

Jointly produced by the Connexions Service and the Rough Sleepers Unit.

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Working together

Connexions and youth
homelessness agencies

Foreword

Connexions will build a modern multi-disciplinary service to help all young people reach their full potential and make a successful transition to adult life. The Government believes young people should get whatever help they need to do this, in the most straightforward, cohesive and consistent way possible. The vision is an ambitious one, but it is what young people have told us they want and need. There is recognition at national level that the success of Connexions is vital to Government Departments in their aims to help young people. This applies equally at local level, and we will only achieve our vision for young people by working closely together. This is why it is vital that everyone involved in delivering young people's services gets involved with their Connexions Partnership.

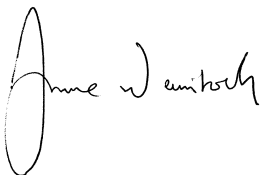
Working together - Connexions and youth homelessness agencies

The Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) has worked together with the Rough Sleepers Unit (RSU) and other colleagues across Government, Connexions Partnerships and frontline agencies to produce this Guidance. It is part of a set of guidelines about joint working aimed at Connexions Partnerships and the range of young people's support services. These publications focus on integrating support for some of the most vulnerable young people that Connexions will work with including homeless young people, teenage parents, young offenders and young people supported by Social Services. The many agencies already used and trusted by these young people have an absolutely critical contribution to make to Connexions, particularly voluntary and community organisations that work with young people out of touch with mainstream support.

The prevention of rough sleeping and the prevention of social exclusion amongst young people are inexorably linked. To help local agencies address these issues and to prevent rough sleeping amongst a range of vulnerable groups including young people the RSU published 'Preventing tomorrow's rough sleepers - a good practice handbook' in June 2001. The handbook includes some useful ideas for services that can support young people who are at risk of homelessness, and may assist Connexions Partnerships when planning to tackle some of these issues. It also illustrates how joined-up working in a local area can develop real solutions for young people.

Like the RSU Handbook, 'Working together - Connexions and youth homelessness agencies' does not provide a prescriptive blueprint for delivery. It is instead intended as a tool for agencies to use, planning together how the Connexions Service can be delivered most effectively in their region. The messages are based on what has been learnt from the Connexions Pilots and the early work of the Connexions Partnerships that came into operation in April 2001. Connexions has only just started and the guidance will develop as the Service does. To make it as helpful as possible in the future, CSNU needs to hear back from you what you think, both about the usefulness of the guidance and your experience of the support Connexions provides for young people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

Most importantly, we need you to get involved - only through partnership will Connexions become a service that ensures the best start in life for every young person.



Anne Weinstock



Louise Casey

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The Connexions Service

The Connexions Service is being introduced to provide integrated information, advice, guidance, support and personal development opportunities for all 13–19 year olds in England. It aims to help young people engage in learning, achieve their full potential and make a smooth transition to adult life. This will be achieved by bringing together a wide range of existing agencies in the public, private and voluntary sectors. The support young people receive will vary according to their needs. Central to the Service will be a network of personal advisers who will provide a single point of contact for each young person and ensure that someone has an overview of each young person's ambitions and needs. They will be drawn from new recruits and from existing professionals currently delivering a personal adviser type role, for example, care leavers advisers, Yot staff, social workers, Sure Start Plus advisers, youth workers, career specialists and voluntary sector workers.

Connexions Partnerships, at local Learning and Skills Council area level, will be responsible for planning the new Service while delivery will be organised by Local Management Committees. Connexions Partnerships and Local Management Committees are both multi-agency bodies, made up of a range of partners, for example LEAs, careers services, Yots and voluntary sector agencies.

Connexions Partnerships will develop a cross-cutting strategy to address the needs of all 13-19 year olds in their area. A mapping process will identify the needs of local young people, the services currently available and any gaps in provision. Connexions Partnerships will then ensure that the planning of new provision for young people across services reflects those needs, bringing together a cohesive framework of support for young people.

The Service is being rolled out across England from 2001 and will be available throughout England by 2003. Fifteen out of forty-seven Partnerships went into operation in 2001.

Further details of the structure of the Connexions Service are included in Annex 4.

Connexions Service key principles

- **Raising aspirations** – setting high expectations with each young person.
- **Meeting individual needs** – and overcoming barriers to learning.
- **Taking account of the views of young people** – individually and collectively.
- **Inclusion** – helping young people stay in education and training preventing them from becoming marginalised.
- **Partnership** – agencies working together to achieve more for young people, parents and communities.
- **Community involvement and neighbourhood renewal** – involving community mentors and personal advisers to increase access to local welfare, health, arts, sport and guidance networks.
- **Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity** – raising awareness of opportunities, raising participation and achievement levels for all young people, influencing the availability, suitability and quality of provision.
- **Evidence based practice** – ensuring that new interventions are based on rigorous research and evaluation into what works.

What the Connexions Service will offer young people

There will be three broad levels of service response according to young people's need:

- All young people will have **access to information, advice and guidance** on careers and learning and a range of other issues, including personal development, financial issues, benefits, health and leisure.
- Young people at risk of disengaging or already disengaged from learning will receive **more intensive one-to-one support** based on a full assessment of their needs. A personal adviser will develop an action plan with the young person to address the underlying factors, such as problems at home and school, and ensure their continued engagement in learning.
- A personal adviser will **broker appropriate specialist support**, for example from drug, mental health or housing services, and ensure a co-ordinated approach to helping young people facing multiple problems.

The personal adviser

Central to the Connexions Service will be a network of personal advisers, operating from schools, from drop-in centres, based in other services and working through outreach. They will help make sure that young people are able to engage in learning and reach their full potential by:

- engaging with young people, identifying and addressing their needs, raising their aspirations, offering advice and guidance on learning and careers options and other issues as appropriate (drawing on colleagues where necessary) and providing access to personal development and other opportunities;
- working with, and supporting, education and training institutions and employers in meeting the needs of young people;
- working with a network of voluntary, statutory and community agencies, and commercial bodies to ensure a coherent approach to support for young people;
- working with parents, carers and families to support young people;
- managing information effectively to facilitate the process of meeting the needs of young people;
- reviewing and reflecting upon their own professional practice to achieve continuous improvement in performance.

Personal advisers will come from a range of professional backgrounds, bringing a variety of expertise and experience to the Service. Some will be employed by, or seconded to, the Connexions Service, while others will remain within their existing professional context, working under a partnership agreement. Homelessness workers, drugs workers, care leavers' advisers, youth offending team workers, and many other professionals will deliver this role.

Key principles of the multi-agency approach

The Connexions Service will need to build on and link up existing services across agencies, to ensure that current provision is not duplicated and that young people receive cohesive support. How this is done will differ according to local circumstances and provision, but there are some key principles that should underpin the development of the Connexions Service across agencies:

- **The most appropriate worker is identified to be the young person's personal adviser.** Factors to take into account include the young person's own views, their relationship and involvement with existing support workers, their circumstances and needs and the likely length or intensity of involvement with a new worker. The personal adviser is then responsible for assessing the young person's needs, brokering the intervention of other agencies and ensuring a cohesive and co-ordinated package of support is provided. Young people should be clear who their personal adviser is and what their role is. Where appropriate, existing workers should take on this role, as an integral part of the Connexions Service, and should be enabled to do so by Connexions Partnerships. Connexions can fund training costs and may be able to help with back fill costs and transport costs to venues for voluntary sector workers. (See appendix 1 for further details on this and other support for the voluntary sector).
- **The number of other professionals working directly with the young person is rationalised.** As an example, a personal adviser should seek advice from a specialist colleague where appropriate, rather than automatically making a referral. Where specialist intervention is required the personal adviser will need to ensure clearly differentiated roles are agreed between workers. Awareness and understanding of one another's roles should be developed between support workers; for example through joint training, meetings and secondments, exchanges, or using shared/adjoining premises.
- **Support for young people offers consistency and continuity,** and professional boundaries do not impair the support that the young person receives. A young person's personal advisor may change as their needs or circumstances change. It is important that transitions between personal advisors are managed in a supported way and the relationship between a young person and their worker is not ended in a way that sets back the young person's progress.

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- **Information about young people is managed and shared** (in the context of protocols governing data sharing, protection and security). This will avoid repeat assessment of the young person and establish an overview of their needs over time and across agencies. It will also help identify young people who most need support and prevent them from 'slipping through the net'.
- **All agencies must be committed to quality assurance and co-ordinated, complementary accountability arrangements need to be developed** to make sure young people receive the support they need.
- **The Connexions Service builds on rather than duplicates existing work and ensures more cohesive service planning and delivery** for 13-19 year olds across agencies, based on a comprehensive understanding of need and existing provision.

The youth homelessness sector

The voluntary and community sector is an important provider of specialist support services for homeless young people and those at risk of homelessness. Provision varies extensively across the country. Examples include:

- family mediation;
- one-to-one support for vulnerable young people;
- advice and signposting services;
- links to education, training and employment facilities eg Foyers;
- services for young people with drug, alcohol or mental health problems;
- emergency or short-term accommodation linked to support;
- resettlement to permanent housing where appropriate;
- floating support for young people who need extra help to sustain their tenancy because they have been homeless or are vulnerable for other reasons.

These services have a vital contribution to make to the success of the Connexions Service, particularly in relation to:

- specialist knowledge, extensive expertise and experience, often of working with the hardest to help young people;
- the identification of young people at risk, often including the most vulnerable and disaffected;
- workers from this sector may be best placed to act as the young person's personal adviser,
- a safe, trusted and informal environment for young people, in which to deliver integrated services;
- information on young people's needs, which can inform service planning.

The Connexions Service, helping homeless young people and those at risk of homelessness

Young people who become homeless face significant barriers to education and employment, and it can be a long and difficult process for them to get their lives back on track. The Service will need to work with other agencies to:

- prevent homelessness by addressing the underlying causes;
- ensure a prompt and appropriate response if a young person runs away or faces housing crisis;
- ensure homeless young people receive appropriate support from the Connexions Service and other services for young people;
- build up a clear picture of the needs of homeless young people and young people at risk of homelessness and ensure that this influences the development of local provision.

Connexions Partnerships will need to both recognise the important role of specialist support for homeless young people, while ensuring they have full access to mainstream services.

Helping young people to avoid homelessness

Research has identified particular trigger factors and welfare factors that increase the risk of homelessness, and protecting factors that can lessen that risk. Young people with a combination of trigger and welfare factors, but no protective factors, are particularly at risk, and in this way can be identified and therefore helped at an early stage. The table overleaf highlights the key trigger, welfare and protective factors.

Trigger factors	Welfare factors	Protecting factors
Family dispute or relationship breakdown	Exclusion from school	Strong network of family or friends
Leaving an institution eg care, prison or the Armed Forces	Lack of 'coping' or practical skills	In education, training or employment
At risk of eviction or abandonment	Learning disabilities	Co-operating with or actively seeking assistance
	Anti-social behaviour	Statutory or voluntary help
	Mental ill health	
	Substance misuse	
	History of running away/sleeping rough	

Connexions personal advisers will help to address trigger and welfare factors and strengthen protecting factors through their one-to-one support of young people and the brokerage of appropriate specialist services. The Connexions personal adviser will use the Connexions Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) framework (see Appendix 4) to assess a young person's needs holistically and help them to access the range of support they need. Young people with acute needs in a particular area of their lives, where possible, will be allocated a personal adviser with the relevant expertise.

Connexions personal advisers will have a role to play in ensuring young people who run away from home have access to support, including support from Social Services, to help them deal with whatever issues led them to run away. The Connexions Service National Unit is working with the Social Exclusion Unit and other agencies to consider how this role might best develop.

When a young person is over 16 and it is dangerous or unsuitable for them to remain in the family home, the Connexions personal adviser should ensure that the young person is helped to make a managed transition to independence. This should include support in accessing accommodation and applying for benefits, as well as help with life skills such as budgeting, that young people may need. At a minimum, young people should be given information about the choices available to them and the implications of leaving home.

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Under the Housing Act 1996, local authorities are required to ensure that there is an advice service in their area for people facing homelessness and the Connexions Partnership will need to ensure personal advisers are clear about how and where this is delivered in their area.

Personal advisers will need to work with the local housing department to ensure 16 and 17 year olds are safely housed. Joint Department of Health and DETR guidance was issued to housing authorities in April 2000. It sets out the Government's strongly held view that housing authorities should consider homeless care leavers and 16 and 17 year olds as being vulnerable and in priority need for housing assistance under existing homelessness legislation. This will be taken forward in revised legislation extending the groups of homeless people being in priority need for housing assistance, hopefully by the end of 2001. More information about homelessness legislation is included in Appendix 2.

If a young person is found a place in a hostel or supported housing scheme, the personal adviser will need to liaise with the housing provider, update them about the young person's situation (within the context of information sharing protocols) and work with them to agree an action plan and roles.

Supporting existing homeless young people

Connexions will need to ensure that all young people within the Connexions age range who present as homeless and do not already have a personal adviser are allocated one. This may be a worker in the homelessness sector or one in the wider Connexions Service as best suits the needs of the young person. Connexions Partnerships will need to agree referral protocols across agencies in the area to make sure this happens.

In all circumstances, the personal adviser, in partnership with other workers, will need to help the young person find and settle in suitable accommodation, or help them to return safely to the family home, to enable them to successfully engage in learning and work.

Homeless 16 and 17 year olds may be entitled to a Young People's Bridging Allowance, Jobseeker's Allowance or Income Support. The personal adviser will need to support the young person in their application for benefits, in liaison with the Employment Service and the Benefits Agency or Jobcentre Plus. See Appendix 3.

Multi-agency models of service delivery

Examples of service delivery from the Connexions Service pilots and phase one Connexions Partnerships are set out below. The different options used should reflect circumstances and provision in the area. A mixture would be expected, with some existing staff best placed to take on the personal adviser role within their own organisation, while the Connexions Partnership may fund new posts or consider secondments in other circumstances. There are a number of questions Partnerships will need to consider in planning service structures.

1. Which agencies are already delivering personal adviser type roles? An initial identification should have been made through the mapping process. How can their work be best linked into the Connexions Service?
2. Where do gaps in provision for personal adviser support for young people exist? How can these gaps be best filled to provide the right expertise in the most appropriate location?
3. How can links between personal advisers in different organisations and with specialist workers be maximised to ensure that young people receive cohesive and consistent support?

Model 1 – External workers act as Connexions personal advisers based in their existing professional context

The **Central London Pilot** is working with three homelessness agencies, Alone in London, New Horizon Youth Centre and the London Connection to explore how their work can be linked in most effectively to the Connexions Service. A jointly-funded post at each of the agencies will:

- ensure that all staff and volunteers are up to speed with the aims, ethos and delivery of the Connexions Service;
- analyse the advice given at each agency in relation to the Connexions eight key principles and recommend adaptations to further reflect these principles;
- adapt the assessment frameworks currently employed in each agency to fit in with the APIR framework as appropriate;
- provide personal adviser support for at least twenty young people, and identify how the Connexions Service might have prevented them from becoming homeless.

Support workers at the agencies have been identified who will take the diploma training course and deliver the personal adviser role for their client group.

Coventry and Warwickshire Connexions Partnership has dedicated 50% of its second year's training budget to train workers in partnership agencies. Staff have been put forward from NCH Action for Children, Young Gifted & Talented - a local African Caribbean Project, Royal National Institute for the Blind, Rugby Youth Access Project, Educational Welfare Service, Millennium Volunteers and the Health Authority.

Existing workers already delivering a personal adviser type role to young people should be enabled to continue as an integral part of the Connexions Service. Examples of such roles include:

- services that help vulnerable young people with issues at home and at school which are putting them at risk;
- workers providing intensive, long term support to homeless young people or to resettled young people to help them sustain their tenancies and engage in education, training or work.

In addition, voluntary and community sector agencies should be given the opportunity to bid for funding to develop new personal adviser posts within their organisations, where this reflects local need.

Hertfordshire Connexions Pilot has funded two part-time personal adviser posts managed by local housing agencies to work with young people who are homeless or who have been homeless. The personal advisers are able to offer more in-depth assessment of need and more intensive support than was previously available to these young people. Plans are being made for these personal advisers to work with the Connexions teams in schools, to offer group sessions and one-to-one support to prevent young people from becoming homeless.

Advantages

- Young people have access to the Connexions Service from workers they already know and trust.
- Connexions benefits from the expertise and specialist knowledge of existing agencies.
- A consistent way of working with young people across agencies is developed and duplication is avoided.
- The training and development opportunities that Connexions offers is extended to a wide range of service providers.
- The stake that other agencies hold in the Connexions Service increases, since they are contributing key resources.

Issues

- Allocating a young person a new personal adviser based in a homeless agency is likely to be most appropriate if they are expected to be engaged with that agency for a sustained period. Otherwise it may be beneficial to secure or continue the young person's engagement in the wider Connexions Service. (Although workers at the homelessness agency will still have an important role to play in their support – see model 4.)
- Strong links between these workers and the wider Connexions Service will need to be developed. Their attendance at team meetings, forums etc as appropriate should be covered by the service level agreement.

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- The service level agreement will need to set out the level of support the agency will deliver to the young person, and how their work will integrate with Connexions principles and practice. Connexions Partnerships may wish to support agencies to develop the systems necessary for this.
- The roles and duties of the support worker in combining their existing role with that of Connexions personal adviser will need to be clear, both to the personal adviser and the young person, and carefully managed to overcome any perceived tensions.

Model 2 – External workers become Connexions personal advisers in a multi-agency Connexions team, for example in school or a community setting

The Cornwall and Devon Connexions Pilot placed a voluntary sector housing specialist on its multi-agency team working in a school. This meant that vulnerable young people at risk of homelessness were able to get help, for example in dealing with difficult landlords, and arranging rent bonds, and advice on independent living.

Advantages

- Young people have access to a range of specialist workers in one place. Delivering specialist support in mainstream settings can help young people get the advice and support they need before they reach crisis point.
- Agencies working with similar at-risk groups of young people in a similar way, but with different objectives, for example agencies focused on first-stage prevention of youth offending, homelessness and drug use, join forces. This both avoids duplication and could help young people feel less stigmatised.
- Workers can learn from one another, share understanding and expertise.
- Seconded workers can improve links back into their original services.

Issues

- A range of school and community based access points will be needed to effectively reach the most at-risk young people.

Model 3 – Personal advisers are placed by the Connexions Service into existing homelessness services or provide roving support across homelessness agencies

Coventry and Warwickshire Connexions Partnership have arranged for their personal advisers to work on split sites, for example three days a week in a homelessness agency and two days a week in the main Connexions centre. This enables young people to continue working with their personal adviser when they are no longer engaged with the homelessness agency. The personal adviser benefits from a sense of integration with the rest of the Connexions, and the main Connexions centre has the benefit of his increasing specialist knowledge about homelessness.

The Cornwall and Devon Connexions pilot placed a personal adviser in a local Foyer to provide intensive one to one support and motivational opportunities for residents with the highest level of need. Working with the rest of the team, the personal adviser developed the life skills provision, including cooking, shopping and budgeting. With the active involvement of the young people themselves and the rest of the team, the personal adviser set up a range of activities and events, including drama, basketball and Information Technology workshops. Support and guidance with job search, training and help with benefit claims were also provided.

Advantages

- Homeless young people, who may have lost touch with Connexions or who may not have successfully engaged with the service initially, can be reached.
- A Connexions personal adviser can bring a specialism to the team, for example, education, training and employment advice or benefits liaison.
- Being based in the agency will help the Connexions personal adviser to work closely with the other support workers and agree roles clearly in a day-to-day context.
- The Connexions personal adviser will be able to improve links between that agency and mainstream provision – for example by working with Connexions personal adviser in colleges.

Issues

- Workers will need to be integrated in both the agency team and the wider Connexions team. Existing Partnerships have arranged for personal advisers to have operational managers within the host agency, a line manager within Connexions, and clear agreement on attendance of the worker at team meetings, training sessions, etc.

Model 4 – Existing workers deliver specialist support alongside a Connexions personal adviser

In some cases it may not be appropriate for existing workers to take on the personal adviser role. Examples may include workers delivering a very specialist role, such as family mediation, or supporting young people for a very limited period, such as support workers in short-term hostels. However, it is important that these specialist workers use the Connexions Service to the benefit of the young people they work with.

This might include referring young people to Connexions when they are not already engaged with the Service, using shared needs assessment processes, actively engaging with the young person's Connexions personal adviser to contribute to the overall case management or sharing information where appropriate. Connexions Partnerships and other agencies will need to identify workers who might benefit from participating in the Understanding Connexions course (see Appendix 4) and consider strategies for extending the message more widely, for example conferences targeting particular sectors.

Specialist workers such as key workers in hostels, are likely to be delivering aspects of the role to their clients, for example providing information about education, training and employment opportunities or motivational and developmental opportunities.

There may be ways that Connexions Partnerships can support specialist voluntary and community organisations to help make their contribution as effective as possible. These might include helping them to develop information management systems or supporting training and development for their staff.

Advantages

- Integrating specialist services in this way helps to ensure young people receive holistic, support regardless of the remit of the agency at which they present.

Issues

- It is important that Connexions personal advisers do not duplicate the support provided by other workers; their contribution will need to be taken into account when planning services.

Strategic links with local authority housing and homelessness strategies

Connexions Partnerships will need to make links with the local authority housing departments in their area (and the newly emerging Supporting People Partnerships – see Appendix 2) and work with them to ensure that:

- housing needs mapping processes effectively capture the needs of young people aged 19 or under who are homeless or at risk of homelessness – including the needs identified by the Connexions Service;
- preventative and homelessness support services are developed that reflect the needs of young people and the gaps in existing provision, identified by the Connexions mapping process;
- these services benefit from the structures developed by Connexions Partnership and integrate with the Connexions Service;
- joint funding and planning of services is considered where appropriate.

Local authorities are likely to be in the process of preparing for a number of changes to existing legislation, or new legislation, which is intended to prevent homelessness and increase the protection available to vulnerable homeless groups. These are set out in Appendix 2.

The Connexions Service will also have an overview of the preventative work in other sectors, such as the youth offending sector. At a strategic level Connexions Partnerships will be able to work with other partners, including Drug Action Teams (DATs) and Youth Offending Teams (Yots) to help rationalise these preventative activities, which may be targeting similar underlying issues.

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The **Central London Connexions Pilot** has placed a Connexions personal adviser into Kensington and Chelsea's housing department. Their role will cover four main functions:

- to ensure local housing strategies are integrated with the local Connexions Strategy;
- to develop a youth homelessness prevention strategy, which will be integrated with the Connexions Strategy in the area. To inform this process research into the needs of young people at risk of homelessness in the borough will be conducted;
- to provide specialist advice to other personal advisers in the area working with young people at risk of homelessness;
- to work with homeless young people coming to the housing department for advice and through outreach.

Appendix 1 – Involvement of the voluntary sector in the Connexions Service

Connexions Partnerships will need to proactively involve and support the full range of voluntary and community organisations in the delivery of the Connexions Service, particularly for young people who can not or chose not to access support in school or other more formal settings. Connexions Partnerships can help the sector to develop and strengthen, in a number of ways, in accordance with the aims of Connexions, for example by:

- training and developing workers. It is important that as many voluntary sector workers can attend Connexions training as possible, Connexions will fund the cost of the training and may be able to help with back fill costs during training and transport costs to venues;
- sub-contracting delivery of part of the service to voluntary sector agencies or offering grant funding;
- helping to develop organisational information management or quality assurance systems;
- facilitating the acquisition of resources, for example by strengthening fundraising expertise through workshops, or initiating joint fundraising bids across the sector;
- ensuring consultation mechanisms are in place for the range of voluntary and community sector providers (either building on existing forums or establishing new structures).

The 'Compact on Relations between Government and the Voluntary and Community Sector in England' and three associated codes of practice (on Funding, Consultation, and working with Black and Minority Ethnic Organisations) offering good practice information and models for developing agreements and protocols have been produced by the Home Office. Copies of these are available to Partnerships on request. (020 7217 8400 or <http://www.homeoffice.gov.uk/codes.htm>)

The Connexions Service National Unit will be issuing further guidance to promote the effective involvement of the voluntary sector in the Connexions Service.

Appendix 2 – Youth homelessness – the legislative and policy context

Rough Sleepers Unit

The RSU was established in May 1999, following the Social Exclusion Unit's report into rough sleeping in 1998. Its strategy 'Coming in from the Cold' was launched in December 1999.

It has three key elements:

- preventing new rough sleepers, particularly those leaving care, prison or the Armed Forces, and amongst vulnerable young people;
- helping people sleeping rough on the streets tonight with drug, alcohol or mental health problems;
- rebuilding the lives of former rough sleepers through education, training and employment.

The Unit's work with young people has concentrated on:

- ensuring suitable advice, care and support is given to young people at risk of homelessness to ensure they do not end up sleeping on the streets;
- helping homeless young people back into the community and manage a successful transition into accommodation and meaningful occupation.

'The Way Forward for Housing'

In its Housing Policy Statement the Government announced its intention to strengthen the protection provided by local authorities for unintentionally homeless people.

On 21 June 2001 a Homelessness Bill was introduced into Parliament. The Bill will achieve the Government's intentions by strengthening the protection provided by local authorities for people who become homeless through no fault of their own. It will include legislative provisions which will require local authorities to:

- have a strategy for preventing homelessness;
- review homelessness in their area at least every five years.

The proposals will also remove bureaucratic barriers which have limited authorities' ability to help homeless people.

1996 Housing Act

Local authorities have a duty to provide temporary accommodation to homeless households in 'priority need'. The current priority need groups are: families with children or pregnant women, people who are vulnerable (for example due to old age or mental or physical disability) and people who are homeless as a result of fire or flood.

The Government is currently proposing to extend the priority needs categories by statutory Order to include homeless people who are vulnerable and considered to be in priority need of housing. These categories are:

- 16 and 17 year olds (apart from those for whom the council has responsibility under the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000);
- care leavers aged 18 to 21;
- those considered vulnerable as a result of fleeing domestic, racial or other violence;
- those who are vulnerable because of institutionalised backgrounds (eg those leaving care, prison or the Armed Forces).

A consultation paper on the draft Order along with statutory and non-statutory guidance was issued on 29 June 2001. The Government is proposing to implement the Order by the end of 2001.

At present housing authorities adhere to guidance which was issued jointly by Department of Health and Department of the Environment, Transport and the Regions in April 2000. This sets out the Government's strongly held view that housing authorities should consider homeless care leavers and 16 and 17 year olds as being vulnerable and in priority need for housing assistance, under existing homelessness legislation.

1989 Children Act

Under Section 20(3) of the Children Act every Social Services authority has a duty to provide accommodation for any 'child in need' who has reached the age of 16, and whose welfare is likely to be 'seriously prejudiced' without accommodation. A 'child in need' is defined as:

- those unlikely to achieve or maintain, or have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services;

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- those whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of such services;
- those who are disabled.

Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000

The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 places new responsibilities on local authorities with Social Services responsibilities, to provide greater support to young people living in and leaving care, including:

- a duty to assess and meet the needs of young people aged 16 and 17 who qualify for the new arrangements;
- the provision of a personal adviser and pathway plan for all young people aged 16 – 21 or beyond who qualify for the new arrangements;
- a duty to assist those leaving care, including with employment, education and training. The duty to assist with education and training and to provide a personal adviser and pathway plan continues for as long as a young person remains in an agreed programme, even beyond the age of 21.

Accommodation is one of the elements to be covered when the responsible authority and a young person devise the young person's Pathway Plan. While a young person who qualifies for help under the Children (Leaving Care) Act is under 18 the responsible authority must make sure that they have suitable accommodation as agreed in the Plan. This may require joint working between Departments or Authorities, or with other agencies such as Foyers, depending on the young person's needs.

The Act is being implemented from October 2001 with Quality Protects funding for preparation available to local authorities from April 2001.

As the role of the Young Person's Adviser appointed by the local authority for the purposes of the Children (Leaving Care) Act will be very similar to that of the Connexions Personal Adviser, it is expected that the Young Person's Adviser will normally take on both roles. Companion guidance: 'Working together - Connexions and Social Services' has been developed on this and is available from the Connexions website:

www.connexions.gov.uk.

Supporting People

Supported housing is any type of housing where vulnerable people are assisted to live as independently as possible. Supporting People is a new funding mechanism for supported housing that will come into effect in April 2003. It will bring together existing funding streams from: the part of Housing Benefit that is currently paying for housing support, the Supported Housing Management Grant, the Probation Accommodation Grant and Home Improvement Agency grants. All this money will go into a single pot which will be administered by local authorities.

County and District authorities will have to work together across a county region with the local probation service and health authorities to plan services that respond to local need and priorities. Housing support for young people could include advice on applying for housing benefit, help with budgeting or cooking lessons. However, Supporting People facilitates the provision of housing support that is provided alongside other services as part of a package. This means that all of a young person's needs can be addressed together and that young people who are fleeing a violent home, leaving care prison or the Armed Forces, or coming off drugs will be able to have housing support that fits in with their other support and housing needs. For more information, call the Supporting People helpline on 020 7944 2556 or visit the website www.spkweb.org.uk.

Appendix 3 – Benefit Liaison

The Connexions Service is required to provide young people with general information about the benefits and allowances to which they may be entitled. This includes giving details about how these allowances/benefits can be claimed and the rights and responsibilities associated with them.

The Connexions Service will be the agency with lead responsibility for unemployed 16 and 17 year olds and will help them to make a claim for Young Person's Bridging Allowance or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA) where appropriate and work with them to identify and secure a suitable learning opportunity. The Connexions Service has an obligation to provide the Employment Service (ES) with confirmation of the young person's registration with the Connexions Service for work and training, and other information needed by the ES to help establish entitlement to benefit. An ongoing exchange of information is required to ensure young people receive a seamless service and are supported in their efforts to find work and training. When a young unemployed person reaches 18 the lead responsibility transfers to ES, but the Connexions Service can, by agreement with the young person and ES, continue to support the young person as needed.

Working together - Connexions and youth homelessness agencies

For young people aged 16-19 not required to be in the labour market, the Connexions Service will advise on Income Support, and other social security benefits and assist them to make a claim if needed, in liaison with the Benefits Agency (BA). Connexions can help BA to establish entitlement to benefits, for example by providing information that helps to confirm a young person's estrangement from their parents.

A number of factors should help young people, and particularly 16 and 17 year olds, seeking to claim benefits.

- For many 16 and 17 year olds the first point of contact in claiming JSA will be a worker they already know and trust. For others the requirement to register with the Connexions Service to claim JSA will help to ensure that their wider needs will be identified and addressed as their benefit claim is being taken forward.
- Revised Benefits Liaison Instructions and Good Practice Guidelines emphasise the role of the Connexions Service in facilitating young people's application for benefits, for example, accompanying young people to the ES/BA and supporting them at the interview where necessary.
- Closer working relationships with the ES and other key partners such as BA (supported by revised Benefits Liaison Instructions and Good Practice Guidelines) should help prevent vulnerable young people from falling between the gaps when being passed between agencies. For example, young people who mistakenly approach ES to make a claim without first having registered at Connexions will have an appointment with the Connexions Service booked for them and their details passed across. If the young person fails to attend the appointment the Connexions Service can follow up and offer help with any difficulties they are experiencing.

The Connexions Service will need to work with Jobcentre Plus as it is phased in across the country from October 2001. The new organisation will bring together all ES services and most BA services to provide a single gateway into the welfare system for all clients of working age (16-64 inclusive).

The **North London Connexions Partnership** have arranged with the local Employment Service for an ES worker to attend the local Connexions Centre on a regular basis. This will help to ensure young people receive a seamless service from Connexions and the ES and can access financial, personal, careers and job search support in the same place.

Appendix 4 – The Connexions Service – further details

The Connexions Service has been piloted in different forms around the country. Fifteen Phase 1 areas (listed below) began delivering the service in 2001. Phase 2 areas will begin in 2002/3.

Phase 1 areas

- The Black Country
- Cheshire and Warrington
- Coventry and Warwickshire
- Cumbria
- Devon & Cornwall
- Greater Merseyside
- Humber
- Lincolnshire & Rutland
- London North
- London South
- Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and
- Buckinghamshire
- Shropshire, Telford and the Wrekin
- South Yorkshire
- Suffolk
- West of England

Connexions funding

The Connexions Service is funded from 3 sources:

- National grant from the Connexions Service National Unit. This includes the current Careers Service and New Start budgets, and the additional funding which has been made available in the Year 2000 Spending Review. This amounts to £320m in 2001-02 and £420m in 02-03;
- Contributions (mainly in kind, but also in cash) from partners at local level;
- Regional European Social Fund money.

Connexions training

To enable the continuous professional development of support workers across professionals involved in the delivery of the Connexions Service, two main national training programmes for personal advisers have been developed:

- the **Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers**;
- the **Understanding Connexions training programme**.

Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers

Primarily for practitioners who will be working with young people needing in-depth support and with significant barriers to learning. The diploma comprises pre-course reading and five core modules and each of the first four consists of:

- 25 hours distance learning;
- 12 hours live training;
- 3 hours work with smaller groups in an action learning set;
- last module is on reflective practice and is longer with around 40 hours of distance and reflective learning, 18 hours of live training and 3 hours in an action learning set.

Understanding Connexions Training Programme

The Understanding Connexions training programme will reflect the universal nature of the Connexions Service and will allow progression to the Diploma. It will primarily be for Connexions personal advisers who will be working within their practitioner base needing less intensive support but will also be a route into personal adviser training for many people without qualifications.

It is currently being designed and will comprise;

- a front end introduction (two-three days) training offering a basic information on the Connexions Service,
- a further training for up to 10 days for people working as personal advisers,
- five days supervisory training for team leaders who will be supervising groups of PAs.

The programme will be available as a pilot for five partnership areas from September and nationally from October /November 2001.

Connexions APIR framework

The Connexions Framework for Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review has been developed to support personal advisers in helping young people make a smooth and successful transition to adult and working life. It outlines a process for identifying needs, planning effectively and taking action to address and review those needs. In particular it is intended to help personal advisers co-ordinate more coherent service delivery to those young people facing significant or multiple barriers to learning, some of whom may currently be involved with a range of different agencies. It has been designed to support the Connexions quality standards and, once trained in its use, it will be good practice for personal advisers to follow the processes outlined. The Connexions Framework was issued to all Partnerships in June 2001. An evaluation, as part of a larger piece of research looking at personal adviser practice and training, is planned for the autumn. The findings along with feedback from a range of sources will inform revisions to the guidance due to be re-issued in April 2002.

Connexions Direct

In addition to the traditional methods of delivery for the service the potential for using new technology is being explored through Connexions Direct. It will use telephone and Internet technology to help Connexions reach out effectively to all young people. The service will be piloted in the North East of England from September 2001.

Connexions Direct will be an integral part of local Connexions provision, offering a complementary tier of service delivery. It will offer information and advice through qualified practitioners who, where necessary, will also facilitate referrals to Personal Advisers and specialist support services on the ground.

Connexions Card

The Connexions Card is an exciting and innovative cross-departmental project, which will reward 16 to 19 year olds for their engagement in formal and informal learning and for meeting agreed targets. You can find more information about the card at <http://www.connexions.gov.uk/connexionscard>

Appendix 5 – Contacting Connexions

To obtain details and contact details for your local Partnership please contact your GO:

North East

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To find out more about the Connexions Service and download our current publications go to our web site: www.connexions.gov.uk