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**Appendix 1** - Educational institutions taking part in the pilot project

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Report No.2

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Advisers

# EVALUATION OF THE COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE CONNEXIONS SERVICE 2000 - 2001

## REPORT No. 5

### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This report was commissioned by the Coventry and Warwickshire Connexions Strategic Partnership to help identify the overall effectiveness of the local Connexions pilot project. The Coventry and Warwickshire sub-region is one of 16 pilot areas for the new Connexions service. The pilot is designed to trial new ways of working in local communities and focuses on the work of Personal Advisers (PAs) in educational institutions, and in community settings with partner organisations. Within this context, research and evaluation play a crucial role in helping to assess the impact of the Connexions Strategy on the local community, and in supporting policy-makers and practitioners to determine what works and why. From 1<sup>st</sup> April 2001, Coventry and Warwickshire will receive further Government funding to deliver the new Connexions Service as part of the national roll-out programme in England.
- 1.2 The report builds on three baseline evaluations completed in late November 2000 by the Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS), University of Derby. These focused on the work of the Personal Advisers in educational institutions<sup>1</sup>; the work of Personal Advisers in community settings providing support to African Caribbean Young People<sup>2</sup>; and work with Young Offenders in Coventry & Warwickshire<sup>3</sup>.
- 1.3 The findings are designed to inform the continuing review and development of the Connexions Service in the sub-region and to highlight lessons learned that can be used to inform national policy and practice. The report draws primarily on evidence from a range of interested parties at a local level. It is designed to reflect on practice and identify 'what works' and 'what doesn't'. The report provides a summary of the key issues highlighted throughout the evaluation process. Main conclusions and recommendations are made to support the development of the new Connexions service from April 2001 onwards.
- 1.4 The report is structured to enable key points, on-going issues, and evidence of good practice to be easily identified:
- Section Two:* Sets out the research objectives and the agreed methodology.
- Section Three:* Provides the national and local contexts of the development of the Connexions Service.
- Section Four:* Highlights the strategic approach adopted by the relevant Connexions educational institutions and community organisations

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<sup>1</sup> Evaluation of the Coventry and Warwickshire: Pilot Report 2.

<sup>2</sup> Evaluation of the Coventry and Warwickshire: Pilot Report 3.

<sup>3</sup> Evaluation of the Coventry and Warwickshire: Pilot Report 4.

- Section Five:* Describes and evaluates the management and organisation of the service.
- Section Six:* Assesses the effectiveness of the delivery in both educational institutions and community settings and provides examples of good/interesting practice.
- Section Seven:* Examines the involvement of young people in the design and planning of Connexions.
- Section Eight:* Explores the effectiveness of the emerging partnerships.
- Section Nine:* Reflects on the introduction of the Foundation Diploma for Personal Advisers and other relevant training provision at local and sub-regional levels.
- Section Ten:* Highlights the overall evaluation conclusions.
- Section Eleven:* Draws together key recommendations.

## **2. Research objectives and methodology**

2.1 The evaluation focuses on four main aspects as agreed with the local Connexions Strategic Board:

- 1) Management and organisation of the new Connexions service.
- 2) Delivery of the service through Personal Advisers.
- 3) Young people's involvement in the development of the Connexions service.
- 4) Partnerships and collaborative arrangements at local and sub-regional levels.

It should be noted that this research study does not include any formal assessment of the Connexions Strategic Board and Local Management Committee arrangements, given that this was beyond the scope of the study. However, some respondents discussed their involvement in these structures and, where appropriate, their views and experiences are reflected within the report.

2.2 The evaluation framework is based on the following approaches<sup>4</sup>.

- descriptive:* to identify different forms of practice in the pilot stage;
- diagnostic:* to examine the reasons for successful or unsatisfactory delivery;
- evaluative:* to appraise the effectiveness of practice and identify the added-value of the Connexions strategy;
- strategic:* to identify good practice and lessons learned and make recommendations on the required policy and key action points.

2.3 A 'qualitative' rather than 'quantitative' approach was chosen in order to gain a rich source of data based on the knowledge, experiences and perceptions of those involved in the Connexions pilot. Close working links were established with the national evaluators (GHK Ltd.) in order to share information and to reduce duplication of efforts. In March 2001, CeGS completed relevant sections of the DfEE Evaluation Toolkit to outline key learning points that can be used to inform Connexions

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<sup>4</sup> Richie, J. and Spencer, L. (1994) 'Qualitative data analysis for applied policy research', in Bryman, A. and Burgess, R. G. (eds), *Analysing Qualitative Data*. London: Routledge.

developments at a national level. Examples of emerging good/interesting practices were confirmed and these are included anonymously within this report.

- 2.4 All educational institutions and partner organisations taking part in the pilot contributed to the evaluation. During February and March 2001, twelve visits were conducted to educational institutions involved in piloting the Connexions Service in Coventry and Warwickshire (Appendix 1), and to 8 partner organisations with Personal Advisers working in community settings (Appendix 2). The research team devised interview schedules to provide a common framework for discussions with a wide range of staff and young people. In-depth discussions were held with 60 staff and 18 young people, covering a diverse range of roles and responsibilities (Appendix 3).
- 2.5 In addition, Graham Hollowell (Deputy Chief Executive of Warwickshire Careers Service) accompanied the lead researcher on two visits in order to gain further insight into key issues that need to be addressed at a local level.
- 2.6 Our findings indicated that all respondents welcomed having the opportunity to engage in discussions about Connexions. The majority were positive about the pilot project.

### 3. National and local context

- 3.1 The national development of the Connexions Service in England is a new and challenging initiative involving many agencies and partners. Connexions aims to *'provide a new approach to guiding and supporting young people through their teenage years and in their transition to adulthood and working life'*<sup>5</sup>. The new service is still evolving, following consultations at national and local levels. Evidence from the experiences of 16 pilot projects is still unfolding and the findings are expected to inform future planning guidance from the Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU). The Government is currently undertaking a national consultation on the future funding of Connexions Services and the training of Personal Advisers<sup>6</sup>, as well as the Connexions Framework for Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review<sup>7</sup>. There is also continuing work to develop guidance in relation to services involving young people in the design and development of provision<sup>8</sup>. The latter is a crucial requirement within the Connexions strategy.

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<sup>5</sup> Connexions Service -Prospectus and Specification 2000.

<sup>6</sup> The Guidance Council Policy Document No.17.

<sup>7</sup> The Connexions Framework for Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review - Consultation Draft, February 2001

<sup>8</sup> Tomorrows Future: Building a strategy for children and young people. <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/cyfu>

## 4. Connexions strategic approach

4.1 The pilot in Coventry and Warwickshire has a strong partnership vision:

*'By 2005 we will ensure every young person aged 13 years to 19 years in Coventry and Warwickshire is engaged in appropriate learning. In short, we will eradicate unemployment amongst young people under 19 years of age and encourage a sense of self-worth and responsibility.'* (Connexions Strategic Plan, 2000/2001)

As part of the consultation process for the new Connexions Business Plan 2001–2004, the Shadow Strategic Board has revised the original mission statement. It now reads:

*'By 2005, we will ensure that every young person aged 13-19 years in Coventry & Warwickshire has access to the highest standards of advice, guidance and support and the opportunity to engage in and benefit from appropriate learning.'* (Connexions Business Plan 2001-2004)

4.2 The clear overall aim outlined in the Coventry and Warwickshire Connexions Service Proposal for Pilot Funding was to develop a Connexions Service of Personal Advisers across the sub-region characterised by:

- serious engagement of young people in the development, delivery and management of the service;
- sharing of good practice;
- using tried and tested approaches and being radical in service delivery;
- valuing the different cultures and challenges across the sub-region;
- total commitment to fairness and equality of opportunity;
- providing a truly universal service where resources are focussed on meeting needs;
- ensuring principles of best value are followed.

4.3 Both areas have adopted a range of differing approaches in order to determine what works best and to assess the factors that facilitate or hinder Connexions developments. As the pilot has evolved, the lessons learned have been embodied within new codes of practice, policy statements, training and development strategies, and business plans.

4.4 The recommendations from an earlier CeGS Evaluation Report (No. 2) are summarised in Appendix 4 and include an assessment of progress made. Earlier findings show that during the initial planning and preparation phase for Connexions (July-December 2000), respondents from educational institutions generally welcomed Connexions, although some were concerned about how it would actually translate into practice. The key issues of concern in schools and colleges were the general lack of clarity about the boundaries of the new service and the continuation of support for careers education and guidance<sup>9</sup>. Since then, CSNU has

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<sup>9</sup> Evaluation of the Coventry and Warwickshire Pilot. Report 2, paragraphs 2.2 and 2.3.

produced guidelines for schools<sup>10</sup> and colleges.<sup>11</sup> In Coventry & Warwickshire, headteacher and principal representatives have been consulted in the planning and design of the Connexions Strategic Business Plan 2001–2004. As a result, progress has been made in forging stronger strategic partnerships. In early March 2001, a sub-regional conference was held in Warwickshire, which provided an opportunity for school and college staff to find out more about Connexions and to consider its implications for their practice. From this and other local consultations, there are still outstanding issues which need to be addressed. For example, levels of resource, recruitment, training and supervision arrangements for Personal Advisers and their line-managers, the level of input available in relation to specialist careers guidance provision, and how this relates to other youth support services in schools and colleges.

4.5 The Connexions Planning Guidance makes it clear that the Connexions Service is expected to evolve over time and that the first Connexions Partnerships will pioneer new ways of working, learning from current Connexions pilots and the good work of many schools and colleges. It will not arrive 'fully fledged' into institutions. This approach facilitates opportunities to test out new and innovative approaches and enables a greater ownership of practice. The main benefits are for practice to develop in different ways in different institutions, tailored to individual need. The majority of heads and principals in the pilot institutions are now very positive about Connexions. However, there is a minority of institutions (approximately 25%) where the pilot has yet to achieve its original ambitions. All of the respondents support the rationale and philosophy of Connexions, but in some cases the current approach needs to be revisited.

4.6 Organisations in the pilot have developed a diverse range of strategies to support young people. Senior staff within and outside schools and colleges expressed a desire to ensure that the work of the PAs supported these and did not duplicate existing work. The PA role is seen as interlinking with existing services and agencies and supplementing them where appropriate. Senior staff recognise the value of the PA role in supporting the social exclusion agenda and highlight benefits to the whole school from a more integrated approach. Government guidelines<sup>12</sup> highlight good practice principles, which schools already draw upon:

- Setting good habits from the beginning.
- Early intervention.
- Rewarding achievements.
- Supporting behaviour management.
- Working with parents.
- Involving pupils.
- Commitment to equal opportunities.
- Identifying underlying causes of students' problems
- Study support.

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<sup>10</sup> Establishing the Connexions Service in Schools. DfEE 0302/2000.

<sup>11</sup> Connexions: What Does it Mean for Colleges? November 2000.

<sup>12</sup> Social Inclusion: Pupil Support. DfEE Circular 10/99

Some senior managers describe how Connexions can support and develop this agenda. They especially cite the work of the PA in early intervention with students, work with parents/guardians/carers and identifying the underlying causes for disengagement from learning.

- 4.7 Other managers working in agencies and community settings generally welcome the Connexions approach. They see it as linking and evolving with existing practice, although they too, are anxious to reduce duplication of work. They also express concern about the long-term future of their own organisations within Connexions, particularly careers service and youth service staff. Several agencies such as the new Youth Offending Teams (YOTs) particularly welcomed the Connexions approach.



## 5. Management and organisation

5.1 This section focuses on the overall management and organisation of the pilot project. It identifies key issues raised by respondents, which include the role of the PA, joint management arrangements and communications.

5.2 The management structure and organisation of the Connexions Pilot is outlined in the Connexions pilot Business Plan 2000-2001. Day-to-day responsibility for the implementation plans currently resides with the Connexions Development Manager. This post was designed to act as a conduit between the Shadow Strategic Board and partner organisations. Much has been achieved in a very short timescale across the sub-region. The existing infrastructure comprises the Development Manager working closely with a range of organisations, managers and practitioners to develop new approaches and agree delivery plans. However, the current arrangements are fragile, given the fast multiplying breadth and scope of the project. The current arrangements will need to be reviewed, especially in light of plans to extend the number of people and organisations linking to Connexions within the next development phase.

### *Consultation with partner organisations*

5.3 A wide range of consultation at all levels has taken place over the course of the pilot. Examples include:

- business planning consultation meetings;
- conference events;
- regular briefing meetings for schools and colleges;
- Connexions Newsletters produced and disseminated throughout the area.

In January 2001, the Coventry and Warwickshire sub-regional mapping exercise was completed. This provided valuable information on local trends and issues relating to young people. The findings will be used to inform universal and targeted approaches designed to improve services for young people.

5.4 Our findings suggest that some senior managers feel that they were not adequately consulted in terms of the on-going development of the pilot project. They remain unsure about roles and responsibilities:

*'The ground rules appear to change on a daily basis.'*  
(headteacher)

Several staff expressed concern that the boundaries remain blurred and that responsibility for decision making is currently fragmented and confusing:

*'Who is making the local decisions about Connexions that are affecting schools?'* (deputy head)

These are communication issues that need to be addressed as Connexions unfolds throughout the sub-region.

- 5.5 Lines of management and accountability in schools and colleges were initially unclear:

*'It was like walking through treacle, no-one could get any answers from anywhere.'* (school manager)

At least half of the respondents indicated that the improvements are necessary in order to ensure better co-ordination of activities at grass-roots and senior management levels. In some areas, the fast pace of change and the need for managers to plan for the next, roll-out phase has caused delays. Over recent months the situation has greatly improved. For example:

- in Coventry caseload managers have been appointed;
- meetings have been held of all the pilot institutions in Warwickshire to share policies and practices;
- sub-regional Personal Adviser group meetings have been introduced;
- Executive Director appointed and discussions taking place on sub-regional structures.

Teaching staff and Personal Advisers felt that joint meetings were essential in order to improve their knowledge and understanding of Connexions:

*'The chance to meet with other pilot schools was appreciated. It was very helpful to share experiences and ways of working.'* (teacher)

*'The sub-regional meetings are very useful. We find out more about developments in other areas and share ideas with one another.'* (personal adviser)

#### *Communication channels*

- 5.6 Since the beginning of the project strong efforts have been made to develop appropriate communication channels within and across agencies and institutions. Given the number and diversity of agencies and institutions, this has proved quite challenging. Links between the Personal Advisers have gradually developed and are proving invaluable in terms of sharing information on what works, what does not work, and the lessons to be learned from the new approaches across the sub-region.

- 5.7 The majority of respondents felt there was confusion at the beginning of the pilot, especially with regard to the allocated time that PAs would actually spend in each institution. Our evidence indicates that within institutions there was an expectation that Personal Advisers would be present for two or three days each week to work intensively with young people. In the event this expectation was not met mainly due to training arrangements, and in a few cases, some Personal Advisers have only spent one day per week in the allocated institution. Comments included:

*'It's not possible to develop a working relationship or become a member of a team if you are not here when you are needed by young people and staff.'* (senior manager)

*'Two days or less each week to develop the Connexions Service and the PA role is unworkable.'* (deputy head)

The Connexions Guidance to Schools<sup>13</sup> states that schools will receive the same level of help as from careers services and will have a minimum of one day a week from a Personal Adviser. This is a baseline guide from which to build the service. However, our evidence suggests that a more substantial Personal Adviser presence and input is required. Without this, the goodwill of institutions is likely to be lost.

- 5.8 Staff in schools and colleges emphasised the importance of continuity in service delivery:

*'The Personal Adviser needs to be here for young people on a regular basis.'* (headteacher)

*'Staff need to know when the PA is going to be here so that referrals can be made.'* (college manager)

Managers within schools and colleges highlighted their dissatisfaction with part-time arrangements which have led, in some cases, to inadequate provision:

*'I am much less satisfied with what we have in the Connexions pilot than we had previously under careers. Far from expanding, the provision has actually diminished. From the user end point, it has not delivered the goods.'* (college principal).

In many cases, the training process has disrupted the continuity of services to young people within the pilot project. This is discussed more fully in section 9.

- 5.9 Four out of twelve educational institutions reported that they have at some point considered withdrawing from the project due to a lack of local management support. They contrast their experience with that provided previously by the careers services which, in their opinion, provided a better informed and more reliable service.
- 5.10 The key lesson to be learned for the future development of the Connexions service in the sub-region is the fundamental importance of an effective infrastructure to drive the implementation forward. Lessons learned from the pilot need to be embedded within a tighter communication framework with appropriate consultation at every stage. It is important to involve agencies and educational institutions to a far greater degree in the process of planning and implementation. Attending to their agenda is an integral part of the process, and is likely to be significant in determining the success of Connexions at a local and national level.

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<sup>13</sup> Establishing the Connexions Service in Schools (paragraph 10), DfEE 0302/2000.

### *Role of the Personal Adviser*

- 5.11 There is now a greater visibility and improved understanding of the role of Personal Advisers across institutions and agencies:

*'That which was submerged is now becoming visible. The role of Personal Adviser is much bigger than anyone realised.'* (deputy head)

*'This is an area of work we had a tarpaulin over. When we take it off we see the need. If we hadn't got a Personal Adviser, we would have had to invent one.'* (college principal)

Senior managers in educational institutions indicated that in order to fully promote Connexions, good examples of policies and practices need to be further developed in order to make it work. It was noted that patience and perseverance would be necessary: 'there are no quick-fix solutions'. Many identified the prime need for Personal Advisers to be well trained, motivated, and able to relate well to young people. The following key characteristics were identified as essential to the PA role:

- Able to develop good relationships across organisations.
- Able to provide family support.
- Able to take action and achieve targets.
- Knowledgeable about local opportunities, local agencies and young people's cultural backgrounds.
- Flexible in approach.
- Possessing commitment and drive.
- Pro-active and able to use own initiative.
- Self-reliant.
- Strong advocacy and brokerage skills.

These reflect the findings from earlier research studies of New Start and Learning Gateway initiatives. Relevant comments included:

*'The Personal Adviser job is sensible and well conceived. It needs a pioneering spirit.'* (college manager)

*'Connexions is a truly wonderful resource, if schools are allowed to manage it effectively.'* (headteacher)

Several respondents felt that the PA has the potential to become a key local figure. One senior manager reported that:

*'Personal Advisers will be more prominent in the community and their drive and passion can, in the long term, begin to change hearts and minds.'* (senior manager)

### *Selection and recruitment of Personal Advisers*

5.12 The pilot in Coventry and Warwickshire recruited new PAs from varied backgrounds. The selection process is detailed in CeGS Evaluation Report 2 which also outlines good practice in terms of involving young people in the process. Across agencies and institutions, managers highlighted the need for greater involvement in the selection of their PA. Many have begun to recognise the importance of the role and have expressed a desire to be involved in the recruitment process. The Strategic Board and Local Management Committees will need to review the selection and recruitment process and to devise a strategy to enable schools to have a greater input in this process. An on-going review of the person specification for PAs is also required.

5.13 Table 1 provides information on the background of PAs involved in the pilot.

**Table 1**

<b>Background</b>	<b>Number of Personal Advisers</b>
Careers Service	8
Teaching	4
Voluntary Service	2
Youth Service	4
Other	2*
<b>Total</b>	<b>20</b>

\* information assistant, administration.

These categories do not reflect the full breadth of knowledge, skills and experiences that the PAs bring to the role. Many have worked across agencies and client groups: for example, co-ordinating homeless projects, teaching looked-after young people in residential homes, outreach work in community settings and work with travellers. The current PA cohort holds a wide variety of qualifications which include:

- A Certificate in Youth and Community Work.
- NVQ4 in Guidance.
- Diploma in Careers Guidance.
- BTEC National in Social Care.
- Certificate of Qualification in Social Work (CQSW).
- Teaching Certificate in Special Education.

5.14 A major strength of the pilot project has been the valuable mix of different skills and experiences that PAs bring to the role. Several PAs stated that assumptions should not be made that any one particular background enables a person to be a successful PA. They emphasised the importance of being appointed on the basis of existing skills and aptitude for work with a diverse range of clients within Connexions. Some felt that 'psychological resilience' is essential in order to be able to cope with setbacks and disappointments.

*Joint management in educational institutions*

- 5.15 The majority of organisations are working successfully through dual management arrangements. It has taken considerable time and commitment to achieve a sound working relationship between the institution manager, the Connexions manager and the PA. Joint meetings have helped respondents to work through the issues. The majority of schools have nominated a deputy head as the PA's line-manager. Colleges have allocated a senior member of staff usually from within Student Services.

**Box 1**

**Management of Personal Advisers**

In one school, the deputy head is the line manager for the Personal Adviser. He arranges weekly meetings with her, and also meets the ESW and other support staff on the same day, as part of his line-manager responsibilities. This enables him to see each person separately and also for them to overlap meetings, so that they can discuss joint work. This promotes effective working between agencies, avoids duplication and helps allay any suspicion about the role of Connexions.

The deputy head feels that regular meetings with the Personal Adviser are essential to 'keep a handle on the caseload' and to provide help with individual students if needed. He has a weekly timetable from the Personal Adviser. They have also jointly devised a useful Connexions Record Sheet, which is used by the Personal Adviser to detail every interaction with a student. This gives the reason for referral and the action taken. This enables on-going progress to be monitored. A referral form for staff is currently being designed to support the introduction of a coherent referral system.

The Personal Adviser comments:

*'The school is brilliant. They are so helpful. Everyone is very supportive and the work is centred on the students. I really feel part of the school, which I never did as a careers adviser. Once the training is over, it will work even better.'*

- 5.16 Where joint management works well there are:

- detailed planning and implementation processed in place;
- regular meetings scheduled between the line manager and PA to review progress and monitor the caseload;
- transparent and positive working relationships developed across the institution;
- clear communication channels in terms of seeking to explain and clarify the PA role;
- clear understanding of the roles and responsibilities underpinned by written Partnership Agreements;

- systems in place to identify and prioritise young people for the PA to work with;
- clear frameworks for referral;
- agreement on how student progress is recorded and fed back to appropriate staff within institutions;
- weekly timetables of PA activities which are used as part of the review process.

5.17 So far, several institutions have reviewed their systems and management structures. This is crucial to ensure that Connexions makes a positive start:

*'It's important to get the foundations right so the PA can slot easily and meaningfully into the overall framework and systems of our institution.'* (headteacher)

Several institutions have managed this successfully and could usefully serve as models of good practice to help others to understand more quickly the opportunities that Connexions brings. A continuous improvement plan which reviews dual management arrangements should be drawn up to ensure that arrangements are cost-effective and sustainable. Inter-agency quality assurance should feed into this process.

5.18 However, there are a number of issues that need to be further addressed. In some cases, joint management arrangements are not working well. For example, some senior managers feel they have not been adequately consulted on key management issues, such as:

- the demarcation of responsibilities linked to appraisal and performance reviews;
- impartiality;
- time management;
- arrangements for home visiting;
- PA holiday and leave arrangements during school/college term-time;
- time allocated and remuneration for the management of PAs.

Schools and colleges reported that they expected PAs to book annual leave in line with teacher holidays as a means of maximising access to young people during term-time. From our discussions, this is likely to be contested by quite a few PAs and Connexions managers. However, it is noted that Personal Advisers are also expected to work closely with young people during holiday periods.

5.19 The issue of time allocation and remuneration for management and support for PA work was also highlighted. Several managers reported that senior staff would need to give extra time to the new service:

*'Connexions needs to seriously consider how it will finance teacher time.'* (deputy head)

- 5.20 The majority of careers service and agency managers from Coventry and Warwickshire highlighted concerns about the impartiality of the new service provided by PAs working in schools and colleges. Some headteachers and college principals also expressed similar views. Comments included:

*'Working within an organisation whilst not part of it can be a difficult balance.'* (college principal)

*'It may be difficult for PAs to remain impartial, i.e. autonomous enough to access all other agencies and not be seen as part of, or to represent, any one institution.'* (deputy head)

*'It will take time before we can assess whether or not PAs are able to remain impartial as they will be pulled in different directions.'* (careers manager)

- 5.21 Several PAs and senior managers questioned how PAs' time should be used when they are not in school or college. This links to the varied roles that PAs are currently performing. PAs reported that they are sometimes required to cover office duties outside their allocated institution(s) and that this is having a detrimental effect on their ability to be flexible and responsive to institutional and student needs. This is in line with the views of managers expressed in paragraph 5.8. The issue of how best to manage increasing PA caseloads was raised, in particular, there appears to be growing concern that from September onwards a new cohort of students will emerge. This is likely to impact on the existing arrangements and will require careful management.

- 5.22 A key lesson from the Connexions pilot is that an overall strategic approach has to be customised and tailored to meet the individual needs of both the institution and young people. It is important to recognise that what works well in one institution will not necessarily work in another. In Coventry and Warwickshire, there are clear differences in educational institutions relating to:

- Structures.
- Pastoral systems.
- Involvement of other agencies.
- Needs of the students, parents and carers.
- Neighbourhood and community support.

Traditionally, both careers organisations tended to deliver services to host organisations and offered broadly similar provision across all institutions. In contrast, the Connexions service in the pilot institutions is much more customised: this is a key strength of the project. At some stage a cost-analysis exercise will be necessary to fully measure the added-value and sustainability of delivering such an individualised service. In the meantime, lessons learned from local experiences should be cascaded across all institutions. Our findings suggest that it is important to actively promote success stories to those likely to be involved in Connexions in the future.



- 5.23 Many institutions provide comprehensive induction programmes, although PAs and their line-managers reported that forming positive working relationships in large institutions requires consistent input and on-going development work. A useful start has been made to enable the PA to begin to work effectively within institutions.

*Accommodation*

- 5.24 The arrangements for accommodating Personal Advisers within institutions vary. Many institutions have worked hard to provide a suitable location and several PAs are based within the institution's Careers Centre. However, a few PAs have found it hard to find space in already crowded schools. At present there is an absence of dedicated accommodation for Personal Advisers. As the service expands, the availability of suitable space in institutions may be a problem. This issue was highlighted by several people:

*'The setting of the job is important to give a positive image of the Personal Adviser to students.'* (college manager)

*'I have a very dark room, which is used for other purposes. There is no confidentiality for the young person.'* (personal adviser)

*'I share a room with the careers adviser and there is no privacy for young people. This will be a real problem if Connexions expands within the school as I hope.'* (personal adviser)

- 5.25 Within schools and colleges, Personal Advisers and school/college staff expressed the need for a Connexions resource base within the institution. It was suggested that this could help to inform staff and students on the range of information, advice and guidance available as well as supporting the concept of a one-stop shop approach. This facility was perceived as a place for PAs, school staff, agency workers and young people to use local information and share resources.

*Communication*

- 5.26 Effective communication is seen by many respondents as taking a long time to achieve. This includes communication:

- within and across institutions;
- within the Connexions company;
- with students;
- with parents, guardians and carers;
- with other agencies and services.

- 5.27 Many PAs feel that it will take at least a year or more to be fully effective within the school or college and to build up partnerships:

*'It is vital to get the service known to staff and students which is difficult and takes time in a large college.'* (college programme manager)

*'Because it's early days I don't think that I've been taken fully on board yet.'* (personal adviser)

Our findings suggest that the majority of Personal Advisers have made a good start on partnerships within schools and colleges. One PA is being mentored and participates in the college staff development programme.

*'I have fitted in well and am treated like one of the staff.'* (personal adviser in school)

*'She has fitted in as part of the team.'* (college principal)

*'Connexions is a good idea and we want to make it work.'* (college manager)

*'College staff have been very supportive and I have felt very welcome. I have an excellent base and the use of various facilities have been much appreciated.'* (personal adviser)

- 5.28 Draft Partnership Agreements are being developed and senior staff reported that they found this approach useful, especially as the agreements clearly state the intention of Connexions:

*'The Partnership Agreement is extremely thorough and makes specific reference to Connexions but it's almost intimidating because of its size.'* (headteacher)

- 5.29 In many cases, the Partnership Agreement has taken some time to develop because the pilot institutions wanted to get it right and to learn from the process. In one case, the Partnership Agreement was written by a team of staff in order to ensure that it was shared and widely understood. This is an example of good practice. A deputy head stated that:

*'As the school is now involved in several Partnership Agreements with various agencies, it would be helpful to bring them all together under one umbrella.'*

In the longer term, Connexions should provide a vehicle for achieving this.

- 5.30 One school wanted to ensure that the work of the careers adviser was retained and kept separate from the work of the PA. This arrangement is now clearly stated within the Partnership Agreement because the school does not want to lose the 'career specialist', whom it highly values. There is a growing concern here and elsewhere that careers work could become increasingly marginalised with more time allocated to providing support for 'hard to help' young people at the expense of other students. This is discussed further in paragraph 6.6.

#### *Management in community settings*

- 5.31 Most agencies have identified a manager from within their organisation with specific responsibility for overseeing the work of the PA(s); however, in three agencies a manager has yet to be identified. This is largely due to internal changes and staff shortages. The line-management role within community projects may be performed by:

- an operational manager;
- a project manager.

In most cases dual management arrangements are in place.

- 5.32 Those PAs who have successfully worked in community organisations have on-going management support. PAs reported that they have regular meetings to discuss individual cases and this has helped them to settle into the team. Our findings highlight examples where dual management is working well (e.g. Box 2).

**Box 2**  
**Management in community settings**

One team highlighted advantages both for managers and for PAs. They believe that:

*'as Connexions is new and evolving, it is helpful to discuss issues that arise with each other so that we can understand both perspectives. Ideas and resolutions to problems are shared and agreed.'*

The findings from PAs support this view. They are equally positive about dual management and feel their two managers bring:

*'different areas of expertise. One has in-depth knowledge of the client group and the workings of the team, the other has a wealth of local knowledge and an understanding of the client group.'* (personal adviser)

The managers meet on a monthly basis. The agency manager sees the PAs daily and meets them regularly to discuss their work. The caseload manager meets each of the PAs for supervision every two weeks and discusses their individual cases, systems and any issues or problems.

Both managers agree that there are still areas that need clarification:

*'The issue of sharing information and where information goes is a minefield. The practical application of managing information has not been thought through.'*

The managers suggest that young people may suffer as a result as information to support young people may not be available.

Another issue is that of caseload management. A good service has to be provided whilst managing a realistic caseload given the constraints of resources. Managers and PAs are concerned that:

*'they would raise expectations too far and then not be able to deliver.'*

Guidelines are being prepared for PAs on when it is appropriate to end the working relationship.

5.33 Personal Advisers based in community settings emphasised the sensitivity around sharing of information between agencies particularly in relation to direct contact work with young people. They saw the benefits of sharing information with the young person but also the danger of young people thinking that they are 'being talked about'. PAs and their managers identified a need for further joint development work to clarify policies in relation to:

- young people giving consent for disclosure of information;
- formal protocols for sharing information between agencies;
- shared values and ethical issues.

5.34 The National Youth Agency has recently published *Ethical Conduct in Youth Work: a Statement of Values and Principles from the National Youth Agency (2001)* which provides a useful reference in terms of the latter issue. It was noted that protocols have been agreed at a strategic level, providing a useful starting point. However, there is evidence that further work is needed at practitioner level:

*'The strategic protocols are in place but this doesn't give any guidelines as to how it should be done at practitioner level.'* (caseload manager)

*'The issue of sharing information and where information goes is a minefield.'* (YOT operational manager)

*'The practical application of managing information has not been thought through from government level downwards.'* (YOT operational manager)

Our early evidence shows that most staff are working in small teams to review existing policies and practices. Some are in the process of disseminating draft proposals to help clarify these issues. This is part of an on-going dialogue between agencies.

5.35 Management and supervision were highlighted as a key area that requires further development. PAs reported that they want a supervisor who knows the job and can help them with individual cases. However, they emphasise the difference between:

- a *management model* which tends to adopt a monitoring and performance review role;
- a *supervision model* which tends to offer a facilitative and counselling role.

Several PAs reported that both models are necessary. Given the complexity of cases with the hardest-to-help young people, supervision is required to ensure that reflective practice and professional development are integral to Connexions work:

*'Managers are too used to taking control and there is a tendency to focus on targets and outcomes rather than in-depth counselling and personal development.'* (personal adviser)

5.36 It is clear that PAs working in community settings with complex caseloads require effective management and on-going supervision. The Connexions Development Manager has identified this as a key issue that needs to be addressed in the next phase of the development plan. In most cases, dual management systems appear to be working effectively.

## 6. Delivery of the Connexions Service

6.1 This section concentrates on the work of the Personal Advisers. It begins by reviewing PA locations, caseloads and key activities. Evidence is presented from the work of the PAs in educational institutions and in community settings which reviews referral and assessment issues and the active involvement and links with other agencies. The section concludes by reflecting on the availability of alternative local provision for young people.

6.2 It is clear that the pilot has enabled PAs to:

- explore and establish their role;
- develop vital networking contacts;
- examine issues related to social exclusion;
- investigate a range of inclusiveness strategies designed to re-engage young people;
- share knowledge, skills, expertise and experience.

### *Location of Personal Advisers*

6.3 Coventry and Warwickshire have adopted different approaches in order to explore models for working within and across institutions and agencies as discussed in 5.21. Table 2 provides an overview of current arrangements.

**Table 2**

	No. of PAs serving one location	No. of PAs serving two locations	No. of PAs serving three locations	Total No. of PAs
<b>Coventry</b>	11	4	3	18
<b>Warwickshire</b>	1	9	5	15

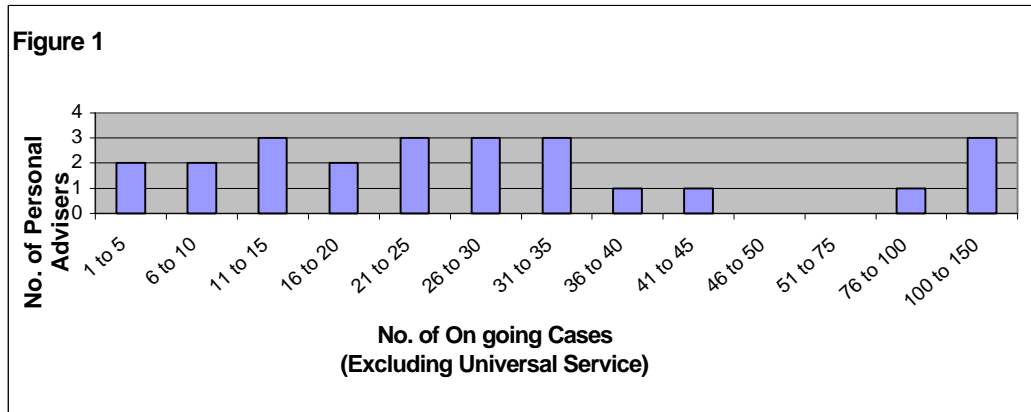
6.4 In Warwickshire at least 93% of PAs are working in two or more locations. In contrast, the comparable figure in Coventry is only 38%. Our findings indicate that where a PA is based in one setting, i.e. a school/college or community organisation, this generally appears to work well. In some cases, where PAs are working on a part-time basis across two or more locations, this has proved less satisfactory. The majority of respondents emphasised the importance of having sufficient time to establish working relationships and to fully grasp the complexities of delivering a Connexions service, particularly within a school/college setting. The three main factors that have challenged PAs working in two or more institutions/agencies are:

- undertaking training requirements alongside the delivery of services to young people and staff;
- attendance at meetings within and outside the institution/agency;
- performing dual roles i.e. working as a careers adviser and a PA.

6.5 PAs working in community settings reported at the beginning of the pilot that they were uncertain about where they would be situated and how they intended to work in the community. Since then, strong links have developed with statutory, voluntary and community groups across the sub-region. Some PAs are located within the Coventry One-Stop Shop, Warwickshire Careers Service and Youth Offending Teams (YOTs). Other PAs work on specialist projects such as the Young, Gifted and Educated. All of the PAs working in community settings have identified outreach work as a key priority. Our evidence shows that they are reaching out to community groups and exploring options for utilising local facilities on housing estates and in inner-city areas.

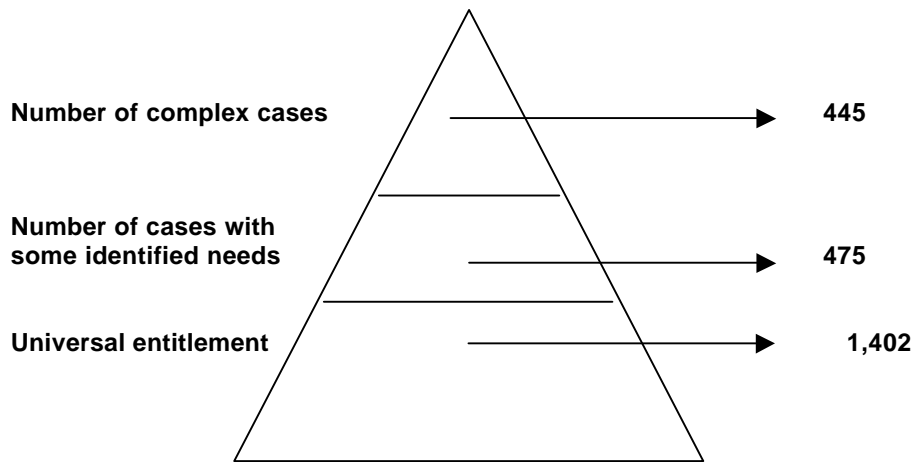
*Personal Adviser's caseloads*

6.6 At the start of the pilot there was uncertainty about how the PA caseloads would be identified and managed. In mid-January 2001, the Connexions Development Manager conducted a formal review of progress. Figures 1 and 2 provide a breakdown of current PA caseloads and their work with clients.



\*It should be noted that data is not included for all Personal Advisers, as newly appointed Personal Advisers were in the process of being allocated case loads.

**Figure 2: Breakdown of current caseloads**



- 6.7 Our findings show that within educational institutions, two types of PA caseloads have developed:
- a) *A caseload of students all with behavioural problems or other multiple barriers.* In this instance, the Personal Adviser works with a small caseload drawn from Years 10 and 11. Emphasis tends to be focused on finding alternative provision for these students through extended work experience or suitable local courses. Many are on the brink of exclusion from school.
  - b) *A varied caseload.* For example, students from Year 11, who are non-attenders or excluded, as well as Year 9 and 10 students who may lack motivation or are at risk of dropping out of the system. A limited service is also made available for students in Year 11, with the aim of finding extended opportunities for work experience. Work with younger pupils is concentrated on providing additional support in school through motivational groupwork sessions and one-to-one interviews.

PA respondents reported that where they only have students with behavioural problems or those on the point of being excluded, their main role is to find alternative local provision through extended, work experience. In some cases, this has proved difficult because of a lack of existing opportunities. A few PAs indicated that they felt rather demoralised due to a lack of appropriate placements.

- 6.8 PAs working in institutions highlighted the need for Connexions to be 'seen as a serious service for all young people'. There is a danger that those PAs working with both types of caseloads, especially those working only with young people with behavioural problems, may become stigmatised:

*'One young person started his first interview by saying ...'I'm here because of my behaviour aren't I?'* (personal adviser)

Several heads and principals are aware of this potential problem and are seeking to promote a positive image for the Connexions service within their institution. The majority of headteachers and principals suggested that unless prominence is given to the universal nature of the service, a negative perception of Connexions could emerge. It is clear that a careful balance between a universal and targeted service is required.

#### *Personal Adviser activities*

- 6.9 An analysis of PA activities show that they are adopting the following approaches:

- engaging young people to identify and address the needs that affect their learning, education and employment;
- working with a network of voluntary, statutory and community agencies to remove barriers to learning and employment opportunities;



- working with parents/guardians and carers and families to engage young people in education, training and employment opportunities;
- utilising and supporting educational institutions and training providers/ employers to help meet the needs of young people. In many cases, this involves intensive work on 'The Real Game' and 'Making It Real';
- managing information to facilitate the process of meeting the needs of young people;
- managing self and undertaking professional and personal development.

The majority of PAs report that they have yet to fully develop their work with young people. This has occurred mainly as a result of competing priorities in relation to direct delivery, training and networking with other agencies. As the Connexions service gradually develops throughout the sub-region, PAs should be in a much stronger position to deliver services to young people in their respective areas.

- 6.10 It was noted that PAs require further clarification on the extent of their role. There is still some confusion over the requirements of the job:

*'Many agencies are confused between who should be providing information, advice and guidance, which makes the role difficult.'*  
(personal adviser)

*'The service is still evolving and much of the work to date has involved informing people about Connexions and the role of the PA. There is still much work to do.'* (personal adviser)

*'High expectations, lack of structure and being client-led adds to the confusion.'* (personal adviser)

- 6.11 Several PAs have long-term plans to establish a more co-ordinated approach to service delivery at a local level, although this is taking longer than anticipated to establish and develop:

*'true partnership working will take longer than most people think.'*  
(PA line-manager)

Many respondents report that agencies need to be convinced of the merits of working within a Connexions service:

*'More needs to be done to understand each other's role and there is a need for on-going work on this.'* (personal adviser working within a community setting)

*'The need to develop and improve networking between all relevant organisations is crucial.'* (personal adviser working within a community setting)

*PAs working in educational institutions*

6.12 The range of work currently being undertaken by PAs in educational institutions shows that a wide variety of development work is in progress. This involves some, or all, of the following activities:

- One-to-one interviews with students who have been identified by the school/college as in need of additional support.
- Finding alternative provision such as extended work experience and short taster courses.
- Working with groups of young people to explore attitudes and raise motivation levels and self-esteem.
- Working with School Councils to explore ways of involving young people.
- Linking with families to improve understanding of Connexions and to tackle problems such as housing, health, careers, truancy and/or exclusion.
- Developing new ways of working such as mentoring schemes, curriculum developments and/or work with governors.
- Planning and co-ordinating a multi-agency approach within schools/colleges.
- On-going liaison with external agencies.

6.13 Several Personal Advisers are working with students in Years 7 and 8. Within the pilot, one Personal Adviser plans to support a small group of young people through their transition from primary to secondary school. The school has identified that several pupils would benefit from increased support during this transition and the PA will work with the feeder primary school to identify and support pupils before and after their transition. Early interventions designed to prevent, recover and re-integrate young people back into mainstream provision are vital and all agencies strongly indicated a desire to focus Connexions work in schools from Year 7 onwards despite the specific restrictions of Connexions for the 13-19 age group. This raises significant policy and resource issues for the future planning and delivery of Connexions in schools.

6.14 The majority of respondents emphasised the importance of initial contact with young people:

*'Each student is totally different and they all need individual contact. I can see evidence of real quality, and the movement and progression of students at an individual level.'* (headteacher)

The case studies in boxes 3-5 provide examples of good and interesting practice.

**Box 3**  
**Initial meetings with young people**

At one school, during the initial meeting stage the young person was asked to bring along (a) a photograph of their family and (b) an item that was special to them. The Personal Adviser brought similar items and the initial discussion focused around these. This enabled the young person to discuss shared interests and to talk about their family.

Once good relationships are formed, the next stage of the process is to work with groups of three or four young people in order to develop their self-esteem and confidence and to raise their aspirations. The Pacific Institute's 'Go for It' programme and the Real Game will be utilised. Local projects are also being developed within the community to encourage self-development and raise awareness of the range of opportunities available to young people.

**Box 4**  
**Jake**

Jake is studying a Vocational Certificate at college. He has been travelling quite a distance to the college and this has taken up a lot of time and proved expensive. He described his Personal Adviser as:

*'someone who would help me sort out my accommodation problems.'*

As a result of talking on a one-to-one basis with his PA, he decided to explore the option of moving into student accommodation. With the help and advice of the PA, he is now locally housed and is grateful for the support. He explained that:

*'she also sorted out my travel money too.....I find her easy to talk to and helpful. She listens to me.'*

He explained that his only problem is not being sure when his PA is available and how he can contact her.

**Box 5**  
**Steven**

Steven is in Year 10 and has moved school and home frequently. He has met his Personal Adviser several times either at home or in the community. He describes his PA as:

*'not like a teacher. He doesn't yell. He's quite calm. I find it hard talking to people about why I get into trouble. I don't feel I can fully talk to my PA as yet. It's good that you meet the same person, you can get straight on to what you have talked about before. I've met my PA at home as well - he's been three times and talked to my mum on her own. It was a bit weird him being there, but mum was happy about it and said he was OK. After I saw him at school, he showed me what he'd been writing down. I think we will get on well together.'*

When asked what the PA could do to make Steven trust him, he replied:

*'I might trust him in time, but I don't trust many people. They let you down.'*

6.15 Our findings indicate that the majority of institutions have agreed *referral systems*. These are usually negotiated between:

- school/college personnel;
- the line-manager;
- the personal adviser.

There is wide variation between institutions as to who actually undertakes the role of agreeing referral systems. Our research shows that in schools the role is performed by one or more of:

- the Headteacher;
- the Deputy Head;
- the Head of Year;
- the Head of Pastoral System;
- the Careers Co-ordinator;
- Tutors.

PAs and their line-managers emphasised the importance of having senior management involvement in this process. Respondents strongly indicate that where a senior manager from within the institution (i.e. a headteacher or deputy headteacher) is directly involved, there is greater clarity in terms of how young people are identified and work plans agreed. This joint process works most effectively when regular reviews are planned.

6.16 In most cases, institutions have adapted existing referral forms or have devised new ones to suit their circumstances. This works well and enables a clear prioritisation of students. PAs working in pilot schools are still at early stage of development, but there is evidence to show that in some schools a more co-ordinated approach is beginning to emerge. Examples are provided in boxes 6 – 8.

**Box 6**  
**Referrals**

In one school, the PA has devised a referral form in consultation with school staff. Heads of Year and their deputies complete the referral forms. A weekly meeting takes place to discuss issues including new referrals, and the PA provides an update on developments.

**Box 7**  
**Monitoring and review of student progress**

One school has built in a number of routes for assessing and monitoring the progress of young people:

- Fortnightly meetings are held between a senior manager and the PA.
- There are also monthly meetings between the senior manager and the caseload manager.
- Reasons for referral are listed by year heads, with a planning sheet drawn up for each young person. Following a meeting, a target sheet is drawn up which sets targets that can be monitored over time.
- Review meetings are held twice a term to evaluate progress and amend targets as necessary.
- Each young person completes two self-assessment questionnaires when they first meet the PA and again at the end of any work undertaken to measure progress. At present, the questionnaires cover the topics of 'School' and 'About Yourself'. The PA is developing other topics, such as 'Interests and Ambitions', 'Skills' and 'Preparing for Work', and more in-depth subjects - for example, self-esteem and anger management. The aims of the initial questionnaires are to enable a young person to reflect on their situation, and help the PA to understand them.

Following an earlier mapping exercise, the school has introduced a new way of recording information. Written records on each pupil are set up in year group files that contain a list of all the agencies working with the student and a summary record of all contacts that an agency has with the student. This includes input from the PA. This system was introduced to streamline previous methods and to ensure that *'year heads are in control and can manage the huge amounts of information that come their way'*.

The school is still developing this work and issues around confidentiality will be discussed at the next core group meeting, using the Youth Service Guidelines as a starting model.

The school has also set up two key regular meetings:

- A Connexions Core Group. This is involved with strategic planning and involves representatives from all the different agencies that work with and in the school. It meets once a term.
- The Umbrella Group. This group meets twice a term to discuss individual cases. One of the tasks of the group is to try to ensure that recording and communications systems are working effectively and that there is no duplication of work. It also decides on who is the best person/agency to help the individual move on. At this stage the student may be referred to specialist help.

The PA has attended both meetings and given valuable input regarding her work with her caseload.

**Box 8**  
**Communication and referrals**

A Pupil Referral Unit (PRU) has established strong working links with the PA. Referrals are discussed and agreed with the Head of the Centre and other PRU staff, where appropriate. Constant liaison also takes place with other agency workers to ensure that young peoples' needs are identified and a planned programme agreed. The PA explained that:

*'In the event, the referral process and initial assessment of need is seen as an organic interactive process.'*

- 6.17 In colleges, PAs have worked primarily through Student Services and college tutors. Referrals take place either on a self-referral basis or as a result of contact with tutors. In most cases, PAs have been pro-active in promoting Connexions by designing posters and leaflets and delivering presentations to staff and students.
- 6.18 However, in some cases, PAs are unclear about the referral criteria being used within their allocated institution(s):

*'All referrals are made to me by xxx, head of upper school. It is a clear policy of the school that a firm hierarchy is in place.....I have therefore, apparently, no need to be consulted in the referral process with the other staff at this stage, as all such referrals are already seen to be refined by the senior staff by the time they come to me. I have little idea how this process works, or by what criteria young people are selected prior to referral to me.'*  
(personal adviser)

- 6.19 Our findings indicate that different types of *assessment approaches* have been used. They can be divided into two main categories:
- *use of referral information*, usually provided by school or college staff, youth service, education welfare service or other relevant agencies;
  - *informal approaches*, ranging from one-to-one discussions to activity-based exercises designed to either build positive working relationships and trust or to elicit young people's aptitudes, strengths, weaknesses and personal characteristics.

During our research, we found no evidence of formal assessment methods being used such as psychometric testing. Many PAs are relying heavily on educational institutions to identify young people's needs. This has some advantages; however, the active involvement of young people is central to the assessment process, particularly in relation to identifying factors which may be supporting or hindering progress in learning and personal development. Many respondents indicated that assessment should not intrude upon the early relationships being developed with young people.

- 6.20 Coventry & Warwickshire have shared information on assessment approaches mainly through discussions at Personal Adviser Sub-Regional Group meetings. Beyond this, there was little evidence from our findings of sharing or cross-fertilising assessment practice. At least three PAs are currently involved in the process of reviewing the *Connexions Framework for Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review Consultation Paper*. It is clear that this aspect of the work requires strengthening.
- 6.21 The pilot has recently established contact with the Lincolnshire Connexions pilot and is currently exploring ways of jointly testing out a range of diagnostic and assessment approaches. It is clear that a toolkit of user-friendly diagnostic instruments is required for use in schools and colleges. Coventry intends to continue its work with Professor Jim Sampson (Florida State University) and is in the process of exploring the adaptation of the Career Concerns Checklist.
- 6.22 It is clear that there is strong management and practitioner interest to develop this aspect of work but, as yet, many PAs do not feel suitably equipped or confident about performing in-depth assessments without having adequate training and supervision. Some indicated the need for a toolkit of different assessment approaches to support work with a wide range of clients.
- 6.23 As yet, none of the educational institutions appear to have agreed *specific targets* or performance measures. Several institutions felt there should be some quantifiable outcomes, given that the work of the PA is likely to impact on institutional targets. As one senior manager explained:

*'The whole thing is too woolly, we have no way of knowing if it will be successful.'* (school senior manager)

One Personal Adviser described the current arrangements as:

*'Non-specific with no indication of what targets are needed.'*  
(personal adviser)

Conversely, many respondents expressed their unease with performance measures and target setting at this stage of the process:

*'The pilot needs to test out new ways of working and it's too early to set targets and outcomes. This will come at a later stage when we've all got used to working with one another.'* (careers co-ordinator)

- 6.24 PAs and senior managers gave a clear message that targets have to be:
- jointly agreed;
  - challenging yet attainable;
  - transparent;
  - include 'hard' and 'soft' targets.

Several institutions are currently developing milestones for the PA but, in many cases, this has proved difficult due to insufficient levels of PA time spent within the school or college. It is important to identify realistic targets for PAs, taking into account that in many cases, the progress and development of some young people may be slow.

*Work with parents/guardians/carers*

- 6.25 The majority of Personal Advisers have begun to work effectively with parents. Those working within school/college settings identified this as a specific priority. In some cases, PAs write personally to parents, giving them information and setting up appointments. Others contact parents direct by telephone and then arrange home visits. Examples of good/interesting practice are provided in boxes 9-10. In the long term there is further scope to explore the potential use of the internet and e-mail facilities.

**Box 9**  
**Involving parents/guardians/carers**

One PA explained that she has a communication role with parents which involves explaining and discussing the full range of opportunities available to their children. She also sees her role as increasingly becoming involved in 'advocating' between the parent(s) and the school. Parents already viewed her as a broker who was acting in the best interests of the child.

**Box 10**  
**Involving parents/guardians/carers**

At one school, once a student is identified as a potential referral, a target sheet is produced. This is discussed with the young person and a letter sent out to parents/carers. The letter gives information about the Connexions service and lists possible options for them: for example, are they content for the PA to see their child, and would they like to come and discuss this with the school? To date, out of the caseload of 15 young people, all parents/carers have agreed to PA involvement and three have had joint discussions with the school and PA. The service has been received positively by all parents to date.

- 6.26 Although several PAs are confident about making links with parents, a few indicated that they do not feel well prepared for this aspect of their role.

*Involvement of governors*

- 6.27 In early October 2000, visits to educational institutions showed limited involvement of governors in the development of Connexions. More recently, many of the institutions have addressed this issue through Connexions presentations at governors meetings and consultation exercises linked to the development of the Connexions Business Plan. An example is outlined in box 11.



**Box 11**  
**Involvement of governors**

At one school, the Connexions Service was discussed with governors during a meeting. The school line-manager for Connexions gave a presentation on the Connexions philosophy, management and work plans. The governors met the Personal Adviser and were able to ask specific questions about how referrals and the delivery of services would take place. It was reported that they had 'an in-depth rounded discussion about a wide range of issues'. Governors emphasised the importance of offering a universal service in school as well as a targeted service for those with multiple barriers to learning. They indicated that Connexions could add-value to the school in the long term by bringing together a range of agencies within a coherent framework. Governors suggested that Connexions 'should begin when students enter the school'.

*PAs' work in community settings*

6.28 The delivery of Connexions in community settings is extremely varied. Most PAs describe their work as falling within three main categories:

1. working with other professionals/agencies such as Youth Offending Teams, Social Services, Probation Service, Youth Service, Health Education Service, and a plethora of community/voluntary/lottery-funded organisations such as the Youth Access Project and the Homeless Project;
2. exploring opportunities and finding appropriate provision for young people;
3. supporting and helping young people in transition.

6.29 The majority reported that they are working with young people who have not attended school and have experienced unsettled lives. The continuity of approach offered so far by the PAs is a major strength, as some young people have attended several secondary schools, and have had multiple social workers and foster parents:

*'I've managed to draw in young people whose previous relationship with the YOT was poor.'* (personal adviser)

PAs and their line-managers are jointly exploring ways in which continuity can be maintained. For example, as a result of close contact with a local Youth Offending Team (YOT), the PA is planning to visit a young person detained at a Youth Offending Institution to provide a consistent approach. Close working links have been developed between the PA and YOT workers.

6.30 PAs frequently accompany young people to careers centres, job interviews and group sessions designed to improve confidence. They also find work-experience placements for them. Several are working in drop-in centres at youth clubs and developing useful inter-agency links. Others are focusing on particular areas of need: for example, work with young people in rural areas and linking to existing projects such as Double Take and the First Gear Project. PAs working with looked-after young people link with designated units and the NCH Aftercare Project.

Other PAs are designing a Personal Development Programme for young people. Examples are outlined in boxes 12 and 13.

**Box 12**  
**Development course**

Two PAs are currently designing a ten-week Connexions Development Course for disaffected young people and they plan to have this accredited. The course aims to:

- Engage young people in their own learning and development.
- Develop social skills and self-awareness.
- Encourage young people to progress on to education, training or employment.

The integrated course, which will include a residential visit, will cover four main areas:

- Job search.
- Self presentation.
- Key skills.
- Future planning and development.

**Box 13**  
**Young, Gifted and Educated Project**

This project aims to help under-achieving African-Caribbean young people who have either been excluded from school, who are not attending school or at risk of exclusion. The project has a high profile and receives referrals from schools, parents, statutory organisations, such as the behaviour support unit, and self-referrals from young people themselves. Two Personal Advisers work on the project and have built up a caseload of 20 young people; they offer one-to-one mentoring and try to help them to overcome their problems. They have also worked with families and carers to support them in supporting young people. This help has been very positively received by families. The Personal Advisers have also spent time with local agencies and schools explaining the aims of the project.

Group sessions have been piloted in two schools addressing issues for black young people; for example, awareness of cultural issues, race awareness and behaviour management and communication skills. These sessions examine the issues involved and explore positive strategies for resolving them.

The project has not formally involved young people in planning as yet, although they will be involved in planning the proposed residential. Young people have been very positive about the project *'at last, there is someone who understands and believes me'*.

Dual management is working well. Monitoring, review and evaluation is undertaken through monthly supervision meetings. Action plans, drawn up with young people, are reviewed and targets set. The Personal Advisers also provide quarterly feed back to the West Indian Community Association which forms the Steering Group.

- 6.31 Our findings show that the majority of PAs working in community settings have concentrated their efforts on networking with organisations and agreeing ways in which effective referrals can be made. Agencies mentioned include education services for travelling children, community workers, after-care services, national children's home workers, drug agencies, housing associations and careers services. This shows a diverse range of organisations which are utilising the Connexions service.
- 6.32 In some cases, Personal Advisers are relying on their 'street cred' and outreach activities for self and agency referrals. Others are linking into community centres and other neighbourhood projects. In the main, the demand for services is gradually increasing, and caseload management needs to be closely monitored. Most PAs have devised systems to record the nature of referrals and levels of client contact. In some cases, line-managers expressed concern about the likelihood of growing numbers of young people wanting to access the service from the summer onwards. This will significantly impact on existing practice as the client numbers increase.
- 6.33 Our findings show that in line with PA counterparts in schools and colleges, informal approaches are being used to assess clients needs. The majority of assessment is carried out on a one-to-one basis. The majority of PAs are involving young people in identifying their own needs assessment. Many feel that formal assessment could be used more effectively when young people are 'on board' and feel ready to give serious consideration to developing their own future plans.
- 6.34 The majority of PAs working in community settings reported that at this stage of development, no specific *targets* have been formally agreed, with the exception of working with specific target group(s). These PAs indicated that they are in the process of agreeing 'success criteria' with their joint line-managers, including both 'hard' and 'soft' targets.
- 6.35 In most cases, work is monitored and reviewed regularly by joint line-managers, mainly through monthly team meetings, informal supervision partnership agreement discussions and completion of progress sheets. Discussions have taken place in most agencies to review how data are collected and have monthly statistical records are being used. At present, there appears to be no clear evaluation strategy for the work of the PAs in the community, although monitoring and review arrangements are being developed. PA line-managers reported that they intend to develop an evaluation strategy.
- Alternative provision*
- 6.36 Our findings show that regardless of the delivery setting Connexions managers and Personal Advisers highlight the need for a more structured system to identify alternative provision. Many report that the PA will lose credibility if alternative provision is not made available:

*'I can identify the needs of a young person, but I cannot meet them. In the long term I will be seen as someone who talks to them but does nothing for them.'* (personal adviser)

- 6.37 The findings from the pilot highlight a need for the development of alternative curriculum provision. Two schools are looking to jointly develop the Youth Achievement Award for students. Partnership approaches involving the LEA, the Youth Service, voluntary organisations and others should be used to identify existing alternative curriculum provision in local areas, highlight gaps and improve provision.
- 6.38 From our research, respondents indicate that local colleges have been generally supportive in developing customised provision in response to young people's needs. However, there is a growing demand for practical skill training combined with social/life skills programmes. The lessons learned from the Learning Gateway should be built upon, as they provide examples of good practice in terms of negotiating bite-sized learning opportunities and taster programmes with training providers at a local level. An example of this is given in box 14.

**Box 14**

**John**

One Personal Adviser is working with students who are poor attenders. She is trying to help them find alternative work-experience provision for a day or a half-day each week. They will then attend school for the rest of the week. She is supporting John in this and has helped him to write to possible providers asking for a long-term placement. She suggested local garages to contact as John is very interested in cars. John has her mobile telephone number so that he can call her if she is not in school.

Next week, John has an interview at a garage and his Personal Adviser is taking him to the appointment. She asked if he would like her to remain during the interview. He agreed because *'she gives me more confidence'*. John describes his Personal Adviser as *'very helpful to me'*. He is optimistic that he will get a suitable placement.

- 6.39 In one area, each Personal Adviser has a target of finding one additional work placement each month. Small and medium-sized companies are currently targeted as the most likely sources of placements. Several PAs spoke about their lack of success in finding placements for young people:

*'Employers are unwilling to take on young people who are disaffected with school or who have particular problems.'* (personal adviser)

*'There is a need to find employers willing to offer work experience to difficult youngsters and a need for financial help for employers to afford the additional cost.'* (personal adviser)

- 6.40 The eventual rollout of Connexions into every institution across the sub-region will place further demands on finding new and alternative provision for young people. The findings of a recent NFER research on alternative education provision at Key Stage 4 highlights the key factors in effective alternative provision<sup>14</sup>:

<sup>14</sup> Alternative Educational Provision at Key Stage 4. NFER Research Report 11.

- A supportive school context.
- A supportive local context.
- Selection procedures.
- Sustaining collaborative partnerships.
- Encouraging and acknowledging achievement.
- Monitoring, review and evaluation.

These link well with the Connexions strategy and could underpin joint approaches throughout the sub-region. The pilot findings highlight the need for a more local strategic approach to alternative provision, building on the existing good practice and identifying gaps. It also suggests the need for a local cost-effective system to find extended work experience placements. There is potential to develop a joint approach between trainee PAs and experienced PAs in their work with employers and training providers.

- 6.41 Many PAs and their line-managers identified a need to have flexibility in providing resources that can be used to directly support young people. There appears to be some confusion as to who is responsible for the provision of resources that can be used with students. PAs report that access to Connexions funds has proved problematic and at present, policies are inconsistent. This needs to be clarified in line with equal opportunities policies.

*Evidence-based practice*

- 6.42 All the respondents acknowledged the importance of developing reflective practice. PA line-managers emphasised the difficulties of keeping up-to-date with the full range of Connexions developments. Sharing information between managers within and outside school and college settings is necessary in order to ensure that policies and practices build on 'what works' and the lessons learned from traditional and new approaches.

- 6.43 The Connexions Development Manager has played an active role in encouraging PAs to share their practice and experiences through:

- the use of reflective diaries;
- regular PA meetings.

Personal Advisers are in the process of examining how to make best use of their diaries to support professional and personal development. The issue of confidentiality and ownership of the contents has yet to be finalised. In the long term, reflective diaries could be used within a framework for monitoring progress and/or supervision.

## 7. Involvement of Young People

- 7.1 There has been considerable progress in involving young people in the design and development of the Connexions service across the sub-region. As detailed in an earlier CeGS report<sup>15</sup>, young people have been involved in the recruitment of Personal Advisers and have been consulted through a variety of surveys and focus groups. A city-wide consultation with young people, led by Marketry, resulted in the production of a highly informative report. However, the key messages from this still need to be addressed by many of the agencies and educational institutions involved in Connexions. Warwickshire Careers Service has commissioned research on working with 'gifted and talented young people' and the involvement of disaffected young people in shaping the new service. These reports should be given high priority in the next development phase.
- 7.2 Young people are part of the local management committees and those involved report that their views and experiences were listened to<sup>16</sup>. Good relationships have developed with the Youth Council and with neighbourhood Youth Forums. A Young Person's Charter is also currently being produced. Examples of good practice in involving young people are given in boxes 15 and 16.

### **Box 15** **Involving young people**

Alan and one other young person belong to a 'Connexions Reference Group'. They have contributed to the young person's section of the 2001/2002 Business Plan and the Young Person's Charter. Alan has seen the draft section and consulted other local young people - for example, at local advice agencies. He feels that *'95% of our views were incorporated, the others were perhaps a bit ambitious'*. Alan is positive:

*'There are good, early signs but it will take up to two years to see if young people will really relate to the new service or whether they consider it as an old service re-branded.'*

Alan believes that Personal Advisers are *'making a lot of effort'*.

### **Box 16** **One-Stop Shop**

The One-Stop Shop in Coventry opened in November 2000. This offers information, advice and guidance to young people on various issues, from careers to health. Young people were actively involved in the design of the shop including design, layout and colour schemes. This has significantly contributed to the imaginative, welcoming environment, which is being increasingly used by young people and staff from other agencies'.

<sup>15</sup> Coventry and Warwickshire CeGS Evaluation Report 2, section 5.

<sup>16</sup> Right Connexions in Coventry. TES FE Focus. November 3, page 36

- 7.3 Personal Advisers and their line-managers indicated that young people should be consulted more on the planning and delivery of the new service. They are also very keen to publicise and promote Connexions. However, in practice this has proved slow to achieve. Several PAs highlight the need for local information for young people and have produced specific publicity material and leaflets for them and their parents. They have posted these directly to homes and given them to students. Personal Advisers highlight the urgent need for a clear branding of the service and for more publicity, particularly for young people and their parents. This is being addressed, in line with Connexions branding guidelines recently issued by the CSNU.
- 7.4 Many respondents described how young people are unclear about the service and the role of the Personal Adviser. The majority of Personal Advisers in educational institutions have not yet begun to involve young people in the planning and development of the service, although they highlight this as an important aspect of Connexions.
- 7.5 Several PAs have made a start or have begun to develop strategic approaches. One PA has been tasked with getting the Youth Action Group to undertake research into the views of young people regarding Connexions and the work of the PA. Examples of different approaches are given in boxes 17 and 18.

**Box 17**  
**Links with the School Youth Council**

One Personal Adviser has already made links with the School Youth Council, This school has tried to get a representative sample of students on the Council. The Personal Adviser has discussed his role with the President and plans to talk to the Council about what they want and how their needs can be met. This will be used initially as the vehicle to involve young people in the planning of Connexions in the school.

**Box 18**  
**Software packages**

A software package entitled 'Viewpoint' is currently being piloted as part of the new Connexions service. This is in a questionnaire format but in a very user-friendly style using pictures, games, voice activation and tick boxes to make it easier for the user.

This package is still being piloted but early indications are that it will be useful for eliciting feedback from young people and for drawing specific information together.

- 7.6 Respondents highlight the need to build on the developing good practice with the Youth Council and Youth Forums and to link this into schools and colleges. Closer working links with School Councils and Student Unions should be developed in the future. The process of fully involving young people, takes considerable time in building relationships of trust and developing young people's confidence and self-esteem. Personal Advisers may need training to understand the range of approaches and methods which can be used, in order to fully involve a variety of young people in the process.
- 7.7 Involving young people in undertaking research was identified as an innovative way forward in terms of establishing more formal working links with Personal Advisers. It was suggested that there is potential for young people to become engaged in action research, supported by training, accreditation and on-going support. This would enable closer working links to be established between young people in the community and Connexions workers.
- 7.8 Some respondents indicated that a broader representation of young people is required in order to feed into the Connexions strategic and local development plans. It is acknowledged that this will take time. The long-term aim within the sub-region is to provide an increasing number of positive role models from 'all walks of life' so they can promote the service and encourage the involvement of others.
- 7.9 Overall, there is clear evidence of growing dialogue between Connexions workers and young people. The importance of listening to and responding to young people is given high priority across the sub-region. Nevertheless, a major challenge is how to ensure that a wide range of representative views are fully captured and local responses developed to meet local needs.



## 8. Partnership Working

- 8.1 The findings show that the majority of Personal Advisers have begun to make effective links with a diverse range of youth support agencies. Detailed mapping of partnerships and local provision has been completed across the sub-region. This is a key strength of the Connexions pilot.

### *Work in educational institutions*

- 8.2 A wide variety of partnership working has developed in educational institutions. Draft partnership agreements which build on careers service partnerships are currently being evaluated, given the introduction of Personal Advisers in schools and colleges. In many pilot schools, closer working links have been established with the Educational Welfare Service, Social Services, Behaviour Support Service, and Youth Offending Teams. Links with the Youth Service vary: where there are no existing links, PAs have struggled to develop close working relationships. In some cases, new partnerships have formed in schools/colleges that include local church, neighbourhood and mediation projects. An example is given in box 19.

#### **Box 19**

##### **Forming new partnerships**

In a local community college, partnerships have developed with 'alternative providers' such as the Behaviour Support Service, local church, neighbourhood support project, community development agency, voluntary organisations and the local education action zone. Representatives are working together to find ways of expanding opportunities for all young people in the local area.

In some areas, Connexions has helped to strengthen working relationships between colleges and schools:

*'Connexions will assist in the development of the school/college partnership.'* (headteacher)

Several PAs are taking students and their parents on college visits. They are also exploring the possibility of alternative curriculum provision with college tutors.

- 8.3 Some PAs are developing links with employers and training providers; however, this is patchy across the sub-region. Our findings show that the Education Action Zone in Coventry has supported employer networking and contacts in schools/colleges. Senior managers in schools highlight the importance of the PA role in expanding community and business links. However, the current arrangements do not provide sufficient time and resources to fully develop this aspect of the work. Greater clarity is needed in terms of PA work with employers and training providers.

- 8.4 In a few cases, PAs who have recently been recruited to Connexions report that they are unsure how other support agencies work, particularly where there is no direct link into the school. Some respondents stated that they were ill prepared to take on the wider advocacy role:

*'I feel I have no authority yet to question other services.'* (personal adviser in school)

It is envisaged that individualised training and development plans should help to overcome this problem.

*Work in community settings*

- 8.5 Several PAs are building on established work with other agencies. This approach extends and develops existing links. One of the major tasks is trying to get agencies to see that the role of Connexions is much wider than the traditional careers service role. PAs feel that the service should be 'better marketed' to other agencies and not just rely on PAs on the ground. They point to many organisations that know very little about Connexions. PAs generally see their current role as being 'reactive rather than proactive'; however, there is scope for more pro-active work to be undertaken in the coming months. An example of pro-active work is given in box 20

**Box 20**  
**Awareness raising**

The PAs working within a YOT team planned an awareness day at the end of March. This aims to:

- Raise awareness of the YOT and their clients.
- Improve networking between local agencies and organisations, e.g. developing specific points of contact within schools.
- Share good practice and learn from other agencies.

- 8.6 Connexions has begun to move into the voluntary sector and PAs have linked with several local projects. This needs to be further extended to ensure that the voluntary and community sector are an integral part of Connexions working at neighbourhood level.

## 9. Training of Personal Advisers

9.1 This section examines the training and professional development of Personal Advisers in Coventry & Warwickshire. It provides a brief overview of national developments and how these relate to policies and practices at local and sub-regional levels. The findings draw primarily on evidence gathered from:

- one-to-one and group discussions held with twenty Personal Advisers in schools/colleges and those working in community settings (this also involved a review of completed training evaluation reports);
- interviews with two staff involved in the planning and delivery of the Foundation Diploma for Personal Advisers;
- interviews held with twenty-four managers who have responsibility for overseeing PA work.
- documentary reviews of Personal Adviser training and development plans at a national and local level, including an overview of sub-regional 'customised training' provision.

### *National context*

9.2 At a national level, the CSNU Planning Guidance provides information that specifically relates to 'Advisers and Training'. This makes a distinction between three types of Connexions Advisers:

- (a) *Connexions Personal Advisers.* These will work with young people facing a range of barriers and needing in-depth support. It is envisaged that these PAs may benefit from a mixed caseload and will combine a professional specialism such as careers, youth or social work with the skills required to take on the PA role. They will enhance their existing skills to encompass the additional skills required to be a PA, as part of multi-disciplinary teams. A Foundation Diploma for Personal Advisers is currently being piloted in 13 Connexions Pilot areas including Coventry & Warwickshire. Some pilot areas are also at an early stage in planning to introduce an Access programme designed to support Personal Advisers without formal academic qualifications.
- (b) *Connexions Advisers.* These will work primarily within their existing professional field, but undertaking part of the full PA role. They will include careers workers and youth workers who will undertake 'Understanding Connexions' training (around 10 days) designed to '*develop their skills and enable them to work effectively in the Connexions context*'. They '*need not be trained to work with those young people facing multiple barriers*'. This short training programme is currently being developed by INCLUDE.

- (c) *Specialist Advisers.* These will provide more specialist professional support in such areas as: substance and drug abuse; teenage pregnancy advice; health, including mental health; and counselling. They may also include specialist aspects of information, advice and guidance on learning and careers, for instance, special needs. As part of their work *'they may also undertake some of the wider responsibilities of Connexions Personal Advisers, including brokerage, referral and overcoming less fundamental barriers to learning'*. It is envisaged that initial training provision for staff working within specialist services will have to incorporate specific reference to Connexions service developments.

So far, it is envisaged that on a national level:

*'The balance in the first year of operation is likely to be about half Connexions Advisers working with those facing multiple barriers and about half delivering the universal service.'* (CSNU Planning Guidance, 2001)

#### *Local context*

9.3 In Coventry & Warwickshire, a sub-regional Connexions Training Group was formed during summer 2000, to oversee the recruitment and training of PAs. In July 2000, a two-stage selection process was agreed whereby candidates were required to give a presentation to young people, followed by a formal interview. Twenty PAs were recruited in August 2000; their contrasting backgrounds and experiences provided a rich and diverse range of professional expertise (as described in paragraph 5.13). The Sub-Regional Training Group prepared the following plans to ensure adequate support for newly recruited PAs. These were as follows:

- to undertake a skills audit to help identify areas for further learning (using McCombie material);
- to introduce personal staff development plans;
- to offer supervision in a variety of different ways;
- to provide a half-day each week for PA meetings at either County, City or sub-regional levels.

9.4 In September 2000, the Warwickshire Local Management Committee (LMC) formally agreed that:

*'There will be an expectation that all Personal Advisers will have attended summer school training/induction prior to beginning the new service after half-term.'* (LMC document 22/9/00)

Twelve PAs were recruited. In the first instance, arrangements were made for them to have access to professional supervision and support from:

*'The employing body (Warwickshire Careers) and be provided by the appropriate Area Careers Manager (or nominated deputy).'*  
(LMC document 22/9/00)

Personal Advisers were required to work a split week that would allow them to work from more than one site. The rationale for this approach was that:

*'In the longer term this would provide greater choice for young people and help to prevent PAs being too specialist in their approach.'* (LMC document 22/9/00)

It was agreed that the management arrangements for PAs were to be negotiated on an individual basis, with the option of dual management arrangements if appropriate. Partnership arrangements and day-to-day management would be the responsibility of the unit manager (Headteacher, Project Leader, Team Manager). All twelve PAs were enrolled on the Foundation Diploma for PAs (Connexions) to commence in October 2000.

- 9.5 Similarly, Coventry recruited eight PAs and it was expected that recruitment and training procedures would follow the same pattern as in Warwickshire. However, due to delays with police clearance checks and some entrants having to work their notice, PAs were not appointed until late September 2000. As a result, the majority entered the Foundation Diploma as part of their induction to Connexions. Staff responsible for the delivery of the Foundation Diploma reported that this caused problems. For example:

*'On the first day, we had people arriving who were appointed late in the process and our original assumptions that everyone had been inducted to the Connexions service were wrong! This meant that the group had very differing needs that needed to be addressed before we could begin to deliver the first module.'*  
(programme tutor)

*'It would have been helpful to have a proper induction before going on to the Diploma because I was still trying to work out my role and expectations. Nonetheless, I just about managed to cope with this.'* (personal adviser)

#### *Foundation Diploma for Personal Advisers*

- 9.6 The Foundation Diploma for Personal Advisers is currently being piloted across Connexions areas. It was introduced in Coventry & Warwickshire in October 2000. The programme has been developed by a design team working under the auspices of INCLUDE which is part of the Centre for British Teachers (CfBT). The key functions and values are designed to ensure that:

*'The Personal Adviser will understand and put into practice the Connexions principles and be able to deliver four key functions which include information gathering and assessment, planning, intervention, support and guidance, working with other agencies and monitoring, reviewing and evaluating practice.'* (Programme Guide, Autumn 2000)

9.7 The qualification is validated by the Nottingham Trent University (NTU) at undergraduate level II and provides 60 undergraduate credits. Each of the first four modules provides 10 credits and the last module provides 20 credits. Students are required to complete five modules, each one linked to the next in terms of skills and knowledge. These comprise:

- (1) *Module One:* Managing referrals, assessment and engagement with young people
- (2) *Module Two:* Working to secure change with young people, their parents and/or carers and practitioners in the mainstream learning environment
- (3) *Module Three:* Securing an optimal response from all agencies and the community in supporting a young person through change
- (4) *Module Four:* Evidence-based practice, record-keeping and communication
- (5) *Module Five:* Improving service delivery to young people through reflective practice in context.

Appendix 5 provides an outline of the aims and objectives of the training programme.

#### *Findings*

9.8 In October 2000, Coventry & Warwickshire nominated 20 PAs to undertake the Diploma. Nineteen PAs arrived on day one of the programme. One of the programme trainers commented that:

*'the twenty we were expecting on Day One were not those who had turned up!'* (programme tutor)

Since then, Modules One, Two and Three have been delivered, and at the time of the evaluation, PAs were halfway through Module Four. There are now 17 PAs participating in the programme. One PA has dropped out as a result of failing the first assignment and time constraints. One of the programme tutors reported:

*'She had problems with the first assignment which I think demotivated her. Unfortunately, she was one of the best in the group and this is a sad loss.'* (programme tutor)

Another PA attends 'sporadically' but 'is to all intents and purposes is off the programme.' (programme tutor)

*Planning and delivery*

9.9 The delivery dates completed up to the end of February 2001 were as follows:

- 8<sup>th</sup>, 9<sup>th</sup> & 17<sup>th</sup> November 2000
- 12<sup>th</sup> & 21<sup>st</sup> December 2000
- 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2001
- 2<sup>nd</sup> & 27<sup>th</sup> February 2001

This was interspersed with Action Learning Set meetings held on 24<sup>th</sup> November 2000, 5<sup>th</sup> January and 9<sup>th</sup> February 2001. Further delivery dates have been planned from March to May 2001.

9.10 Our evidence shows that the training providers from INCLUDE and NTU had not formally met with the sub-regional Connexions Training Group prior to the delivery of the Diploma Training programme in Coventry & Warwickshire. The first formal meeting between the delivery team and the Connexions Development Manager was in February 2001 prompted by the evaluation exercise. As a result, it was evident that there were gaps in information on both sides, particularly in relation to the additional training that PAs were also engaged in. No formal protocols or agreements were in place to feed back 'problems' or 'issues' that needed to be resolved at a local level. For example:

*'The problem comes when PAs raise issues that are outside the programme such as support from managers which we can do little about.'* (programme tutor)

*'It seemed that INCLUDE wanted to keep us out of the training because they thought that this would prevent students from being open about their experiences. I felt excluded and had to rely on the PAs to tell me about what was happening on the programme.'* (Connexions manager)

9.11 Each had gathered evaluation feedback from PAs and it would have been useful to share this from the outset. One of the major learning points from the pilot is the need for training providers to establish clear channels of communication and regular meetings with staff responsible for PA training and supervision at a local level. It will also be important to communicate clearly with line-managers responsible for overseeing the work of the PAs. All of this needs to be built-in at an early stage to ensure that roles and responsibilities are made explicit and that arrangements are in place to share information on progress and issues. The sub-regional PA Group Meetings also offer opportunities for reviewing developments and sharing future training plans.

### *Modes of delivery and content*

9.12 The two main modes of delivery are:

- *Distance learning* with a certain amount of contact through 'live training days' and facilitated work within an action learning set. The latter were described by programme staff as:

*'opportunities for supporting students through group tutorials, with the afternoon taken up with individual tutorials if people want them.'*

- *A website discussion forum* designed for reporting the outcomes of activities that take place in action learning sets or through the distance-learning part of the programme. The intention is that the website will facilitate collaboration and communication between programme participants, will allow PAs to share identified best practice and will develop a forum for joint problem-solving and collaborative project work.

9.13 The majority of PAs reported that they are using 'high quality' course materials. For example:

*'The course readers are very good.'* (personal adviser)

*'The module handbooks have been extremely useful.'* (personal adviser)

*'The workbook on other agencies contains useful information.'* (personal adviser)

*'The distance learning materials are excellent.'* (personal adviser)

Some PAs reported that certain aspects of the training materials were invaluable, such as:

- understanding the behaviour of young people;
- learning about the ideas behind change in Reader 5;
- updating on relevant theories.

9.14 At this early stage, PAs are unable to articulate how their training has made a direct impact on their work with young people and agencies. Many PAs reported that they highly value having the opportunity to interact with others on the course, receive peer support and learn from one another's experience:

*'It's great to have the chance to share our experiences and to discuss how we could best tackle a particular difficult situation.'* (personal adviser)



9.15 A few expressed concern:

*'There has been a problem of readers not being available in time. So far, it's now end of February and only three out of ten have arrived!'* (personal adviser)

*'The CD ROM doesn't work with all laptops / PCs.'* (personal adviser)

*'The case study examples were not realistic.'* (personal adviser)

*'Often students complain that they do not have all the necessary materials to complete their assignments on time.'* (PA Manager)

*'The CDs did not work properly.'* (personal adviser)

The late arrival of readers has caused anxiety amongst the PAs, mainly due to the time constraints for completing each of the modules within a five-week period. Both programme tutors and students reported that the Design Team is currently addressing these problems/issues. In summary, the quality of the materials appears to be excellent, although in future complete sets of materials should be made available at the start of the programme.

9.16 PAs reported a very mixed response regarding their use of the website and discussion forum. A few had accessed the website. Two Personal Advisers reported that:

*'The website is very interesting.'* (personal adviser)

*'It provides a very good back-up.'* (personal adviser)

The majority indicated that due to time constraints they had not yet made use of this facility. Some had experienced problems in downloading forms and as a result had given up on this. PAs in Coventry do not currently have regular access to the Internet; however, this problem is in the process of being resolved. It is clear that the website has great potential and the Design Team will need to review the extent to which this is utilised by PAs on an on-going basis.

9.17 From our findings, it is evident that the Programme Tutors have systems in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the inputs in terms of both delivery of training sessions and of course content. They have taken steps to feed back students' viewpoints and recommendations to enhance the planning and delivery of the programme. This is an example of good practice which enables the feedback and evaluation process to be iterative and creative.

### *Timing*

9.18 The hours of work assigned to each of the first four modules consists of approximately:-

- 20 hours for distance learning;
- 12 hours for live training;
- 3 hours' work with a smaller group in an action learning set;
- time spent and experience gained in the working environment.

Module Five is a double module, and as a result, the previously mentioned study hours are doubled.

9.19 One of the reoccurring themes that emerged from the interviews with PAs, managers and tutors was the issue of time constraints and pressures to undertake training and meet the assignment deadlines. There are two main issues here; firstly, the PAs experience of meeting the module(s) assignment requirements and deadlines; and secondly, the time spent in training as opposed to delivering services.

9.20 Findings from the student feedback and evaluation reports of Modules One & Two indicate that the majority of PAs have made the set deadlines for handing in their assignments. In some cases, PAs report that there is insufficient time to complete the assignments, due to:

- the late arrival of course materials, such as marking criteria and readers;
- the new and daunting experience of studying a distance learning programme and having to write an essay;
- the pressures of having to manage caseloads;
- the range of networking required within and outside institutions;
- the requirement to attend other training events.

Approximately 30% reported that longer time is needed for completion of the assignments:

*'There is limited time to do background work - difficult due to the number of hours required on top of pressures of day-to-day job.'*  
(personal adviser)

*'There is a need to have longer time in which to complete the course.'* (personal adviser)

*'The time allowance for completing each assignment is currently two weeks and two days and it isn't long enough!'* (personal adviser)

9.21 Programme tutors cited examples of requests from PAs for assignment extensions; however, they pointed out the difficulties of PAs falling behind in their studies, given the six-month timescale of the programme. They also highlighted that:

*'The completion of the module is really reached with the successful completion of the related assignment. A lot of the participants have had extensions to these....'* (programme tutor)

9.22 PAs reported that module meetings are usually held on a day when the assignment is due to be submitted to NTU, this affects motivation and attendance levels. They suggested that holding meetings either on a regular day or block-booking arrangement should be explored. The training programme also needs to take into consideration the dates already scheduled for sub-regional PA Group Meetings. This would enable PAs to plan their diaries in advance and to schedule their work accordingly.

9.23 The majority of PAs indicated that they favoured an eight-week rather than a five-week programme to allow sufficient time to study the materials, to apply relevant aspects to their practice and to reflect the findings in their essay. Examples were cited such as:

*'There are unrealistic expectations of how much work we can do in a five-week period. One folder contains loads of activities, two readers, watch a video, two training days, half day active learning, and write a 2,000-word essay. Two months would be more realistic.'* (personal adviser)

*'It feels like an academic exercise rather than a knowledge and skills development process. I want time to reflect on what I've learned and to see if it works in practice.'* (personal adviser)

The majority of PAs and their line-managers strongly recommended that the INCLUDE Design Team review the current completion arrangements.

9.24 In some cases, PAs reported that the current training venue was:

*'Remote and incurs additional travel time on top of a busy schedule.'* (personal adviser)

The programme tutors reported that the venue arrangements are being reviewed and a more central location will be used in future. In some cases, PAs indicated that they would prefer a residential block because:

*'Too often we are called back into the office during training.'* (personal adviser)

9.25 Coventry & Warwickshire have provided PAs with a half-day per week for study leave. On one level, this appears generous given some employers' expectations that staff should study in their own time. However, PAs reported that their study time is often eroded due to work pressures such as:

- having to attend in-house meetings;
- responding to young people and/or their line-managers' requests to undertake specific tasks;
- completing NVQs and other relevant training.

It is clear that time management is an issue and that PAs will need to be disciplined to ensure that they find ways to protect their allocated study time. Further monitoring is required in order to fully assess the extent to which this is impeding the development of the PA's role.

- 9.26 A major issue is how best to achieve the balance of providing a new Connexions service at a local level, whilst at the same time scheduling PA training. PAs working in schools and colleges reported that as a result of studying the Foundation Diploma programme alongside other training, they have not as yet made a direct impact on improving services for young people. At least 75% of headteachers, college principals and line-managers verified this. Those PAs working in community settings expressed concern that the pace of work is currently restricted due to multiple training requirements. The time allocated to training activities requires close monitoring in order to ensure that an appropriate balance is achieved between service delivery and professional development.

#### *Assessment*

- 9.27 The assessment plans are clearly outlined in the Foundation Diploma programme guide. PAs and their line-managers indicated strongly that the assessment mode tends to rely heavily on the PA's 'academic ability' rather than their skills and competencies to work effectively with young people and agencies. Many questioned the rationale for having to write 'formal academic essays' rather than producing 'practical case studies or reports' relevant to their work. It was suggested that assignments need to be tailored to local needs so that the outcomes can have some practical utility in the work setting. This is an issue that needs to be fed back to the Design Team. The majority of PAs welcomed the opportunity to submit an audio-tape of an interview as this offered a practical example of how clients' needs are identified and the tactics used to help them progress their plans.
- 9.28 Although in the past, many PAs in this cohort have successfully completed professional training, some lacked confidence in their ability to plan and write essays. Our research findings show that there is a need for preparatory study skills to be offered to those PAs who wish to develop their planning and writing techniques prior to enrolling on Module One.
- 9.29 The current assessment arrangements are such that the training deliverers do not mark the student's assignments. Other staff from INCLUDE & NTU who are not involved in the programme delivery in Coventry & Warwickshire currently mark assignments. PAs expressed concern that the assignment markers are at a distance and are not familiar with PA work at a local level. Their anxieties were confirmed when the first set of assignment marks were 'very low'. They described this as a negative and demotivating start to the programme:

*'I nearly packed it in because I tried my best and the mark was much lower than I had expected.'* (personal adviser)

*'My confidence was shattered .....I've never been great at writing essays but I know I'm a good PA because my clients and colleagues tell me so.'* (personal adviser)

*'The assignment was marked by a stranger who is not in touch with my work and doesn't even know me!'* (personal adviser)

- 9.30 PAs reported that following receipt of the first assignment mark, most felt frustrated that the programme trainers were unable to fully explain the reasons for the low marks. Some PAs indicated that they felt unsure about what was actually expected of them. The programme tutors have gathered feedback from the students and marking criteria have now been introduced to help make more explicit the assignment requirements. The Design Team will need to consider ways in which assignment markers can be introduced to students in order to allay any fears or misconceptions. They should also monitor on an on-going basis the standards and consistency of marking systems and student feedback. Lessons can be learned from good practice developed and applied by the Open University which is a leading provider of distance learning materials.

*Other customised training*

- 9.31 Coventry & Warwickshire each have their own local training plans which offer a wide range of training and development opportunities for staff within and outside the careers service. The current provision covers topics such as:

- Induction
- Mentoring
- Aspire
- Equal opportunities
- Looked-after children
- HIV/Aids.
- Lotus notes e-mail.
- Special needs.
- Mental health.
- Work with opportunity providers.
- Inset.
- Diffusing aggression.
- Pacific Institute training.
- NVQs in guidance.
- Homelessness.

- 9.32 Our findings show that PAs and managers are undertaking training on a local and sub-regional basis. Examples are provided in boxes 21 and 22.

**Box 21**  
**Joint training**

Coventry provided two-half day training workshops for Youth Service, Health Education Service and Careers Service staff to explore and agree principles and ways of working together within a One-Stop-Shop arrangement. This offered an opportunity to share policies and practices and to agree a framework for improving services to young people in the city-centre.

**Box 22**  
**Specialist training**

Warwickshire has offered five days' training on the Pacific Institute Breakthrough package. Following on from the training, PAs are considering ways in which this can be used most appropriately. One PA working in a school setting is in the process of implementing this with 'demotivated' young people in year 9.

- 9.33 PAs were enthusiastic and highly motivated to complete short courses linked to specific issues relevant to their work. Approximately 35% of PAs are experiencing training overload, particularly those who are studying the Foundation Diploma and NVQ training. The importance of ensuring that PAs have Individual Training Development Plans which are reviewed on a regular basis should not be under-estimated. PA line-managers need to be involved in this process in order to ensure that the balance and timing of activities is appropriate.

*Supervision and mentoring*

- 9.34 There have been different approaches to supervision and mentoring in Coventry & Warwickshire as described in paragraphs 5.34 and 5.35. Some PAs have received informal supervision from their line-managers as and when requested, particularly in relation to resolving difficult ethical issues; however, this is sporadic and there is much diversity in practice. Others have not received any formal supervision and have relied heavily on their peers for support. Comments on the current arrangements for supervision included:

*'My line-manager is too busy and hasn't been trained in supervision techniques.'* (personal adviser)

*'Supervision can mean different things to different people and both of us (Manager & PA) need to have a common understanding of how this should work.'* (personal adviser)

*'I am keen to offer supervision to my PA; however, I would welcome some guidelines on what this should entail.'* (PA line-manager)

*'There is a difference in culture with regard to supervision within different agencies.'* (personal adviser)

9.35 At a local level, many PAs felt that there is a need for a definition of supervision within the context of Connexions and a clear policy in order to ensure a consistent approach to supervision of PAs. This could encompass:

- a review of coping strategies for managing difficult situations;
- reflections on practice and service delivery;
- application of ethics and values;
- resolving problems and issues;
- training and personal development goals.

PA line-managers could benefit from supervision training to be undertaken alongside their respective PAs.

9.36 Our evidence shows that the majority of PAs have identified their own 'peer mentors' in order to reflect on their practice and to share problem-solving techniques and issues. There was evidence that this also provided a conduit to celebrate success stories and achievements. The current peer mentoring arrangement was described as:

*'A partial peer mentoring system is in place – this needs to be formalised and developed for all PAs.'* (personal adviser)

Given the diversity of PAs' work in schools/colleges and community settings, 'peer mentoring' is essential in order to provide a mechanism for staff to develop their practice and experience. The sub-regional PA Group is currently investigating the potential use of reflective diaries to help facilitate this process. Stronger links could be made between peer reviews and the use of reflective diaries.

9.37 The Foundation Diploma for Personal Advisers has great potential. It now requires further adaptation to take into account the lessons learned from local and national evaluation findings.

## **10. Conclusions**

- 10.1 Connexions is still at an early phase of development and will take time to fully evolve and become established as a coherent youth support service at a local and national level. The Coventry & Warwickshire Connexions Pilot has provided many examples of good and interesting practice both within educational institutions and in community settings.
- 10.2 Throughout the pilot, strategic developments have concentrated on two broad areas: firstly, strategic planning and implementation of pilot developments; and secondly, preparation and business planning for the full implementation of Connexions across the sub-region from April 2001 onwards. A tremendous amount of time, energy and commitment has been dedicated to the implementation of Connexions within local organisations, schools and colleges and community settings. Our findings indicate that a high degree of partnership working and consultations have occurred at a sub-regional level, with positive strong foundations laid for joint co-operation and innovative work in the future.
- 10.3 Within the sub-region, the two Local Management Committees have met on a regular basis and have agreed business and delivery plans. Our evidence indicates that both LMCs have made a positive start. They have identified common ground for future partnership working, shared issues of concern, and involved young people in the process of Connexions planning and development.
- 10.4 There is a need to strengthen the core Connexions management and development role within the new service. The existing arrangement of one member of staff performing a co-ordination role for all aspects of Connexions work across Coventry & Warwickshire is not sustainable. The next development phase should incorporate a clear management structure with sufficient staffing to ensure that work and development plans in both areas are communicated effectively to all key partners. It is also vital to involve educational institutions to a far greater degree in the process of planning and implementation.
- 10.5 The majority of institutions and agencies that have participated in the pilot have cited clear benefits of being involved in Connexions. Most were highly positive about the progress made and highlighted examples of good and interesting practice. The lessons learned should be shared at national and local levels in order to embed good practice and to further develop new ways of working. In contrast, some initiatives have not worked well and the lessons learned from these less positive experiences should be taken into account in order to inform future planning.
- 10.6 The question still remains as to how the new Connexions service will reconcile the provision of a universal service for all young people alongside a targeted service aimed at those young people who are hardest-to-help. The pilot has highlighted new ways of working, however,



it has demonstrated the difficulties of forecasting caseloads and planning resources in response to increasing expectations and demands from young people and organisations. Our evidence shows that as Connexions becomes more fully embedded within educational institutions and community settings demand will increase and there will be problems with the supply side unless this is immediately addressed.

- 10.7 It will be important during the next implementation phase to identify and agree realistic targets and performance measures, whilst taking into account that the progress of 'hard-to-help' young people is likely to be slow and labour-intensive. Mechanisms will need to be developed for setting common targets and agreeing inter-agency quality assurance.
- 10.8 There are issues that still need to be resolved in relation to schools' and colleges' involvement in the selection, recruitment and management of Personal Advisers. Each of these activities will have resource implications and will require further consultation.
- 10.9 The pilot has helped to identify key principles that underpin effective dual-management arrangements. Flexible approaches and transparency of policies and practices are necessary at all levels to ensure that partnership arrangements can be sustained and further developed. Dual management arrangements appear to work in most, but not all, cases. Close monitoring and evaluation is required in order to fully assess the added-value benefits.
- 10.10 Involvement of young people has started well and this needs to be further developed and extended to all participating agencies and educational institutions. So far, Personal Advisers have concentrated primarily on developing effective networking links and sharing of information. Caseloads vary considerably and in some cases direct contact time with young people has been severely curtailed. There was some concern that due to time pressures and training commitments Personal Advisers have been unable to fully address the issue of involving young people in the planning and design of Connexions.
- 10.11 Our research has shown that young people expressed positive views about their involvement in local consultations. The main challenge will be to find ways of increasing the involvement of young people from all walks of life. Role models should be identified and work with Youth/School Councils and Youth Forums should feature more prominently
- 10.12 Personal Adviser recruitment and selection has provided examples of good practice in how to involve young people in making decisions about their local support workers. The current mix of skills, knowledge and experience from PAs with different backgrounds has enriched local provision. It is clear that the role of the Personal Adviser working with the hardest-to-help young people is complex and requires a wide variety of attitudes, skills and personal qualities in order to be effective. The role

needs to be jointly developed by Personal Advisers and their line-managers, and shaped to meet local needs. Our evidence shows that psychological resilience is essential in order to manage the wide range of challenging inter-personal situations which Connexions staff will encounter.

- 10.13 There is a need to define a model of supervision for PAs and guidelines on how this relates to line-manager roles and responsibilities. A clear policy is necessary in order to support the development of reflective practice and an evidence-based approach.
- 10.14 All PAs could benefit from having Individual Training Development Plans that are reviewed on a regular basis. PA line-managers need to be actively involved in this process in order to ensure that the balance and timing of activities is appropriate. In some areas, PAs do not currently have access to e-mail and internet facilities, and this is viewed as a barrier to professional development.
- 10.15 Added-value from the pilot project can be identified through work with parents/guardians and carers, especially in schools where improved communication is evident. Pastoral-care systems in most schools have been reviewed and changes made to help achieve a balance of universal and targeted provision. The process of negotiating and agreeing Partnership Agreements has resulted in closer working links, and there is evidence of gradual improvements in co-ordinating work in schools and colleges.
- 10.16 In practice, a range of informal approaches to assessment and target setting are being used and developed; however, there is little evidence of inter-agency sharing of good practice. Many PAs indicated that they would benefit from a working toolkit covering a comprehensive range of assessment methods. The development of a user-friendly diagnostic/assessment instrument that could be used by Connexions front-line staff and PAs was identified as a useful starting point.
- 10.17 Strategic links have formed to agree protocol arrangements and respondents indicated that they are aware of such arrangements. Our findings indicate that closer working links between practitioners is required in order to agree common ethics and values for working with all young people.
- 10.18 Evidence-based practice is a key principle of Connexions. There is scope to build on reflective practice, and for PAs, researchers and young people to work more closely on joint projects in order to share expertise, experiences, skills development and knowledge.

## 11. Recommendations

### *At a strategic level*

- In Coventry & Warwickshire the next phase of Connexions should have a clear structure of management, and develop organisational plans that are communicated effectively to all key partners. It is also vital to involve educational institutions to a far greater degree in the process of planning and delivery of local services (paragraphs 5.2 and 5.10).
- Agree a strategy to enable educational institutions to have a greater input in the recruitment, selection and management of Personal Advisers (paragraph 5.12).
- Develop a continuous improvement plan that reviews dual management arrangements to ensure that such arrangements are cost effective and sustainable. Inter-agency quality assurance should feed into this process (paragraphs 5.16 and 5.35).
- Set up a formal system to monitor and evaluate universal and targeted approaches across the sub-region in order to ensure that demand for services can be met and the range of opportunities increased for all young people (paragraph 5.21).
- Establish local Connexions resource banks to enable Personal Advisers, school/college staff, and staff from other agencies to collectively share information, learning and assessment materials. This has funding implications and might need to be further explored with the CSNU (paragraph 5.24).
- Develop a strategy to increase PA and trainee PA work with employers, training providers and voluntary organisations particularly in relation to securing extended work experience places for young people (paragraph 6.37).
- Devise a marketing strategy, with information produced specifically for all young people and their parents, guardians and carers. Materials from the pilot should be used to showcase innovative work (paragraph 7.3).

### *At a management level*

- Re-visit the person specification for Personal Advisers to ensure that the key functions and requirements of the role are detailed before the next recruitment round (paragraph 5.12).

- Successful management and delivery models within pilot educational institutions should be fully captured and used as examples of good practice across the sub-region and at a national level. It will be crucial to showcase examples of what works, what does not, and the reasons for this in order to win the 'hearts and minds' of those new to Connexions (paragraph 5.21).
- Extend and develop customised approaches within delivery plans in order to respond effectively to the needs of young people and institutions/agencies. These will also need to be closely monitored and evaluated to ascertain added-value, cost effectiveness and sustainability (paragraph 5.21).
- Explore the potential to develop a user-friendly diagnostic tool for use by front line staff and Personal Advisers (paragraphs 6.20 and 6.30).
- Identify realistic targets for Personal Advisers, taking into account that in many cases the progress and development of some young people may be slow (paragraph 6.23).
- Maximise ICT opportunities and ensure that all Personal Advisers have regular access to e-mail and internet facilities (paragraph 6.24).
- Across the sub-region, agree a consistent policy and approach in relation to the use of direct funding to support young people in hardship and need (paragraph 6.38).
- Ensure that training plans are fully co-ordinated across the sub-region and where appropriate, fully harmonised with the delivery plans for the Foundation Diploma for Personal Advisers. This should include an on-going review of training developments with external tutors (paragraphs 9.11, 9.26 and 9.33).

*At a practitioner level*

- Ensure that the voluntary and community sectors are an integral part of Connexions at a community and neighbourhood level. Work with employers and training providers should be reviewed and a strategy agreed to ensure that this area of work is given sufficient attention (paragraph 6.5).
- Seek to further develop partnership approaches involving the LEA, the Youth Service, Health Education Service and other interested parties to identify existing alternative curriculum provision in local areas, build on good practice and explore ways of widening access and provision (paragraph 6.32).

- Personal Advisers to utilise peer reviews and reflective diaries to record success stories and key challenges that have had to be overcome. It will be essential to agree ownership of the diary with line-managers and agree how these can be used to share the lessons learned from new and traditional approaches (paragraph 6.37).
- Build on local, regional and national good practice to fully involve young people in the planning and development of Connexions (paragraphs 7.1 and 7.9).
- Personal Adviser sub-regional group meetings should be planned on a thematic basis to ensure that there is sufficient time to cover selected key topics and share ideas for development work (paragraphs 9.11, 9.22 and 9.36).
- Personal Advisers should ensure that they strike an appropriate balance between delivery services to young people and participating in training opportunities. Each should have a training plan which is agreed and reviewed with their line-manager(s) on a regular basis. Time management is an issue, and PAs will need to be disciplined to ensure that they find ways of managing their workloads efficiently and effectively (paragraphs 9.26 and 9.33).

*At an external level*

- The Foundation Diploma Delivery Team and local Training Managers should meet on a regular basis to ensure that training and delivery plans are co-ordinated and that potential students are adequately equipped to undertake their studies (paragraph 9.11).
- Nottingham Trent University and INCLUDE should introduce a preparatory study skills programme to be offered to those PAs who wish to develop their study plans and writing techniques prior to enrolling on Module One. This would support those Personal Advisers in need of a refresher and/or those who have not undertaken academic studies for some time (paragraph 9.28).
- The Foundation Diploma Design Team will need to consider ways in which assignment markers can work with students in order to reduce any misunderstandings. They should also monitor on an on-going basis the standards and consistency of marking systems (paragraph 9.29).

**Educational institutions taking part in the pilot project**

Alderman Callow School and Community College, Coventry

Caludon Castle School, Coventry

Campion School and Community College, Leamington Spa

Milverton Centre, Pupil Referral Unit, Warwickshire

Queen Elizabeth School, Atherstone

Southam College, Southam

Stratford upon Avon College, Stratford upon Avon

The Meadows School, Coventry

Tile Hill College of Further Education, Coventry

Warwickshire College, Leamington Spa

Whitley Abbey Community School, Coventry

Woodway Park School, Coventry

**Personal Advisers based in Community Settings**

Community Education Team, Warwickshire

Leaving Care Team, Coventry

Leaving Care Team, Warwickshire

One Stop Shop, Coventry

Rugby Youth Access Project

Young, Gifted and Educated Project, Coventry

Youth Offending Team, Coventry

Youth Offending Team, Warwickshire

### Appendix 3

<b>Respondents</b>	<b>Number</b>
Agency manager	5
Careers Manager	7
Headteacher	6
School/college manager	9
Personal Adviser	19
Principal	2
Special Educational Needs Co-ordinator	1
Teacher/tutor	11
Year 9 students	2
Year 10 students	4
Year 11 students	8
Post 16 students	4
<b>Total</b>	<b>78</b>



## Appendix 4

Recommendations (October 2000)	Action taken (March 2001)
<i>National</i>	
Develop and publicise a national overview of the Connexions Service and the role of the Personal Adviser, within which local priorities can be developed.	This has started to develop through recent publications.
Include careers education and guidance in all initial teacher training, to support the Connexions strategy.	No action as yet.
<i>Sub-regional</i>	
Establish the clear leadership, strategic management and organisation that the new service will demand.	Advertisement for the post of Executive Director has taken place.
Establish how the 'local management' of Connexions can be most effectively developed to meet the diverse local needs of educational institutions and other agencies.	This is developing but will take time to establish and develop. Review and monitoring is needed to establish cost effective and sustainable solutions.
Establish how the 'local management' of the Connexions Partnership will support Personal Advisers and institutions to resolve difficult issues with other agencies and services.	Good practice is identified in the pilots although further work is still needed.
Develop a strategy to deal with the potential problem of lack of local service provision to meet identified student needs.	This still needs to be addressed. Will be addressed in the Coventry 16-19 area-wide action plan.
Clarify the position on financial support for educational institutions in respect of management costs, additional facilities and the provision of in-service training.	Although a limited agreement has been reached in the pilots, this is an issue that requires further work.
Agree a policy on common information requirements to ensure consistency of data.	This is being developed.
Develop protocol agreements on the confidentiality of information exchanged between the Personal Adviser, student, parent and institution.	Personal Advisers working with institutions are developing this and many agencies are using existing protocols.
Identify how the varied work of the Personal Advisers is to be most effectively quality-assured.	Further on-going work is required.
Link with Lincolnshire Connexions Service Diagnostic Screening Project to exchange information on diagnostic tools and assessment strategies.	Closer working links have been established. Discussions are underway to develop a modified version of the Career Concerns Checklist. Professor Jim Sampson (Florida State University) and Erik Wilkinson (Lifetime Careers, Wiltshire) have agreed to develop a new user-friendly diagnostic instrument for use by 'front-line' staff and, if successful, will pilot this in Coventry, Warwickshire and Lincolnshire.

Devise a strategy to support Personal Advisers, working within educational institutions, to enable them to improve and develop relationships with agencies and services.	The management systems in both Coventry, through caseload managers, and Warwickshire, through Connexions managers, is designed to support Personal Advisers. Joint management meetings have also proved successful.
<i>Local</i>	
Enable staff from the pilot institutions to meet together to share good practice and discuss tactics and issues.	This is now happening at a local level and is proving successful.
Develop local approaches to inform and involve Governing Bodies in the development of Connexions.	A positive start has been made in some institutions through presentations and discussions between Personal Advisers and the governing body.
Produce joint management plans with all Personal Advisers.	These have been developed by all educational institutions. These are needed by PAs working in several agencies.
Establish close working links between Personal Advisers and careers advisers to clarify their roles and responsibilities and agree support procedures.	Although progress has been made, further clarification is needed.
Establish close working links between Personal Advisers and EWOs, youth workers and other staff working within schools and colleges to clarify their roles and responsibilities and agree support procedures.	A good start has been made in institutions identifying links and clarifying roles and responsibilities.
Establish how students can be most effectively involved in the planning and development of Connexions.	This has started well at sub-regional level' but has some way to go at institution level, although there are pockets of good practice. It will take time to establish throughout the sub-region.

## Appendix 5

### The aims of the Foundation Diploma programme for Personal Advisers

1. To provide an assessed programme of study.
2. To enable people from a range of disciplines and employment settings, recently recruited as personal advisers, to gain a common set of knowledge and skills.
3. To enable people from a range of disciplines and employment settings to practise as personal advisers.
4. For participants to gain initial competence in the skills and processes involved in:-
  - Managing referrals, assessment and engagement with young people.
  - Working for change with young people, their parents/carers and mainstream practitioners.
  - Working with other agencies to secure optimal support for young people.
  - Using evidence-based practice, record-keeping and communicating.
  - To gain the tools required to enable participants to develop reflective practice within their new roles as personal advisers.

### The objectives of the programme

By the end of this programme, successful participants will have been enabled to acquire the experience, knowledge and confidence to: -

- Undertake effective study at undergraduate level II.
- Manage referrals.
- Use the assessment, planning and review form.
- Engage effectively with young people.
- Work with young people, their parents/carers and mainstream practitioners to secure change.
- Work effectively with other agencies.
- Use evidence-based practice.
- Keep comprehensive and accurate records.
- Communicate effectively with all those working with young people.
- Engage in reflective practice within the new role of personal adviser.

\*Extract taken from the Diploma for Personal Advisers (Connexions) Programme Guide Autumn 2000.