First Connections
Network NE

First Connections Network NE presents

The Ambassador Pack

Why the people who connect our region are the ones it remembers.

Newcastle · Darlington · Sunderland · Durham · Tees Valley



Before you read on

This isn’t a how-to. It’s the why.

You probably already do this. You host the room, tell the story or make the introduction. This pack explains why doing it under the First Connections banner gives back far more than it asks.

Our guiding principles

01 No barrier to entry

Getting started in some networking groups can cost £1,000+ a year. Our monthly coffee mornings are free to attend.

02 Fewer hurdles, more success

We remove barriers across the region so businesses can focus on doing their best work.

03 Open to everyone

Every sector, every business size, every town. Nobody priced out, nobody left out.

Who we are

Making the North East feel smaller.

An independent, founder-run network adding social value to our home region. It began in February 2026 with one free coffee morning in Darlington, and grew from there.



Founders Tom Charlton, Sam Binns, Andy Bartlett and Jack Sheriff

The network today

The fastest-growing business network in the North East.



Every month

Rooms that feel personal

Coffee mornings hosted in independent high-street venues.

Across the year

Major flagship events

From Westminster to Durham Castle.

Recognised

By councils, MPs and leaders

Trusted by the people shaping the region.

Rooted locally

Five home locations

Newcastle, Darlington, Sunderland, Durham and Tees Valley, with more to come...

One idea runs through everything

North East business success comes first.

Part one

Lead with social value.



The philosophy behind every First Connections room.

The “Social First" model

Give first. The brand follows.

The strongest brands rarely sell the product. They back the scene around it, and people come to them.

Ambassadors work the same way. You give to your local community **without expectation**: hosting the room, making the introduction, telling the high-street story.

The reputation that follows is yours.

How giving compounds

From generosity to inbound trust.

01

You give

Host, connect and share with no strings attached.

02

Others rise

Businesses get matched. High-street stories get told.

03

You're known

Your name becomes linked with the good happening locally.

04

Trust comes to you

Relationships form on their own. No pitch required.

A different kind of room

Relationships replace the sales pitch.

The usual networking

Paid memberships and pressure to join several groups

Hard selling from the first handshake

You chase every lead yourself

The First Connections way

Free to attend, open to every sector

Matchmaking, not pitching

Inbound trust brings people to you

Part two

What you receive.



Access | Promotion | Support | Network

01 · Access & introductions

A seat in the rooms that shape the region.

Ambassadors are placed alongside high-level delivery partners.

- **Local authorities**
- **MPs**
- **Policy makers**
- **Major brands like Lumo**



The company you keep

The network already works alongside these partners.

Sponsor, Trade NE

Lola McEvoy, MP for Darlington

Travel partner

Lumo

Regional government

North East Mayoral Strategic Authority

Supporting partner

NatWest

Universities

Durham, Newcastle, Northumbria and Sunderland

02 · Uncapped self-promotion

No pitching in the room. No limits outside it.

Events stay pitch-free so the room stays open. Beyond that, you have complete freedom to promote your business through our channels.

Website

first-connections.co.uk

Newsletters

Sent across the whole network

Social channels

Organic and uncapped



03 · Operational support

You host. We do ‘most’ of the admin.

Your Eventbrite listings

You manage your own listings, published well in advance with the right venue and times. Our team supports you behind the scenes.

Central marketing

Your events promoted across the whole network.

Digital integrations

Including the upcoming First Connections app platform.

You’re never hosting alone.

A dedicated point of contact

Sam Binns, co-founder, is your direct line into the network.

A private ambassador group chat

Share ideas and collaborate with hosts in other towns.



Part three

A bigger stage.

Your local room connects to regional and national moments.



Marquee events

A year-round ecosystem that keeps growing.

Not one big night a year. Regular rooms every month, flagship moments across the calendar, and new events whenever our network asks for them.

Every month **Coffee mornings in Newcastle, Darlington, Sunderland, Durham and Tees Valley**

Just a few examples from our calendar

Westminster

Trade North East

North East leaders at the Houses of Parliament, 25 May 2027.

Awards

NE High Street Heroes

Championing local businesses, celebrated at a Gala Night at Durham Castle.

Founders & investors

First Founders

Bringing the region's universities together with investors.

Supply chain

NEEPO Supplier & Procurement Day

Connecting North East suppliers with the buyers who need them.

And many more **New events added all the time, shaped by what our network needs**

Who ambassadors are

A structureless structure.

No rigid corporate rules. No single mould. Ambassadors are trusted people who bring the region together in their own way for their chosen location.

If you host a room,	**Event hosts**
If you hold a mic,	**Podcast hosts**
If you have a following,	**Content creators**
If you run a business,	**Business owners**
If you know your neighbours,	**Community groups**

you’re already one of us.

If you care about opportunity on your doorstep, there’s a place for you.

What keeps it special

Three things that protect the value for everyone.

Protect the vibe

Relaxed and friendly, focused on matchmaking businesses. No aggressive pitching.

Embrace diversity

Every business size and every sector welcome, in the room and on our platforms.

Plan ahead

Hosts lock in free local venues and dates 2–3 months out, and keep their Eventbrite listings accurate, so marketing has time to work.

Built on trust, not contracts

No contracts. No lock-in. Just a promise to your community.

There’s no rigid contract and no 12-month commitment. You’re running a business too, and we respect that.

This role works because people trust you, and because you care about the opportunities on your doorstep. That trust is what we ask you to protect if you ever step away.

If you step down

60 days’ notice

Local businesses come to rely on your room, your introductions and your monthly date in the diary. Notice means nobody is left without that.

Leave a legacy

Pass the torch

Choose someone you trust from your own community and co-host a handover event. The connections you built keep growing, and your hometown keeps its room.

In summary

Why it's worth it.

01 A reputation built on generosity, not sales

02 Introductions to MPs, authorities and major brands

03 Uncapped promotion across our channels

04 Admin support, so you can focus on people

05 A region that grows, and you with it

First Connections
Network NE

Become an ambassador

Put the North East first.

Start the conversation with the team:

office@first-connections.co.uk

first-connections.co.uk

