



# Access Panel Network

## Training Guides

A guide to  
networking

You don't need to be a big shot or the most outgoing person in the world to network effectively but the exchange of information; ideas and contacts can make a huge difference. In this guide we will look at what networking is and how to do it.

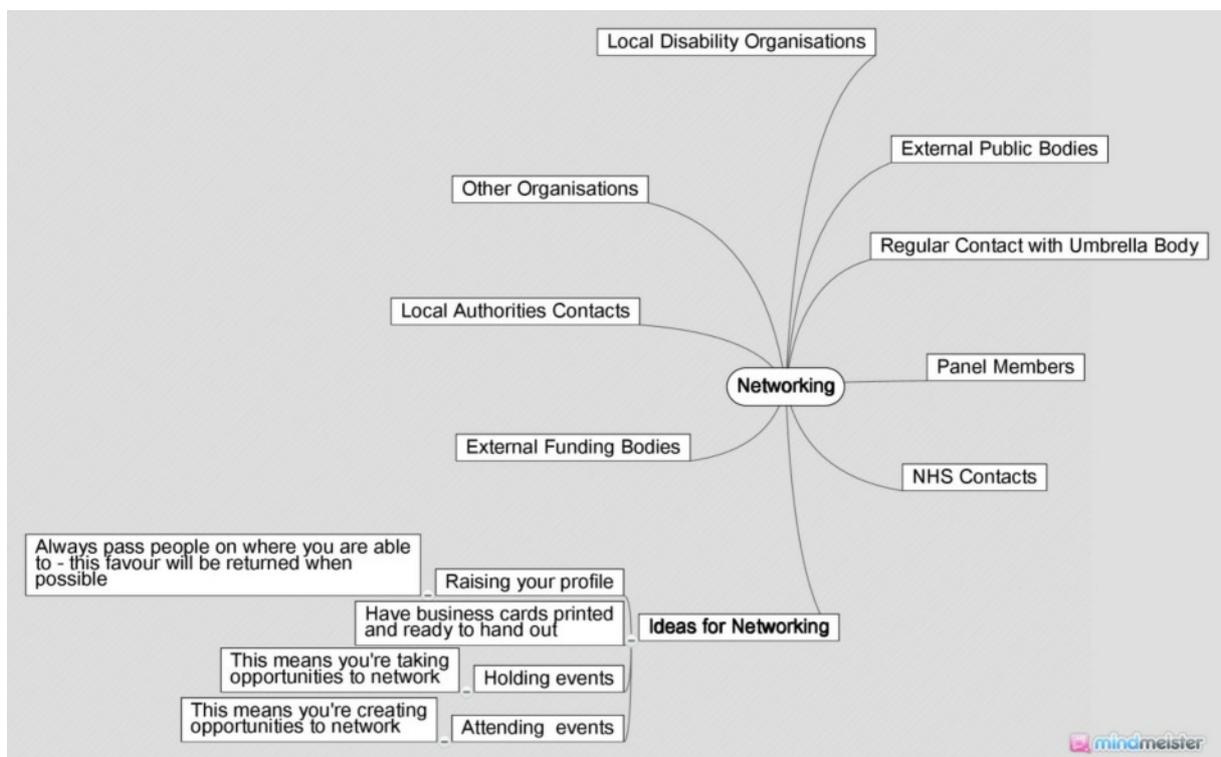


# What is networking?

The definition of Networking is:

Creating a group of acquaintances and associates and keeping it active through regular communication for mutual benefit.

Networking is based on the question “how can I help?” and not “what can I get?”<sup>1</sup>



Networking is the exchange of information or services among individuals, groups, or institutions; specifically the cultivation of productive relationships for employment or business.<sup>2</sup>

Networking for both your Access Panel and individual members is essential if the Panel and members are to grow in knowledge, stature and breadth of activity. The sustainability of the individuals and organisations that you make contact with is equally essential if the Panel is to be successful. It will make sure you continue to evolve and be better known in your own local community, as well as part of the extensive network nationally.

<sup>1</sup> [www.businessdictionary.com](http://www.businessdictionary.com)

<sup>2</sup> [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com)

An Access Panel can be in danger if it does not continually seek to increase its membership because the existing members will end up getting too much to do. It is important that as volunteers the members can put in the amount of work they feel comfortable with. Without people knowing that the Access Panel exists and that people can join; the Panel will eventually begin to stagnate and both the amount of work and the quality of work will be adversely affected.

Networking can include connections with many groups or organisations at a local and national level.

## Some essential contacts to network with

- Local Authorities:
  - Chief Executives
  - Equalities Officers
  - Planning Officers
  - Building Standards
  - Education Departments
- Local Disability Organisations
  - External Public Bodies
  - NHS Contacts
  - External Funding Bodies
  - Local Carers and Support Groups

## Networking contacts

Traditionally, Access Panels have been the first point of contact for Local Authorities and other Public Bodies such as the NHS on any access issues for disabled people in the area. Most Panels have been involved with Building Standards Officers and scrutinise Planning Applications to identify any and all outstanding access issues that may have been missed or are inadequate. Access Panels are also involved in national consultations, scrutinising Council and NHS policy documents and as such will usually work very closely with a number of departments across both the Council and NHS. More and more Access Panels are becoming involved in wider equality issues too. It is, therefore, imperative to create close networking with these two main public organisations and others to enable trust, respect and to help them to view the Access Panel as a professional and reputable organisation.

Many Access Panels publish Access Guides, leaflets and posters to raise awareness about social inclusion and their work. Many Panels also work closely with local businesses, organisations and others to achieve good access for disabled people. Some Access Panels have introduced innovative ways to promote themselves, for

example, Panels have given local organisations and business awards in recognition of good practice.

In making these network contacts in the first place, and of course sustaining them, will inevitably raise more awareness of the Access Panel and the work that is done. This will also have the positive effect of increasing the membership of the Panel, and being involved with more aspects of daily living life, and the public policies that can have such an impact on the lives of disabled people. These positive working relationships are important if the Access Panel is to survive and continue to evolve and develop into the professionally regarded organisation that it already is.

## Other equality organisations

The importance of networking with other organisations that represent the 9 characteristics of the Equality Act is that the 1 characteristic that can broach across any of the others is Disability. Also, we must not constantly be looking at disability in isolation but rather at people. We must look at people and access more holistically because it will not only be disability that affects their lives but a number of aspects of their existence.

The 9 characteristics of the Equality Act 2010 are:

- **Age** – where this is referred to, it refers to a person belonging to a particular age (e.g. 32 year olds) or range of ages (e.g. 18 – 30 year olds).
- **Disability** – a person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on that person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.
- **Gender Reassignment** – the process of transitioning from one gender to another.
- **Marriage and Civil Partnership** – marriage is defined as a 'union between a man and a woman'. Same-sex couples can have their relationships legally recognised as 'civil partnerships'. Civil partners must be treated the same as married couples on a wide range of legal matters.
- **Pregnancy and Maternity** - maternity refers to the period after the birth, and is linked to maternity leave in the employment context. In the non-work context, protection against maternity discrimination is for 26 weeks after giving birth, and this includes treating a woman unfavourably because she is breastfeeding.
- **Race** – refers to a group of people defined by their race, colour and nationality (including citizenship) ethnic or national origins.
- **Religion and Belief** – religion has the meaning usually given to it but belief includes religious and philosophical beliefs including lack of belief (e.g. Atheism). Generally, a belief should affect your life choices or the way you live, for it to be included in the definition.
- **Sex** – a man or a woman.

- **Sexual Orientation** – whether a person’s sexual attraction is towards their own sex, the opposite sex or to both sexes.<sup>1</sup>

It is imperative that as many people with a variety of abilities are represented on the Panel, therefore, the importance of networking with other disability and carer organisations in your local community is of paramount importance.

In a number of areas, networking has also proven to be an effective way of quickly building up the membership of the actual Access Panel. The second but by no means less important reason, is that the more varied the representation is on the Panel, the more knowledge is available when striving to enhance access for all disabled people who both live and may visit your Panel area.

## The positive points of networking

Making contacts with the relevant people and organisations will have a positive effect on your Access Panel. It can raise awareness of the work of the Access Panel and promote it in a professional and positive manner.

Holding regular networking events, such as meeting with neighbouring Panels, open days for disabled people and carers to come along and find out what an Access Panel does, has many advantages. Many people still do not know of the existence of the Access Panel. This is an urgent and extremely important issue that all Access Panels should address with the support of SDEF who can help the Access Panels with advice on how to raise their profile. It is also good practice to have a show stand at events that the local Council, NHS and other organisations are putting together. If you find out about one, just contact them and ask; the worst that can happen is that they may say no, but most will be grateful to the Panel for asking and agreeing to be part of any event that may be happening in your own area.

## External funding bodies

Networking with External Funding Bodies (see Appendix 1) is important if an Access Panel is to explore avenues of available funding. If an Access Panel has better financial stability, their work will increase and the Panel will become better known by being able to have a more varied and targeted means of promotion. It will be easier to purchase necessary equipment and meet the training needs of the members.

Better promotion will mean that it will be easier to increase a more varied membership across more of the protected characteristics of the Equality Act, and the public at large.

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<sup>1</sup> Taken from [www.equalityhumanrights.com](http://www.equalityhumanrights.com)

Regular contact with SDEF as the Umbrella Body will ensure that a more targeted and tailored package of support will be available. The Panel will be kept up to date with consultations and always informed of upcoming events and news. Constant and regular contact with SDEF is imperative for the future of both the Access Panel network and of course SDEF as the Umbrella Body. It also assists SDEF by supplying regular and accurate records and statistics that SDEF now requires to ensure that the funding streams and networks are sustainable and constant.

## The importance of word of mouth

### Effectiveness

People are more likely to use a service when recommended by a person they know.

### Trust

People trust Word of Mouth more than advertisements, because it comes from a real person they know. This helps your service gain people's trust.

### Promote and market your panel

Word of Mouth promotion and marketing helps you to build your name with the help of referrals. You can use your contacts, volunteers and other supporters to promote and offer your services.

### Cost effective

Word of Mouth Marketing is a cost effective marketing strategy, because it spreads the information about your services through communities and networks, with minimum investment. This can be both social and business.

### Provide a good service

If someone is happy about your service, then you will probably enjoy free, word of mouth marketing.

## Appendix 1 - List of national funding bodies

Funding Body	Contact Person	Position in Organisation	Telephone Number	Email/Website
Association of Charitable Foundations	David Emerson	Chief Executive	020 7255 4499	<a href="mailto:acf@acf.org.uk">acf@acf.org.uk</a>
<b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b> UK wide support organisation for grant-making trusts and foundations of all types				
Awards for All	Chris Holloway	Programme Manager	0141 242 1400	<a href="mailto:scotland@awardsforall.org.uk">scotland@awardsforall.org.uk</a>
<b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b> Special lottery grants programme for small community groups looking for small sum of money				
Big Lottery Fund	Dharmendra Kanani	Fund Director for Scotland	0141 242 1400	<a href="mailto:enquiries.scotland@biglotteryfund.org.uk">enquiries.scotland@biglotteryfund.org.uk</a>
<b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b> Awards grants to education, health and environment projects throughout the UK				
BT Community Connections	Simone Perry	Project Director	020 7299 4163	<a href="mailto:info@btcommunityconnections.com">info@btcommunityconnections.com</a>
<b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b> Award scheme that connects community groups across the UK to the internet				

Funding Body	Contact Person	Position in Organisation	Telephone Number	Email/Website
Charities Aid Foundation (Main Office)	Mr John Low	Chief Executive	01732 520000	<a href="mailto:enquiries@cafonline.org">enquiries@cafonline.org</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  Provides specialist financial services to other charities and their supporters. Committed to increasing the resources of charities worldwide and helping individual and corporate donors add value to their generosity.</p>				
Community Development Exchange (CDX)	Mr Nick Beddows	Chief Executive	0114 241 2760	<a href="mailto:admin@cdx.org.uk">admin@cdx.org.uk</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  Works towards bringing about positive changes towards social justice and equality by using and promoting the values and approaches of community development.</p>				
Community Foundations Network	Mr Stephen Hammersley	Chief Executive Officer	020 7713 9326	<a href="mailto:network@communityfoundations.org.uk">network@communityfoundations.org.uk</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  A fast growing way of giving, community foundations are charitable trusts that promote and support local voluntary and community activity.</p>				

Funding Body	Contact Person	Position in Organisation	Telephone Number	Email/Website
Development Trusts Association Scotland	Mr Ian Cooke	Director	0131 220 2456	<a href="mailto:ian@dtascot.org.uk">ian@dtascot.org.uk</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  A community-based regeneration network and promotes the work of development trusts that aim to bring about social, economic and environmental renewal. It aims to bring about a successful development trust in every community that wants one. It contributes towards the economic and social health of communities in the UK and focuses on community-based regeneration.</p>				
Directory of Social Change	Debra Allcock Tyler	Chief Executive	020 7391 4800	<a href="mailto:enquiries@dsc.org.uk">enquiries@dsc.org.uk</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  Helps voluntary and community organisations to thrive through providing advice on: how to raise the money they need; how to manage their resources to maximum effect; how to influence the right people; what their rights and responsibilities are; how to plan and develop for the future.</p>				
Esmee Fairbairn Foundation	Dawn Austwick	Chief Executive	0207 8123 700	<a href="mailto:info@esmeefairbairn.org.uk">info@esmeefairbairn.org.uk</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  Make grants in four programme areas: Arts &amp; Heritage, Education, Environment and Social Development.</p>				

Funding Body	Contact Person	Position in Organisation	Telephone Number	Email/Website
Government Funding  <b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b> An online portal to grants for the voluntary and community sector from the following funders: Department for Education and Skills; Department of Health; Home Office; Office of the Deputy Prime Minister; Government Offices for the Regions .				<a href="http://www.governmentfunding.org.uk">www.governmentfunding.org.uk</a>
Lloyds TSB Foundation for Scotland  <b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b> The Foundation supports grassroots charities which enable people - especially disabled and disadvantaged people - to play a fuller role in society. Funds are awarded to a wide range of community groups and priority areas include children, young people, ageing population, parenting, physical and mental Equalities, support for people at risk, substance misuse and development of people and resources.	Mary Craig	Chief Executive	0131 444 4020	<a href="http://www.ltsbfoundationforscotland.org.uk">www.ltsbfoundationforscotland.org.uk</a>
SCVO – Funding information for voluntary sector  <b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b> This section of the SCVO website provides reliable and up to date information on all aspects of raising funds.	Mr Martin Sime	Chief Executive	0131 556 3882	<a href="mailto:enquiries@scvo.org.uk">enquiries@scvo.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.scvo.org.uk/scvo/Information/Money.aspx">www.scvo.org.uk/scvo/Information/Money.aspx</a>

Funding Body	Contact Person	Position in Organisation	Telephone Number	Email/Website
Tudor Trust	Mr Christopher Graves	Director	020 7727 8522	<a href="http://www.tudortrust.org.uk">www.tudortrust.org.uk</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  Tudor is an independent grant-making charitable trust, which exists to enhance people's quality of life. Focus grants on projects in England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland; particularly where there is significant deprivation in urban, rural and coastal areas.</p>				
Voluntary Action Fund	Mr Keith Wimbles	Chief Executive	01383 620780	<a href="mailto:info@voluntaryactionfund.org.uk">info@voluntaryactionfund.org.uk</a> <a href="http://www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk">www.voluntaryactionfund.org.uk</a>
<p><b>Criteria for Funding from Organisation</b>  The Voluntary Action Fund (VAF) provides grants to assist voluntary projects in Scotland.</p>				





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