



Leicestershire
Communities



Leicestershire
County Council

How to start a Friendly Connected Community

The Friendly Connected Community is a simple concept that encourages and suggests ways for communities to be more resilient, and to help individuals to feel welcome, supported, safe and integrated wherever they live in Leicestershire.



Starting a Friendly

Connected Community

A Friendly Connected Communities approach can support any initiative that is looking to increase collaboration and achieve inclusiveness; working with more than one group or individual can enhance the opportunities to achieve this in your local street, a group of streets, town or a village.

There are several ways to start a Friendly Connected Community depending on the issues, local interests and support available in different communities. The questions below set out some of the things you might want to consider when thinking about Friendly Connected Communities.

Is there a **topic, issue or event in the local area that would benefit from, and that could be used to promote, wider community involvement?** For instance, a community fete, dance, Christmas celebration or park run should be designed so that people who find it difficult to get their voices heard or participate in the life of their communities are included. This can be people who have caring responsibilities, some mental health difficulties or experience a situation that makes them more lonely or isolated. The main objective is to think beyond familiar connections to consider how more people, and other groups can also enjoy these community events.

Are there existing **connections in the community?** Scouts, church groups, Age UK, Local Area Coordinators, Dementia Cafes, Friendly Bench, coffee mornings, etc. A Friendly community DOES NOT need all these groups, but more extensive connections with people can help to develop empathic and inclusive solutions and a greater sense of cohesion in the community.

Are there any **local champions, (local individuals that are already active in the community)?** These people are usually committed to support the area where they live and will also know many others in the local area. They can help to make more connections and bring people together (often they are doing that already).

Who can be Involved?

Everyone, including, local residents, local councillors (some activists are also parish councillors), existing local groups, Local Area Coordinators (where available), Age UK, District or Borough Council services, etc..

How do you recognise a Friendly Connected Community in Leicestershire?

The key characteristics are as follows:

- There are at least two organisations or two individuals working together towards common goals (such as improving access for everyone to local facilities or facilitating access to outdoor spaces or perhaps supporting people who are lonely or isolated to engaged and participate in their community)
- More than two regular activities (fetes, community days, etc.) which take place in the community support individuals or families that may find it difficult to attend (e.g. through dementia or autism friendly initiatives, work with children at risk of being excluded from mainstream education, low income families, etc.)
- Activities and projects are designed in a collaborative manner, seeking support from people with different needs.
- Everyone who lives in the community is accepted and this is reflected in facilities and activities that include diverse communities and facilitate participation.
- There are several people supporting actions, activities, programmes or projects that link individuals and groups.



What makes a Friendly Connected Community sustainable?

- Projects and local initiatives **that support, accept and facilitate a better understanding of different communities** and this approach is demonstrated through wider community participation and involvement.
- **Good communication between different groups and projects.** This indicates that a 'Friendly Connected Communities approach' is becoming joined up and does not depend on one project or initiative.
- **Individuals from communities are committed to participating in events and projects which support greater inclusion,** displaying tolerant, accepting and accommodating values.
- **Individual groups form small, and informal clusters of individuals to benefit from common experiences,** funding opportunities and learning that can be replicated in their own organisations.
- **Regular but informal and engaging opportunities for different groups to come together** (music festival, local cinema, appealing to wider swathes of the community). These help to cement and forge more sustainable alliances, based on common interest and community.
- **At least one champion within the community.** A champion is someone who knows the community, has an interest in bringing different people together and who is able to support a more connected community. This is not an additional role, but often the recognition of an existing individual who is already connected to the community.

