

As the interests and aspirations of young people in OoHC are diverse, so too have the connections that have been sought in the community. Below is a list of some of the community members and businesses that have offered various opportunities from internships, mentoring, workshops, courses and traineeships to jobs and volunteer placements. These connections have been sought from five main sources:

Personal network: National Australia Bank, Turnstyle Records, EA Games, Epic Games, Victoria Legal Aid, Collingwood Football Club, Hearth Galleries, Metro Trains.

Professional network: Prokick, Jackson Taylor and Sonja Terpstra MPs, Belgravia Leisure, Victoria Police, Apprenticeships Group Australia, Generation Run, Homie, Roundbird Can't Fly café, Tribe Youth, Campeyn Group, Trees Adventure, Silent Arrow fashion label.

Brighter Futures network: Hill Real Estate, The Basin Community House, Raising Expectations initiatives, as well as numerous opportunities and events offered by Yarra Ranges, Maroondah and Knox City councils.

Events: Cr Jake Keogh, Aimee Adventures, Kalinya Communications, Yarra Valley ECOS.

Cold calling: Knox Photographic Society, MEGT, Ferntree Gully Community Arts Centre.

While a number of these connections were sought in order to build up a bank of opportunities, the majority of connections were tailor-made in response to the expressed passions and aspirations of young people referred into the pilot. Examples include NAB, EA Games, Victoria Legal Aid, and Turnstyle Records who all have representatives currently connected to young people via this custom matching approach.

Moving from connection to connector

As the pilot progressed, Community Connectors' approach to sourcing connections evolved from looking for individual connections to seeking individuals who could act as connectors themselves, essentially establishing connection hubs within the community. Examples of this approach include facilitating a lunch and learn session at Yarra Ranges Council (attended by Council staff from numerous departments), connecting with the President of the CHAOS network of neighbourhood houses, and connecting with Council-based community development officers who brokered further links within the local community.

This strategy allowed Community Connectors to begin embedding the Brighter Futures approach within the local community, in parallel to the work being done to embed it within the Out of Home Care system, building the capacity of the community to support young people beyond the pilot.

Key learnings from working with young people

There have been a few instances in which Community Connectors have needed to provide direct support to young people in the pilot, as discussed in the first section of this report. Below are some key learnings from working directly with young people.

What it takes to make a connection happen

It can take a long time to make a connection happen. One example is a young person with whom a connection to a community leader had been set up around the young person's interest in singing and advocacy. This connection seemed to tick all the boxes for the young person, however, there always seemed to be something in the way, and the young person was never available to meet this community member.

In hindsight, it is clear that there were numerous challenges to this connection: the young person was stressed and overwhelmed in her final year at school, there were a number of issues at home, she had a full schedule with her school and music commitments, and she was trying to live a normal teenage life with a boyfriend and friends. It was also her first year in care and a major traumatic disruption in her life. She was trying to manage as best she could, and doing a great job of it. It may not have been the right connection for her at this time either.

Throughout this period I remained in contact with her, checking in, making time to meet with her, letting her know that I was still there and so were the opportunities. It took more than six months before we were able to connect the young person with someone, a music producer, with whom she has now recorded a song that she wrote.

I believe the key factors that led to an eventual successful connection were the young person's resilience, her situation improving over time, and the trust and rapport she was able to develop with me as I remained in her life, demonstrating patience, reliability, consistency, and persistence. Throughout this time I was also able to get to know her better and to tailor a connection that better fit her aspirations.

Holding the vision for young people until they can hold it for themselves

We know that young people in care often have low self-worth and an internal narrative that is informed by trauma as well as other challenges of being in care. This can make even identifying one's strengths and dreams a difficult and sometimes confronting experience. Once the young person has been courageous enough to share their dreams, the next challenge is to be vulnerable and take the risk of meeting someone new.

Whilst a connection may seem like an amazing opportunity to us as practitioners, for young people, who have been let down so many times before, it may seem like an endeavour fraught with risk. It is very likely that issues of trust, anxiety, fear, rejection and self-sabotage will present themselves throughout the connection process. It is important to continue to support the young person to make connections, and to do so at their own pace, taking small steps to increase their readiness.

Behavioural challenges will occur as the young person wrestles with the difficulty of trusting someone new in the face of the disappointments and hurt they have already experienced. As connectors, it is our job to continue believing in the young person, to hold the positive vision they have articulated to us, until they can hold it for themselves.

The unique role of Community Connectors

Community Connectors have a unique role in that we are not case managers or mandated workers for young people. Our non-statutory role often means that the relationship dynamic we are able to develop with young people can be one of greater openness, authenticity, and freedom. This means that sometimes Connectors may be better positioned than a direct worker to support the young person to uncover their aspirations and work towards a connection.

Post Script: The impact of mature care leavers

In late 2019, three mature care leavers in the community were identified as potential mentors for young people in the pilot. The backgrounds of these three individuals include law, education, and trades. Two of these individuals were sought out in response to a young person's aspirations, and the third engaged with Brighter Futures through an information event where key Brighter Futures staff presented. All three have now been connected to young people transitioning from Out of Home Care.

In all three instances, both the community members and the young people reflected that the connection was a meaningful experience. Young people reported feeling a deeper level of connection beyond the mutual interest; being able to connect with someone with a shared lived experience and who had *"come out the other side"*, happy and doing what they enjoyed, was an inspiring and affirming experience for young people.

The mature care leavers expressed a strong desire to connect with, and share their experiences with young people who they felt could benefit from hearing their stories about their personal journeys from care into adulthood. It seemed important to these mature care leavers to communicate a story of hope and encouragement to young people engaged with the OoHC system.

My final reflections

Share learnings along the way

Meetings of key Brighter Futures staff (such as the Project Control Group and the Monitoring and Evaluation group) have been valuable spaces to reflect, learn, and analyse in real time how different elements of the pilot are going, and to make decisions about how to progress. Whilst the reflexive nature of the pilot has been clear to this core group, the wider network of Brighter Futures practitioners may not always have been clear on this approach. At various times throughout the pilot, particularly in the early stages, practice champions expressed confusion about the roles and responsibilities of different actors in the framework.

A stronger focus on communicating key learnings along the way to the different layers within partner organisations (i.e. case managers, team leaders, managers, senior leadership), may lead to greater tolerance for the dynamic nature of pilot work, greater understanding and therefore efficacy, and a deeper sense of being part of the journey, embedding a shared commitment to not just the work but the vision of Brighter Futures.

The importance of time

One thing I have learned throughout this pilot is the importance of time. Time affects all things, and this pilot is no different. It takes time to build relationships, to foster trust, to learn, to demonstrate a theory of change. On a personal level, it took time for me to develop confidence in what I was doing, to become accustomed to the messy nature of a pilot with so many stakeholders, and to find flow. On a broader level, it took a large investment in time from all parties to build the strong relationships necessary across the pilot's lead and partner agencies in order to work in a truly collaborative way.

Mindset: courage, authenticity, curiosity and openness

The Brighter Futures Transformation Pilot has been visionary from the start. It is a project that asks practitioners, leaders, young people, and the community alike to envision and aspire to a future in which young people in care have a sense of connection, belonging, and hope. The gap between what

is and what could be is often where we find ourselves feeling vulnerable and uncomfortable. It takes courage to sit in that space and remain committed to the process of change.

It also takes courage to share one's dreams, and this is essentially what we are asking young people to do. We must demonstrate the same courage we are asking young people to, by being vulnerable and authentic. Change can be messy, complicated, and a lengthy process, and it's important to be honest about this. Things won't happen straight away, and as the practitioners, there is a greater responsibility for us to model the behaviours we are asking of young people first. Having the courage to be authentic, to *walk with* and not lead, will go a long way in fostering the kind of trusting relationship with a young person that will allow them to safely build the connection skills they will need to connect to the broader community.

Here are a few other mindset reminders that will help you along the way:

- Respect young people as agents of change in their own right;
- Listen with openness and non-judgement,
- Be curious: by cultivating a curious mindset, we can build greater understanding and develop deeper connection. Curiosity is also a very useful tool for breaking the circuit when we find ourselves in unhelpful states of mind like blaming, fear, anxiety, and frustration.

The final mindset trait is one that can help you unlock all the others: openness. Openness will allow you to be adaptable, which is of utmost importance in this role. Many things will not go according to plan, will require help from others, and will feel like failures. Openness will allow you to pivot when you need to, to go with the flow, to be resilient, and to change.

Openness requires humility and a genuine love of learning. There is always more to learn, about yourself, about others, about the world. Cultivating openness will put you in good stead as you undertake this work. It will support your growth and support you to develop genuine connection with others, which is what this is all about in the end.

Good luck and be kind to yourself.

Appendix A: Additional activities

While the primary focus of Community Connectors is to facilitate connections, the Connections team has held events and participated in activities to promote Brighter Futures within the community and to pursue the broader goals of the pilot. These activities include:

- *“Breaking the Mould” Q&A Panel Event*: Brighter Futures event featuring three speakers who challenged societal expectations to pursue their aspirations. Event speakers: Cr Jake Keogh, one of the youngest mayors in Victoria’s history; Aimee Stanton, plumber, entrepreneur and reality TV star; and Jirra Lulla Harvey, Koorie owner of Aboriginal communications consultancy Kalinya Communications. The event included an information session delivered by *Raising Expectations* and Swinburne University Skills and Jobs staff on tertiary education opportunities for young people in care.
- *Father’s Day sausage sizzle*: event to promote Brighter Futures to the local business community at Waterman Caribbean Park.
- *Business Excellence and Corporate Social Responsibility night*: an event for business leaders to learn about how they can become involved with Brighter Futures, featuring a Q&A with Paul Jamieson, General Manager at NAB, and Melanie Carter, Your Personal Travel Manager, both of whom are connected to young people in the pilot.
- *Public speaking engagements on local radio*: a Community Connector appeared on two local radio stations to promote Brighter Futures and recruit more community members.

Appendix B: Engagement challenges and corresponding engagement strategies

Engagement challenge	Community Connector response
Low number of referrals	<p>Present at team meetings of practice champions and share good news stories and available opportunities.</p> <p>Monthly newsletter promoting community opportunities and sharing connection stories.</p> <p>Attend network meetings to promote Brighter Futures.</p> <p>Regular check-ins with PCs by phone, email and in person to increase engagement.</p>
Confusion / low engagement with Advantaged Thinking and its tools	<p>Provide one to one coaching support (in person and by phone).</p> <p>Refer to Brotherhood of St Laurence for more in depth support (training and reflective practice).</p> <p>Deliver adapted Advantaged Thinking training where necessary (i.e. if the scheduled training is months away).</p>
Low responsiveness from some practice champions	<p>Recognise the busy schedules of practice champions and arrange regular hot-desking days at partner organisations to promote ad hoc meetings.</p> <p>Check in regularly by phone, email, and in person to maintain engagement.</p> <p>Attend team leader and manager meetings where appropriate (e.g. Brighter Futures Leaving Care network meetings) to promote Brighter Futures.</p>
Need to increase number of practice champions	<p>Hot-desking at partner organisations to increase visibility of Community Connectors and keep Brighter Futures on the agenda.</p> <p>Refer workers to upcoming Advantaged Thinking training.</p> <p>Make time to meet and greet new workers within Practice Champion teams. This includes new team leaders and managers.</p>
Continued lack of engagement	<p>If there is continued lack of engagement despite the implementation of the above strategies, consult with the relevant team leader.</p>

Appendix C: Assessing and establishing different types of connections

The table below outlines the main characteristics and set-up requirements of each type of community connection and the metrics used by Community Connectors to assess the suitability of a connection within each type. There are many overlaps between each of these types, and the inclusion of a characteristic in one type does not suggest that it isn't present in other types, merely that this table is a simple overview.

Universal benefits across all three types include: positive wellbeing and sense of self, increased self-confidence, greater sense of belonging, broadening of social network, increased opportunities to engage in positive activities, opportunities for aspirational shift in identity.

Table: assessing and establishing different types of connections

	One to one	One to group	One to organisation
Aims	Support and enhance YP's aspiration, provide positive role modelling, sustainable connection outside of the care system, network building.	Experiential learning, skill development, work experience, exposure to new experiences, socialising, social and emotional development, network building.	Employment, volunteer placement, professional development, network building.
Set up requirements	<p>Assessment of community member for appropriateness and compatibility.</p> <p>Provide basic child safety education.</p> <p>Briefing and debriefing regarding connection meeting – completed by CC with both community member and PC.</p>	<p>Establish a key contact person within the group for Practice Champions.</p> <p>Educate key contact on Brighter Futures and Advantaged Thinking, establishing them as a community practice champion.</p> <p>Clarify what opportunities are on offer, any eligibility requirements and establish intake process for enquiring PCs.</p> <p>Identify any supports the group needs in order to engage with BFTP.</p>	<p>Establish a key contact person within the organisation for PCs.</p> <p>Educate key contact on Brighter Futures and Advantaged Thinking, establishing them as a community practice champion.</p> <p>Clarify what's on offer and the intake and eligibility requirements.</p> <p>Support organisation to develop a system and process for on-boarding young people.</p>
What the Community Connector is looking for	<p>Positive role model, matching interests and aspirations.</p> <p>Compatible personality, openness, good communication skills, and emotional intelligence</p>	<p>Relevant opportunities for young people.</p> <p>A culture that is open to learning about and supporting Brighter Futures and an Advantaged Thinking approach.</p>	<p>Relevant opportunities for young people.</p> <p>A supportive workplace with a culture that's open to learning about and supporting Brighter Futures and an Advantaged Thinking approach.</p>

	<p>Awareness of child safety and appropriate behaviour.</p> <p>Availability.</p>	Someone that can become a community-based practice champion through coaching and support from Community Connectors.	Someone that can become a community-based practice champion through coaching and support from Community Connectors.
Ongoing support requirements	Check-ins with community member to provide debriefing and other support – frequency to be determined by community member or as the need arises.	<p>Regular check-ins to support the young people connected to the group and to support the group itself.</p> <p>Invitations to relevant opportunities to keep group engaged and to offer additional value.</p>	<p>Regular check-ins to provide support to the young people and employer through coaching or other resources, as needed.</p> <p>Invitations to relevant opportunities to keep organisation engaged and to offer additional value.</p>

Throughout the course of the pilot, overwhelmingly the main type of connection sought by young people has been one-to-one, with young people identifying that they would like to connect with someone who can share their experience and provide insight into their chosen aspiration.

Appendix D: The enabling factors in action: unpacking the factors through two case studies

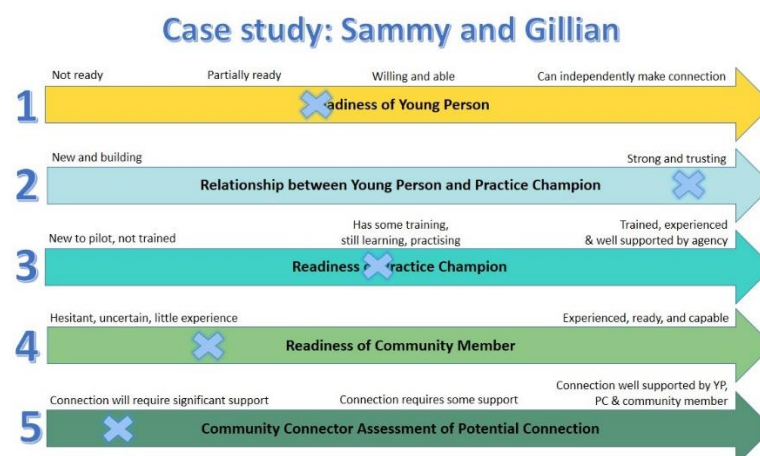
Below are case studies of two connections with the same young person, one of which succeeded, the other which did not. These case studies have been examined through the lens of the five enabling factors to understand what happened in each scenario.

Background information

At the time of referral Sammy was 16 years old, living with her carers, and had expressed an interest in business. Sammy was completing a VCAL course in business retail at TAFE and was interested in meeting a small business owner to learn more.

Case study 1: Sammy and Gillian

Gillian: small business owner in the city of Knox, met at a Rotary event attended by Community Connector. She had been identified as a potentially suitable connection by the Community Connector because of her business, extroverted personality, and volunteer work with a youth organisation. She offered to meet with Sammy to talk her through how she got started in business more than 20 years ago.



1. Readiness of Young Person

Sammy was ready and willing to meet Gillian. Her placement then broke down and the need to find stable housing became the top priority, putting a halt to any connection activities for the time being. Sammy had lived with this family for many years so the breakdown of this placement was challenging on many levels for Sammy.

2. Relationship between Young Person and Practice Champion

Lara had been Sammy's case manager for several years and they had a strong relationship with lots of trust.

3. Readiness of Practice Champion

Lara had completed some Advantaged Thinking training and was still learning and practising with the use of the tools. Her busy schedule impacted her availability to engage with Brighter Futures at times.

4. Readiness of Community Member

During Gillian's briefing session the Community Connector identified that Gillian would need a lot of guidance on how to engage with Sammy in a positive way. Additionally, Gillian was

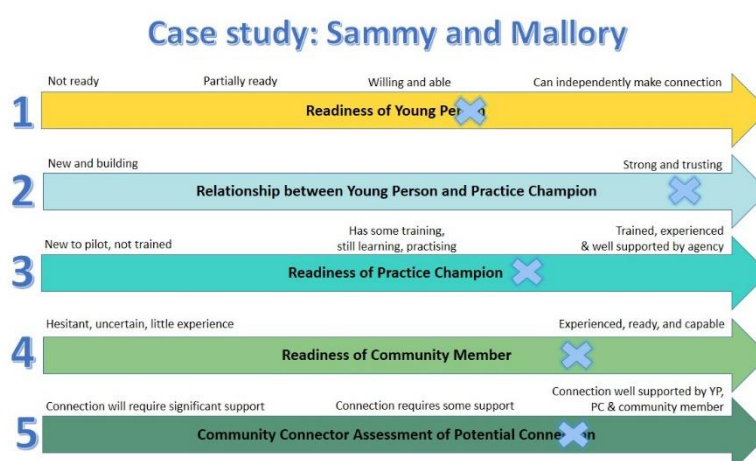
often hard to get hold of and required a lot of follow up to set up a meeting. When a mutually suitable meeting date had finally been set, both Lara and Gillian required a lot of time and follow up to confirm plans. Once plans had been confirmed, DHHS scheduled a clashing meeting with Sammy that couldn't be moved despite our efforts, and Gillian became unresponsive to attempts to reschedule.

5. Community Connector Assessment of Potential Connection

Based on the briefing session, the Community Connector assessed that Gillian could provide a lot of valuable information to Sammy in a one-off meeting, but would potentially be unsuitable as an ongoing mentor. This connection fell down numerous times, and took months to try to make happen. In hindsight this is a connection that took significant support to try and get off the ground, and ultimately it didn't.

Case study 2: Sammy and Mallory

Mallory: small business owner in the city of Knox, met Community Connector at a business community event hosted by Waterman Caribbean Park. Identified as potentially suitable connection due to her entrepreneurship, warm personality, and eagerness to be involved.



1. Readiness of Young Person

Sammy is now settled in her new home, an Education First Youth Foyer.

2. Relationship between Young Person and Practice Champion

Lara is able to continue supporting Sammy despite the cessation of her care placement and their relationship remains strong.

3. Readiness of Practice Champion

Lara has more confidence with the Advantaged Thinking tools and has engaged more with the Community Connector and Brighter Futures generally over time.

4. Readiness of Community Member

Mallory demonstrated passion for the pilot at initial meeting with Community Connector. The subsequent briefing session with the Community Connector confirmed initial impression of her being highly personable, open, and engaging with a high degree of emotional intelligence. She was very responsive when the Community Connector introduced her to Lara and a meeting date was scheduled straight away.

5. Community Connector Assessment of Potential Connection

This connection meeting was quick and easy to organise, with good responsiveness from Mallory, Lara, and Sammy. The connection meeting took place without the Community Connector as all parties agreed that Community Connector support was not required. This connection continued with little support from the Community Connector as Lara was able to coordinate Sammy and Mallory. Mallory reported being impressed and inspired by Sammy and offered her a casual position in her small business – her first hire. Lara was also inspired by her meeting with Mallory, reporting that she wanted to change her studies from business to tourism, Mallory's industry.

NB. Mallory would go on to become a strong advocate for Brighter Futures, speaking at a business event hosted by Brighter Futures on the topic of corporate social responsibility.