



Connection Coalition Quarterly Report

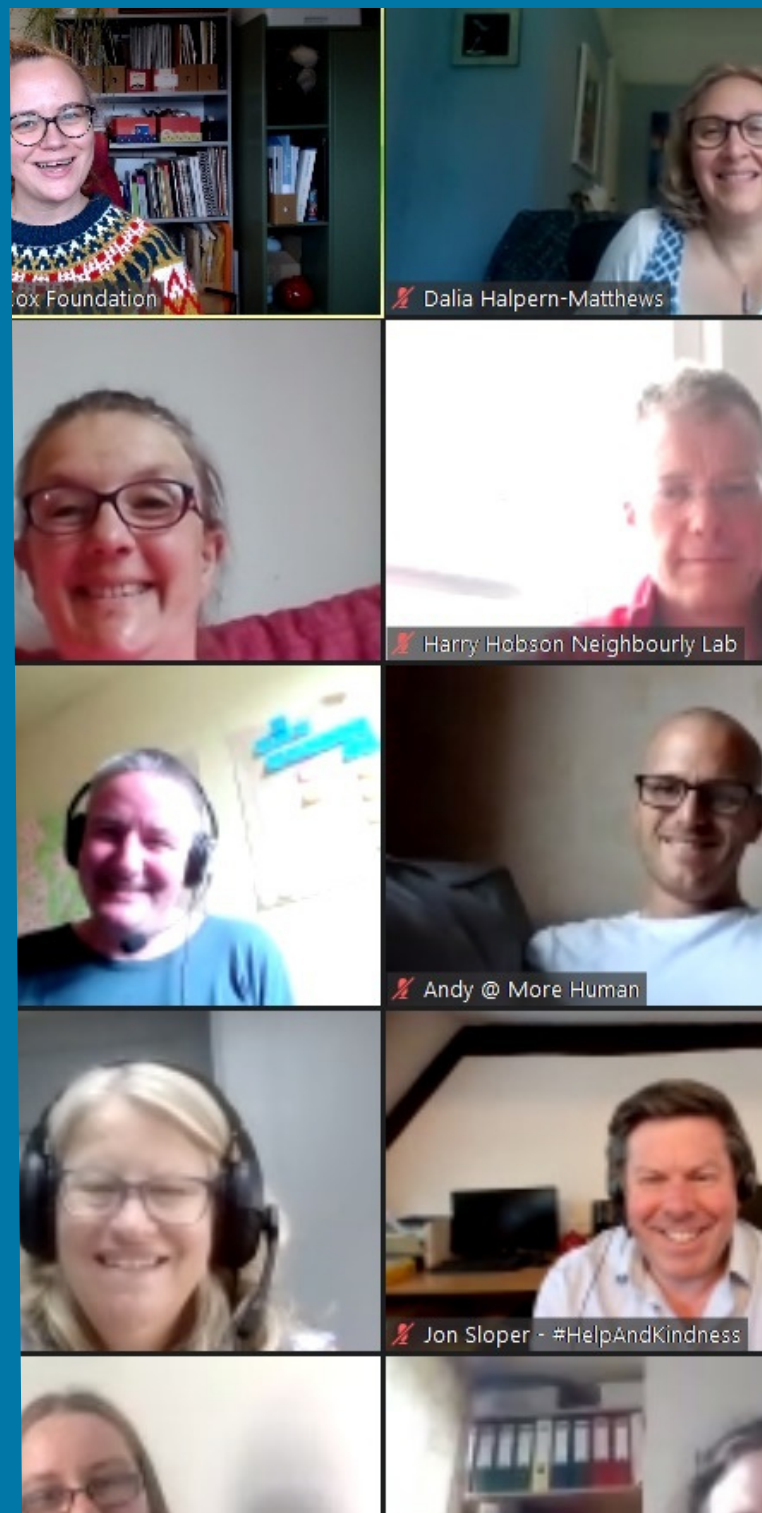
April – June 2022



THE **JO COX**
FOUNDATION

About us

The Connection Coalition was formed in April 2020 as a response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Anticipating that the nation was at risk of a crisis of disconnection, we created a platform for organisations across the country to work collectively to ensure that communities and the nation emerged from Covid-19 ready to build and strengthen social relationships.



Two years on, and the Connection Coalition remains committed to strengthening human relationships and connections in communities.

We are grateful
to our funders
for making this
work possible

ASTRA
FOUNDATION

INNOX
FOUNDATION

Meta

Our aims

1

Support

Support organisations working to build and maintain connected communities through creating spaces for them to share experiences & increase knowledge, skills, confidence and motivation.

2

Encourage

Encourage organisations to capture learnings from the pandemic and work with communities to carry forward relationships, helping us to tackle loneliness and social isolation, reducing the associated stigma.

Influence

3

Influence organisations, funders and the Government to tackle the societal conditions which form loneliness and disconnection and to invest in the power of connectedness.

Develop

4

Ensure we continuously capture and act on our learning, and work with the sector to shape any future plans for the Coalition so long as there is a need.

Our activity

April-June 2022

Unlocking Connection: 7 Keys to unlocking connection in communities

In January, with support from Meta, we gave out 10 small grants totalling £10,000 to Connection Coalition members. The grants enabled members to work together to test ideas and ways of creating meaningful connections, and to capture and share their learning with wider audiences. Through this project we have identified 7 keys for connection which, when considered and applied, have shown themselves to unlock connections between people. These keys for connection are:

Consider your space: to ensure that people feel safe and relaxed. A space intentionally selected to be accessible and facilitate connection.

Consider your activity: To help people feel more at ease, giving them something to focus on, allowing time for conversations and connections to develop naturally.

Pay attention to the small things: Paying attention to the details can help give people reassurance and the tools to help them navigate new connections and experiences.

Remember we can achieve more together (organisations): Working with other organisations with shared values enables an exchange of constructive feedback, opportunities and new ideas. Working with other organisations and groups already known to the people you're trying to connect with can help build trust and understanding.

Remember we can achieve more together (the community):
“exploring this topic with community members helped them to feel invested, feel empowered, heard, and is a creative way to create new ideas and solutions, as well as understand what people really need.” – Empowerment charity

Allow enough time: Building trust, relationships and creating meaningful connections takes time. It needs long-term thinking and is built when we are vulnerable with each other, which happens when we feel safe and valued.

Identify barriers to participation and how you might overcome them: Doing what you can to identify and minimise barriers for those who would benefit most from your activities can help increase your positive impact and change people's lives.

This is just a little snippet of the 'Unlocking Connection' report that will be shared this Summer. Alongside the 7 keys to connection, it also includes summaries of the projects undertaken by the grantees, case studies and inspiration for how to implement the keys to connection and plans for the future of building connections in communities.

Youth Loneliness network

One of the key areas of focus for the Connection Coalition has been to create a Youth Loneliness Network, bringing together organisations who are working on youth loneliness or want to deepen their understanding and capacity to tackle youth loneliness. One of our members, Vicky Eames from Team of Life, recently attended and presented at the Annual Tackling Loneliness Conference. She has shared with us a little about the work that Team of Life do:

“ The pandemic has helped us to realise the importance of connecting with others as we have all had insight into the impact of loneliness on our mental health and wellbeing. However, approaches to building well-being and resilience often locate problems with individuals, which can result in people feeling blamed and stigmatised. The Team of Life invites young people to share their stories, skills and knowledge and helps them to identify key support people or team-mates in their lives. Building a sense of connected identity in this way enables young people to recognise that they are not alone and empowers them to access support. Following the success of pilot groups with schools we are now training practitioners in mental health, schools and community settings to deliver this evidence-based approach, see [here](#) to find out more. ”



Informal Get Togethers

Each month we hold informal get togethers, giving our members the chance to connect with one another and chat. Its a safe space to build relationships, share news, check in with one another and discuss any challenges we may be facing.

In May, we co-faciliated the informal get together with Connection Coalition member and Zzjimi founder Melanie Coutinho. She has shared a with us a little about what Zzjimi does and her experience co-facilitating:

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A central Hub for Charities, Community and Commercial organisations, Zzjimi offers an additional platform to promote events, attract volunteers/fundraisers and raise awareness of their work. Our Hub is different, four search methods and a 24/7 personalised Wishlist option, empowers users to easily find what they want, creating positive experiences for them to reach out and connect with others.

Zzjimi offers anyone experiencing loneliness or isolation, extensive choices to consider when taking those small, tentative, vital steps toward inclusion.

Co-facilitating the informal get together, was an invaluable opportunity to inform members of the benefits of using Zzjimi, irrespective of their organisations' size or niche. It also raised an awareness of our site and its' unique properties and encouraged connection and networking.

The breakout sessions allowed members to explore how Zzjimi could be useful to them, and a number of them are in the process of registering/uploading their events.

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June Informal Get Together x Great Get Together

June saw the Month of Community which is a fantastic opportunity for organisations, large or small, to organise or get involved in events taking place in their local communities – it was a busy time for Connection Coalition members! For our informal get together in June we wanted to take the time to shine a light and celebrate all that our members have done throughout this busy month. Here are a few examples:

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A Warwickshire County Council project which aims to reduce loneliness and social isolation throughout the county has awarded funding to 58 groups and individuals to provide local support with a share of a £47,000 grant.

During Loneliness Awareness Week, Warwickshire County Council held several workshops for funding recipients, encouraging them to network with each other and helping them to understand how their individual initiatives fit into the countywide aims for increasing support available for those experiencing loneliness.

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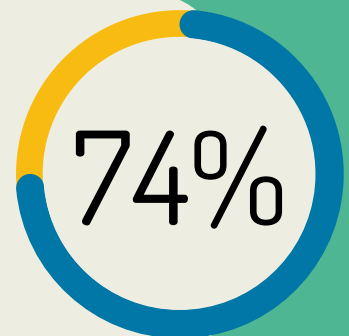


MHA Communities Winchester set up a Public Living Room in a Winchester park on July 9th. This will become a monthly opportunity to connect with those in the community, with the next one taking place in August.

Member report: We asked members about the challenges they are facing, how hopeful they're feeling and what they want from the future of the Connection Coalition.

This Spring, we shared a survey with our members to ask them about their experiences, the challenges they are facing and what they need from the future of the Connection Coalition. We created this as the funding for the Connection Coalition only lasts until December 2022, so in order to work out the best course of action for our members, we thought it important to ask them directly what they would like to see in our future.

When asked about the role of the Connection Coalition, 74% of member survey respondents believe that the Connection Coalition is uniquely positioned to connect organisations working to build social connection, and the vast majority would like to see the Coalition continue in some way.

A donut chart with a blue outer ring and a yellow inner ring. The blue ring represents 37% of the total, and the yellow ring represents the remaining 63%. The text '37%' is displayed in the center of the chart.

37%

When asked whether the Connection Coalition had enabled collaboration and sharing, 37% of respondents said they had collaborated in some way with at least one other Connection Coalition member as a result of their participation in the Coalition.

The two areas that members value most about the Connection Coalition and feel are unique to us are: **representation, relevance and accessibility** for small and locally-rooted organisations, and our **informal, open and collaborative approach**.

Read more here: <https://www.connectioncoalition.org.uk/news>

National work



Alongside providing a space for individuals to come together and form meaningful connections, the Connection Coalition and Jo Cox Foundation have been involved in discussions on a national level around tackling loneliness.

Our CEO, Su Moore, attended a consultation DCMS hosted on the Government's Levelling Up Strategy. She took the opportunity to promote the work of the Connection Coalition members and their openness to collaborate and inform larger bodies on what we are all thinking.

Within this consultation, DCMS announced that they are considering a 3 year fund, with the ambitions to:

Empower communities to take sustained action on volunteering and loneliness.

Enrich lives by connecting communities and improving accessibility of volunteering in levelling up areas.

Strengthen the evidence base on what works and why, to influence other areas to take action and to inform the next spending round.

When attending a Meta event showcasing the importance of the Loneliness WhatsApp bot, Su had another fantastic opportunity to talk to Prince Charles and discuss with him the importance of work around loneliness. The Connection Coalition WhatsApp Bot has been successful in providing people with an anonymous way to reach out for help or support.

Ongoing connection enhancers

Facebook group

Members are invited to join and directly connect with each other. They are able to post their events and resources to share with others.

Active members contact list

An evolving document, this is shared at informal get togethers. Members are invited to add their own details, describe the support they can provide others and the support they are looking for, and then connect.

Events hosted by other organisations

We are often invited to attend and/or speak at other organisations events. Whenever possible, we will attend these and share the opportunity with Connection Coalition members.

Connect with us!

If you have questions about anything in this report or have ideas for new connections or collaborations, we'd love to hear from you.

Please contact: zoe@jocoxfoundation.org

www.connectioncoalition.org.uk