



## Business Connectors

### The Business Case

Business in the community (BITC) exists to create healthy communities with successful business at their heart. A Business Connector is a talented employee from either the private or public sector who is seconded to BITC to work across a specific city or area which typically has greater social needs. Trained by BITC, they seek to understand local needs and match them to business objectives. They bring together local businesses and community organisations to create sustainable and rewarding collaborative partnerships across sectors, to make a positive difference.

To date, 53 organisations have seconded a total of 277 Business Connectors in 131 locations.

Over the last 6 years £45.4 million has been leveraged as our Business Connectors work in communities of greatest need. Our pioneering participating organisations tell us they are seeing benefits in the following ways:

**Building trust and enhancing reputation:** Seconding Business Connectors can help build and improve your organisation's profile and reputation as a force for good among customers and key stakeholders, at local and national level. A food producer who seconded with us, found that seconding in a location where they were closing a key site, was crucial in ensuring the business left a positive legacy and also mitigating any damage to their reputation in the area.

**Improving local commercial performance:** There has been evidence from retail and banking Business Connectors that performance of the local store/branch has benefited tangibly. Exposure to feedback from customers and small businesses has given insights into customer trends and attitudes, products and services, helping to identify new marketplace opportunities.

**Increasing employee engagement and loyalty:** A Business Connector can increase employee engagement indicators in a local workplace/depot/office by facilitating volunteering opportunities for employees and building their local relationships in the community. This can benefit low performing sites, new branches / depots or locations. Once part of the network, participating organisations can benefit from these engagement opportunities in all their sites where BITC have a Business Connector - even if they are not seconding in these locations themselves.

**Developing organisational networks and supporting supply chains:** The recruitment model initiated by Anglian Water in Fenlands has enabled a group of locally aware and involved businesses from their supply chain to work collaboratively to enable a Business Connector to be released, creating a new depth to their partnership working.

**Delivering organisational community investment objectives:** The insight into real local community issues and needs witnessed during a secondment, enables Business Connectors to feedback local intelligence into corporate strategies. Seconding a Business Connector in a location where you are honouring Social Value Commitments can add real and tangible value to the work you are already undertaking. A utilities company seconded a Business Connector into an area where they were planning to construct a major new pipeline. By working closely with the community, it enabled them to secure planning and build and enhance local stakeholder relationships.

*"The pre-employment work I've done with Leyland for the new depot has changed existing thinking around online applications and group interviews to help steer us to include significant groups of the population who are currently excluded from our recruitment offer."* Business Connector

When our Business Connectors return to their companies they continue their relationship with the community as volunteers or trustees, and become role models for their colleagues.



**Providing a unique opportunity to network across sectors:** The diversity of seconding organisations gives Business Connectors the opportunity to integrate with other sectors and see how other organisational cultures differ. They build long lasting relationships, which in an everchanging market, prove invaluable to open up new and innovative opportunities, and enable organisations from different sectors to work collaboratively together.

**Developing talent and securing leadership succession:** The personal development opportunities that a secondment as a Business Connector provides are significant and can equip future leaders with a broader perspective:

*“In seconding Business Connectors from Fujitsu, I have been struck by the way our people have developed, both as individual and as managers, in just six months. That’s why I am increasing the number of secondees and including the business connectors programme as part of our overall approach to talent development, previously we may have sent our potential leaders to Harvard or INSEAD, but now if people want to be a senior leader in Fujitsu, I will be asking ‘have they been a Business Connector.’”*

**Duncan Tait, Head of EMEA and Fujitsu Group Executive Committee member**

There is a short film about Business Connectors that you can watch here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NsLj7t9L1Eo>

## BITC can help you with...

**Marketing the role and engaging key stakeholders;** defining the recruitment process to identify the right secondees.

**Media, PR and Press guidance;** with our communications team to help you make the most of this profile opportunity.

**Regular updates about Business Connectors;** highlighting the difference your commitment has made and specific stories about the achievements of your Business Connectors.

**Opportunities to network with other participating organisations** from across the public and private sector, to share community insights and learnings from their experiences.

**Regular evaluation meetings** with key parties to assess the progress of the secondment, particularly from a development perspective.

## Participating organisations

