



Working with Connexions

Connexions is a multi-disciplinary Government service offering a range of guidance and support for 13 to 19 year olds to help make the transition to adult life a smooth one. It provides personal advisers in schools, one-stop centres and elsewhere, together with a range of information and back-up services. Connexions is for all 13 to 19 year olds, differentiated to reflect individual needs and the support they already receive.

Connexions is underway in 50 LEAs. Connexions Partnerships covering a further tranche of areas are preparing for an April 2002 start. This note sets out the Government's expectations of both schools and Connexions for effective partnership working.

It builds on previous information to schools (see related documents), superseding them in any instances of difference.

Action required

School managers should prepare for negotiation with their existing or emerging Connexions Partnership, so that information, guidance and support for pupils from Connexions is coherent with school provision and priorities. This should lead to an annual partnership agreement. Managers may wish to use their own networks to influence the planning of Connexions locally.

Further copies of this note

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Further information about Connexions

The Connexions website www.connexions.gov.uk contains recent guidance to Connexions Partnerships and on the universal Connexions service (*Connexions for all*) and previous notes to schools.

Headteachers & senior managers in secondary schools

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Related documents:

Establishing the Connexions
Service in schools
November 2000
(0302/2000)

Implementing Connexions
in schools June 2001
(0033/2001)

1. Across England, the Connexions service is either already operating or is being planned by new Connexions Partnerships for a start during the year beginning April 2002. School managers now have growing opportunities to have an input to this cross-Government service, whether in respect of their own school or by influencing the broader plans and activity of Connexions Partnerships.

2. This note outlines the vision of Connexions for 13 to 19 year olds in schools, and summarises recent guidance to Partnerships which will shape their business and delivery plans for 2002-03.

Connexions – an holistic response

3. Connexions is a fully inclusive and differentiated service. It aims to make help available to all 13 to 19 year olds so that they can participate effectively in formal and informal learning, achieve their potential and be ready for the varied challenges of adulthood, work, citizenship and ongoing learning. Young people can expect access to a service that will cater for their needs, whether straightforward or complex, as and when they require it.

4. This vision is very broad. Connexions is not only for **all** young people, it involves access to information, guidance or support on the wide range of topics which either limit the learning and progression of young people or can support their personal development. Connexions' provision includes, but is much more extensive than, the help on learning and career choices that careers services have long provided.

5. The document *Connexions for all*, published in October 2001 (see the Connexions website), explains what young people can expect from Connexions in different settings, including schools. There

should be a range of provision delivered through a partnership between Connexions itself and a school, in pursuit of many common goals. In this way, specific Connexions activities, which can vary between schools, can build on and complement the provision and support systems of individual schools. The role of Connexions in supporting the progression and inclusion of 13-19 year olds is likely to take on new importance as Government takes forward its plans for the 14-19 phase of learning, outlined in the White Paper *Schools: Achieving Success*.

Services to pupils

6. All pupils can expect access to a personal adviser (PA), whether on school premises, in one-stop shops, in community settings or through telephone or internet-based access. PAs will work closely with school staff to identify and prioritise pupils who need more sustained personal support. Referrals may come from school or other agency staff, as well as from pupils themselves or their parents.

7. The Government expects Connexions to make available the services listed below to young people in maintained secondary and special schools. Access or delivery can be by Connexions staff or by school or other staff working to a specification agreed with Connexions.

- Access by pupils to impartial information and guidance on learning and career options, including through a school's careers/Connexions library;
- Access by pupils to advice and contact with the Service, on issues within the scope of Connexions;
- Access by pupils to intensive and/or multi-agency services to remove barriers to learning;

- Support for those with SEN/LDD, including input to Transition Reviews for pupils with statements of SEN;
- Information about Connexions Card and Education Maintenance Allowances, where these operate, and their benefits for those continuing in learning beyond 16;
- Information about personal development opportunities and how to access them.

8. Personal advisers may undertake varied tasks to deliver these requirements and other priorities agreed with the school. Initial assessment is important, especially for pupils with more complex issues, where the *Connexions Framework for Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review* (published May 2001) guides the work of PAs and links to the SEN Code of Practice.

Services to schools

9. Beyond providing services for pupils, Connexions will offer support to school provision in the following areas. Personal advisers may provide some of this support through their time in a school, but a Connexions Partnership can also draw upon specialists at LEA or partnership level, e.g. on information resources, training or relevant curriculum areas.

- Support to improve attendance and tackle truancy. Although schools retain primary responsibility for attendance, the work of Connexions can enhance school activity and support progress towards targets at school and LEA levels;
- Support for careers education and for careers and broader information to pupils (including careers/Connexions

libraries in schools), continuing the work of careers services. Specialist staff or PAs with the expertise may also support PSHE, citizenship, Key Skills or other work which encourages research and self-management skills and personal development;

- Training for school staff to support careers education, information and guidance. Connexions is funded to continue the work of careers services in this area. Connexions Partnerships will take account of practical issues in releasing teachers when encouraging training;
- Advice and support to help pupils shape the delivery of Connexions in their school, and develop the confidence and skills needed to do so effectively.

Making Connexions work

Allocating resources

10. Connexions Partnerships must spend at least 40% of their central grant on work with 13-16 year olds (both in and out of school) and at least 35% on post-16 work. As an absolute minimum, every maintained secondary school must receive sufficient PA time to provide a day a week contact time with pupils. Allocations must also maintain the level of careers service time given in the year prior to the start of Connexions.

11. As part of wider consultation and engagement with schools, partnerships must ensure that Headteacher representatives are engaged in establishing partnership-wide criteria for allocating time to schools and on any flexibility given to Local Management Committees (LMCs) and local managers to adapt a basic allocation model to local circumstances.

12. Connexions may have operational responsibility for some front-line staff from other agencies (e.g. youth workers or EWOs). If so, an allocation model may include time from those agencies and allow a school to negotiate the balance of time from different professionals through a single process. This may lead in time to multi-agency partnership agreements.

Negotiating partnership agreements

13. A partnership agreement needs to be negotiated between Connexions and each school as the basis for delivery. This will set out the roles for PAs in the school and how the school will integrate Connexions activity with its own provision, and show how PAs will work with school staff. To encourage consistency across their area, a Connexions Partnership should discuss a common framework for agreements with school representatives and other services whose staff operate in schools but not through a Connexions framework (eg EWS, YOT). Key issues for partnership agreements are listed in guidance note 0302/00 and in Connexions Business Planning Guidance (both at www.connexions.gov.uk).

14. Within the national role description for PAs, there should be negotiation to balance the requirements of Connexions (para 7), with the views of pupils and the priorities of the school. The precise functions of Connexions PAs may therefore differ from school to school. Connexions activity may be delivered by one or more PAs in a school, and also by peripatetic specialists.

15. Negotiation of tasks should take account of activity under other initiatives (e.g Excellence in Cities, Healthy School Standard) so that Connexions is complementary and adds value. There is a particular need for clarity of roles where

PAs work alongside EWOs, Learning Mentors and other non-teaching staff to address attendance, attitudinal or behavioural issues. Administration of partnership agreements should be kept to the minimum needed to ensure accountability to the Partnership. Schools are encouraged to dovetail the process with their own strategic planning.

Agreeing the personnel

16. As part of their general engagement with the school sector, Connexions Partnerships should involve Headteacher representatives in agreeing a general specification for new PAs who might be placed in schools. Heads should also be invited to sit on area-wide assessment panels for new PAs. At school level, Connexions managers should offer a Headteacher (and/or the Governing Body in Voluntary schools where Governors are responsible for staff appointments) appropriate PAs from its pool of existing and new staff. The choice of individual(s) to be offered should reflect the mix of Connexions roles negotiated through the partnership agreement and the general ethos of the school.

17. Headteachers (and Governors in Voluntary schools), should meet with, and consider, the offered PA(s). They may seek alternatives from Connexions if individuals are considered to be unsuitable for the school on the grounds of competence or the likelihood of them failing to work effectively within the school's ethos. This veto must comply with the provisions of employment and equality legislation and may not be exercised to undermine the impartiality of guidance by Connexions on learning options.

Accountability and management

18. Accountability for the delivery and effectiveness of Connexions in a school is shared between the school, the Connexions Partnership and its LMCs, and, in areas where careers companies or LEAs provide PAs by contract or agreement, these employing organisations. The partnership agreement is the means of establishing PA roles and activities, and how the school links PA work with its own guidance and support processes and key staff (eg SENCO, pastoral heads, careers co-ordinator). Headteachers or other senior staff will be responsible for integrating Connexions with their staff and priorities, and ensuring that PAs can fulfil the agreed roles.

19. Within the terms of the annual partnership agreement, management of personal advisers is likely to rest with the school, although alternative arrangements involving Connexions managers can be agreed with the Partnership. The Headteacher (and/or Governing Body in Voluntary schools) has formal responsibility, but in practice, management is likely to be through an Assistant or Deputy Head.

20. Most personal advisers will be employed by either a Connexions Partnership or an organisation providing PAs by contract or agreement. Responsibility for PA pay, appraisal and development rests with the employer, but Partnerships should invite school management to contribute to appraisal and to support professional development. Responsibility for co-ordinating PAs from different disciplines across an area, and for specialist support to schools, lies with the Connexions' LMC and its managers. These managers will also co-ordinate the deployment of PAs who work in more than one school or setting, although it is important that arrangements take into

account the needs of the schools concerned. Connexions must ensure that all advisers are appropriately trained and continue to be developed and supervised.

21. There should be an annual joint review of the partnership agreement and of delivery. This will build on the framework for delivering Connexions set out in the partnership agreement. The review should include the crucial issue of the impartiality of careers or learning guidance available through Connexions. Informal arrangements will also be needed to monitor the effectiveness of day to day arrangements and raise concerns if necessary (eg on referrals, co-ordination within school, co-ordination with Connexions staff outside school).

Early Connexions experience

22. Connexions is already making a difference to the lives of young people. By end September, Partnerships had 1631 personal advisers in post, including in 70 "one stop" outlets. In the first six months advice or assistance was given on over half a million occasions.

23. Research on Connexions pilot activity in schools concluded:

- there is great value in a neutral adult (a personal adviser) with a role distinct from that of a teacher but able to negotiate solutions within school;
- PAs need to be independent of teachers, and able to offer sufficient confidentiality to build trust with pupils (whilst meeting legal requirements);
- pupils need to be able to self-refer to a PA, rather than all referrals being channelled through the school.

24. Of a relatively small sample of Connexions clients in different pilot settings, 90% found the service useful and easy to access. 77% said that the help they received from Connexions was better than they had received in the past from support agencies.

25. There has been a range of innovative practice among pilots and the first 15 Partnerships; the list below gives a flavour of this in schools:

- pupils have been involved in planning provision, interviewing for PAs (alongside headteachers) and shaping information products;
- Connexions have funded schools to designate/furnish a Connexions library and a working area for their PA(s);
- starter packs have been sent to schools before Connexions goes live to ensure all staff have sufficient knowledge of the service;
- multi-agency partnership agreements have been developed with schools to demonstrate coherence within Connexions;
- PAs have helped to set up activities for groups of pupils, including study support, confidence building provision, and university visits for higher achieving pupils with no family history of HE;
- innovative funding approaches have included Partnerships supporting a participation/inclusion co-ordinator in schools, and a school funding extra PA time;
- co-location of PAs with Heads of House or Year has improved co-ordination.

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