

## Online connectivity supporting local people who offer care and support in their community



Community Catalysts are building a network of small enterprises that can offer care and support to people in their local community. Through a partnership with Westmorland and Furness Council, they are working with local people to develop new enterprises within the South Lakeland and Eden area, that can provide support to people in their homes.

We talked to Hannah Turner about how access to online connectivity supports them in what they do.

Hannah said “The community enterprises we work with make such a difference to people’s lives, enabling them to be more independent when they need help with things, such as cleaning, cooking, or help with washing and dressing and taking trips out in the local area. We offer clear and simple guidance, help to put all the essential paperwork in place and connect with relevant organisations”.

Hannah went on “online connectivity is such a great anchor for much of what we do. From a communication perspective it allows us to manage incoming correspondence and send out attachments and links to relevant information and guide community enterprises to information for example on how to register with HMRC and how to use the online DBS check application”.

“We collate all community enterprises on our ‘Small Good Stuff’ site which is a central portal hosted by Community Catalysts listing all community enterprises working in a selected area and the services they provide. Those who have used the portal have found it a great help. When faced with searching for such support, customers can have the confidence that those listed here as having been through the Community Catalyst Development Programme are working in a way which is safe and legal.”

“Services like ours really emphasise the need for connectivity across our county. Accessibility of such online services is so important and whereas we can offer help via other means, having an online presence is definitely our most used method of contact”.

“Social media is a great tool in supporting us in spreading the word of the service we provide, both in reaching out to community enterprises and highlighting the support we offer to service users. As our social media following grows, we post regularly to keep our page current. This can be done when in the office on the laptop or when out and about on a handheld device, the flexibility this offers is great”.

“From a personal perspective, a good connection is key to my role within Community Catalyst. I don’t actually have a fixed office base, so I need to find a connection wherever I go so I can work on the move whether that be from home, from a local library or from a coffee shop. I will often have to log in for an online meeting, to download my emails or to access online information. I think nowadays there are more and more public spaces offering free Wi-Fi services, it is something which dare I say we are growing to expect, and something which definitely supports me in fulfilling my role”.

“Since beginning our work in the South Lakes and Eden areas, and as the number of community enterprises we work with has increased, we have started a WhatsApp group to build an element of peer support to those who are providing care and support. I like the idea of being able to support each other and think this provides the perfect arena to do so”.

Hannah added “lots of people in Cumbria need some extra help to live the way they want to, perhaps because they are older, disabled or have a long-term health condition. If you are interested in setting up a community enterprise, maybe on your own or with others, offering care and support in Eden or South Lakes, please don’t hesitate to get in touch. You don’t need any care or business experience, just to know what good care looks like.”

If you would like to receive more information regarding the program, or to have an informal chat regarding the opportunities available, visit <https://www.communitycatalysts.co.uk/project/work-for-yourself-care-help-at-home/#Top> or contact [hannah.turner@communitycatalysts.co.uk](mailto:hannah.turner@communitycatalysts.co.uk) , 07435 943901

You can find small enterprises in your area on the Small Good Stuff directory: [www.smallgoodstuff.co.uk/cumbria](http://www.smallgoodstuff.co.uk/cumbria)

Find out more about the connectivity options in your area by visiting the Connecting Cumbria website [www.connectingcumbria.org.uk](http://www.connectingcumbria.org.uk) or contact the team at [info@connectingcumbria.org.uk](mailto:info@connectingcumbria.org.uk)

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