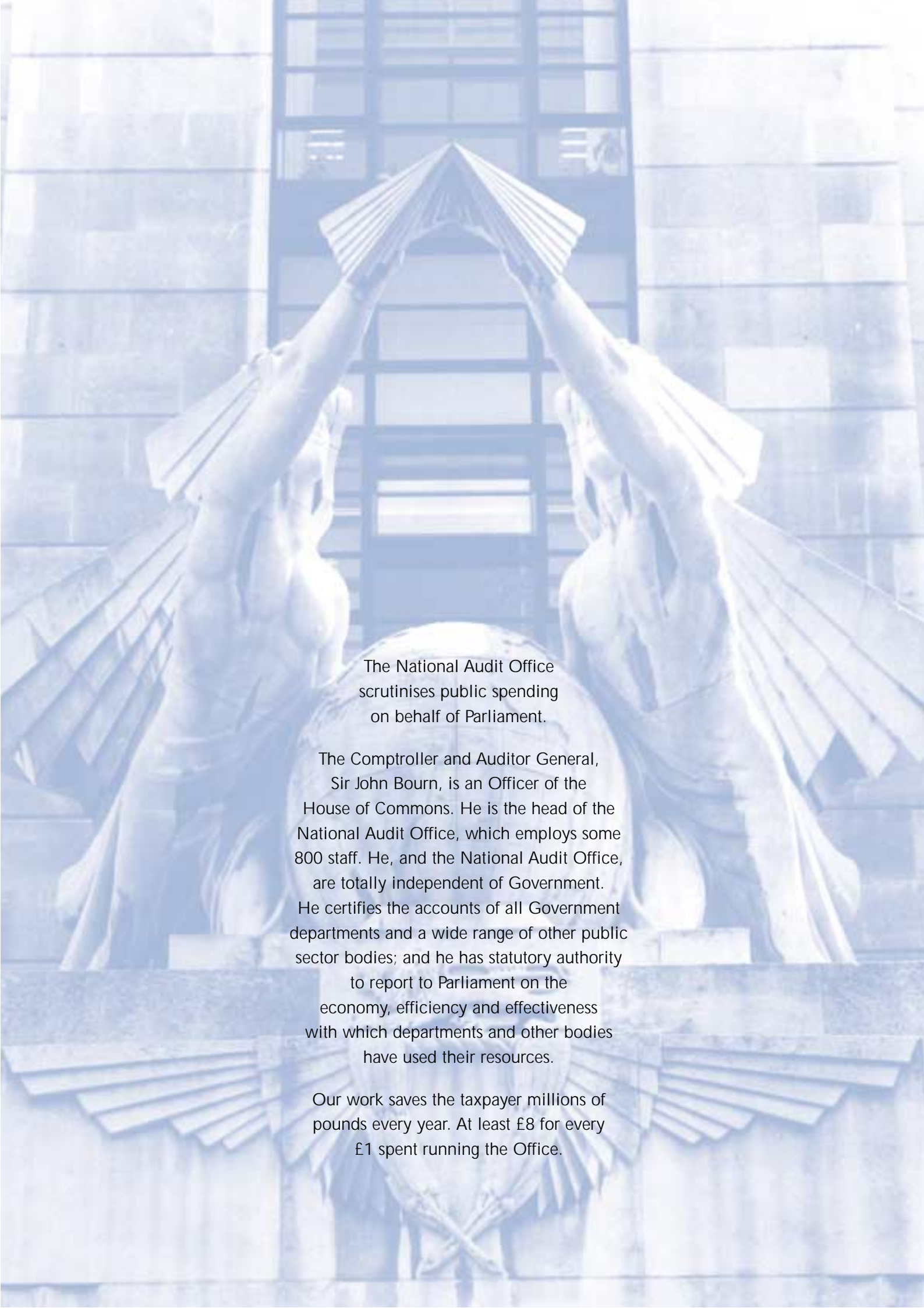


Department for Education and Skills
Connexions Service
Advice and guidance for all young people

REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL
HC 484 Session 2003-2004: 31 March 2004





The National Audit Office
scrutinises public spending
on behalf of Parliament.

The Comptroller and Auditor General,
Sir John Bourn, is an Officer of the
House of Commons. He is the head of the
National Audit Office, which employs some
800 staff. He, and the National Audit Office,
are totally independent of Government.
He certifies the accounts of all Government
departments and a wide range of other public
sector bodies; and he has statutory authority
to report to Parliament on the
economy, efficiency and effectiveness
with which departments and other bodies
have used their resources.

Our work saves the taxpayer millions of
pounds every year. At least £8 for every
£1 spent running the Office.

Department for Education and Skills
Connexions Service
Advice and guidance for all young people



REPORT BY THE COMPTROLLER AND AUDITOR GENERAL
HC 484 Session 2003-2004: 31 March 2004

This report has been prepared under Section 6 of the National Audit Act 1983 for presentation to the House of Commons in accordance with Section 9 of the Act.

John Bourn National Audit Office
Comptroller and Auditor General 18 March 2004

The National Audit Office study team consisted of:

Jo James, Jeremy Weingard and Lee Summerfield, under the direction of Gabrielle Cohen, with assistance from Sandeep Shanbhag, Vicky Gaultier, Jo Harris and Lee Nicholson.

This report can be found on the National Audit Office web site at www.nao.org.uk

For further information about the National Audit Office please contact:

National Audit Office
Press Office
157-197 Buckingham Palace Road
Victoria
London
SW1W 9SP

Tel: 020 7798 7400

Email: enquiries@nao.gsi.gov.uk

© National Audit Office

Contents

| | | | |
|--|-----------|---|-----------|
| Preface | 1 | Part 3 | |
| Executive summary | 3 | Connexions provides a good quality service to young people who meet Personal Advisers, but not all young people who would benefit from advice are receiving it | 31 |
| Part 1 | | | |
| Background | 13 | The importance of the Personal Adviser role and the extent to which they are fully trained | 31 |
| Part 2 | | Quality of services provided by Personal Advisers | 33 |
| Connexions is making progress towards its objectives but target setting and measurement is inherently difficult | 19 | Availability of advice and guidance | 35 |
| Reducing the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training | 19 | Part 4 | |
| Better quality information about young people | 22 | Working with others | 41 |
| Providing a universal service | 25 | Partnership working | 41 |
| Safeguarding resources for schools | 27 | Appendix | 45 |

Preface

At age 16, young people face more choices than ever before. For many, whether to continue in education is clear, but they still have to decide where to study and for what qualification. Others, especially multi-disadvantaged people, need help of a very different kind, seeking to overcome a range of problems before they can decide on a career and the necessary training.

The Connexions Service, with an annual budget of £450 million, aims to help all young people make informed choices and ease the transition into adult life. It was launched nationally on a phased basis from April 2001 and consists of 47 partnerships which bring together the services offered by the former careers services with a range of other agencies. Staffed by over 7,700 Personal Advisers and more than 2,400 other front line delivery staff, partnerships offer a one-stop shop to all young people seeking advice and guidance. By encouraging them to stay in education and training until 19, the Government hopes to reduce the social costs of youth unemployment, poor physical health, and criminal behaviour amongst young people. Based on Departmental research we have estimated that the financial costs to society of young people currently not in education, training and employment is in the region of £16 billion*. This estimate takes account of increased benefit payments and reduced tax receipts and reduced/loss of earnings by individual and business, and the total cost may be considerably higher.

The main objective for Connexions for the two years November 2002 to 2004 is to reduce by ten per cent the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. Achieving the target reduction may result in short term economic benefits to the individual young person, taxpayers, business and the wider economy of £180 million and medium and longer term benefits of over £1.4 billion. This report examines the progress that Connexions is making towards that objective. It includes analysis of the reasons behind variations in partnerships' performance and concludes that those who have secured the highest reductions to date are those who started with the largest proportions of young people who are not in education, employment or training. The Connexions Service is on target to achieve its objective by November 2004. By November 2003, the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training had fallen by 8 per cent in the established phase 1 and 2 areas and 3 per cent overall taking the newer phase 3 areas into account. (Part 2).

We used a survey of 1,000 schools and 150 Further Education colleges to assess the quality of service provided by Connexions. In Part 3, we conclude that although Personal Advisers offer a good service to young people who consult them, more could be done by schools and the Connexions Service to improve access to advice and guidance for all young people, not just those who are multiply disadvantaged. In Part 4 we look at whether Connexions has built effective partnerships with the other agencies that serve young people and we identify good practice and lessons learned.

The report makes a number of recommendations for the Department, for partnerships and for partner agencies which enhance the effectiveness of the service for young people.

* GODFREY, C., HUTTON, S., BRADSHAW, J., COLES, B., CRAIG, G. AND JOHNSON, J. (2002). *Estimating The Cost Of Being Not In Education, Employment Or Training At Age 16-18. (Department for Education and Skills, RR346).*

executive summary



- 1 Connexions is at the heart of government policy to improve the skills base and increase participation in education and training. Prior to the launch of the Connexions Service, the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training had remained fairly constant for some years at about 10 per cent, or approximately 181,000 people¹. As adults, these young people are much more likely than their peers to earn less in work, to be in poor physical health, and to have a criminal record. Non-participation at 16-19 is also a major predictor of unemployment at 21 and teenage motherhood.
- 2 The Connexions Service, which the Department for Education and Skills launched in England² in April 2001, radically changed the way that young people are supported during their transition to adulthood (**Figure 1**). Through providing impartial advice and guidance, Connexions aims to help all young people aged 13-19 (and 20-24 year olds with learning difficulties and disabilities who are yet to make the transition to adult services) make the right choices, giving them the opportunity to learn the skills they need to make a

1 How advice and guidance for young people has changed since the introduction of Connexions

| | Before Connexions | Now |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Access to a careers adviser | Advice was supplied by careers advisers who visit the school. The careers advisers tended to hold a career interview with most pupils in the school. In 1998, policy changes focused the work of careers advisers on young people deemed to be 'most in need'. | Schools identify young people in need of support and arrange for them to see a Personal Adviser. Young people may choose to contact Personal Advisers themselves, for example via their school or college, by calling the Connexions Direct helpline or by visiting a Connexions one-stop shop. There is a presumption that not all young people need to see a Personal Adviser. |
| Getting other types of advice | Young people needing advice on issues such as drugs, sexual health and financial matters needed to seek out specialist advice. | Personal Advisers can offer access to advice on a wide range of issues of concern to young people. |
| The role of schools | Schools had a duty to deliver a curriculum based programme of careers education. They also had a duty to provide the careers service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance. | Schools still have a duty to deliver a curriculum based programme of careers education. At present this applies to Years 9-11 but from September 2004 will apply to years 7-11. They also have a duty to provide the Connexions Service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance. |
| Performance targets | Careers services had input-focused targets, such as number of careers plans completed. | Connexions has outcome-based targets, such as reduction in number of young people who opt out of education, employment and training. |

Source: National Audit Office

¹ Office for National Statistics/Department for Education and Skills Statistical Release SFR 31/2003.

² In Scotland and Wales, careers services for young people are delivered by Careers Scotland and Careers Wales respectively. These organisations provide careers advice for both young people and adults.

success of their adult lives³ and prepare for their future careers. It may also provide guidance on other issues which have traditionally been barriers to employment or undertaking education or training such as substance abuse, teenage pregnancy and youth offending. The service costs some £450 million per year. This is around double the budget of the careers services it replaces, but with a wider remit.

- 3 Partnership working is key to Connexions. Across England, 47 Connexions partnerships have been established between April 2001 and April 2003. The management boards for each partnership include a wide range of agencies providing help to all young people, aiming to provide a single integrated youth support service. Partnerships commonly include organisations such as social services, youth offending teams, careers companies, youth services, local authorities and drugs action teams. To ensure that young people are not 'falling through the gaps', Connexions aims to maintain a comprehensive tracking system for young people aged 13 to 19.
- 4 A new profession of Connexions Personal Advisers is being recruited and trained to provide advice and guidance to young people. Personal Advisers are not expected to be experts in all fields, but are able to identify individuals' needs, supply directly or broker the services they need and monitor their progress to ensure they are getting the necessary support. **Figure 2** shows the different ways in which a young person can contact Connexions to obtain advice.

2 How to get advice and guidance from Connexions



Source: National Audit Office

³ Connexions: the best start in life for every young person, Department for Education and Skills, 2000.

- 5 Connexions is intended to help all young people and is concerned that young people should regard it as being there for everybody, not just for those with problems. Within the context of this universal service, the key objective for Connexions is to reduce the proportion of young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training by 10 per cent between November 2002 and November 2004. Connexions also contributes to a wide range of cross-cutting targets.
- 6 This report examines:
- **the extent to which Connexions is making progress towards meeting its quantified objectives (Part 2)**, including statistical analysis of the reasons why performance varies between partnerships;
 - **the extent to which Connexions is meeting its wider objectives of providing a good quality advice and support service for all 13-19 year olds (Part 3)**, including surveys of 1,000 secondary schools and 150 Further Education colleges; and
 - **whether Connexions has built effective partnerships with the other agencies that serve young people (Part 4)**, based on visits to ten Connexions partnerships, five Government Offices of the Regions, and seven partner agencies and departments.

Meeting the quantified objectives of the Connexions Service

- 7 Connexions is on course to meet its objective of reducing the proportion of young people aged 16-18 who are not in education, employment or training by ten per cent between November 2002 and November 2004. The proportion fell by 8 per cent in established phase 1 and 2 partnership areas between November 2002 and November 2003, and 3 per cent overall taking the newer phase 3 partnerships into account. The partnerships we visited are confident of meeting the target by November 2004.
- 8 There are wide variations in performance between partnerships. The statistical analysis we used to determine the reasons why some partnerships have been more successful than others showed that the only statistically significant factor is the percentage of young people who were not in education, training or employment (NEET) at the time that the partnership was launched. All things being equal, those partnerships that recorded higher percentages of NEET at launch achieved larger reductions by November 2003.
- 9 Connexions has significantly improved the quality of information about the education, employment and training activity of 13 - 19 year olds. Development of a national information system which, by September 2004, will be extracting data from partnerships' databases, has helped to improve accuracy. The new system provides the most complete national picture to date. In developing their databases, partnerships recognised the importance of complying with data protection legislation and some had been slower to move on from establishing detailed data-sharing protocols to actual data-sharing.

- 10 As partnerships identify more young people who are not in education, employment or training, they will find it harder in the short term to meet their target of an overall reduction in the number of such people. For example partnerships have worked hard to obtain data on young people from partner agencies, with varying results. Where they have received good cooperation, they have often become aware of young people who are not in education, training or employment but who were previously unknown to the Connexions Service. In the short-term, this valuable work makes it harder for the partnerships to achieve their targets, especially those in their first year of operation when the number of 'new' young people identified is at its highest.

- 11 Connexions partnerships have well developed but diverse systems for identifying young people requiring intensive support. Personal Advisers invest substantial amounts of time and effort in supporting those with multiple barriers to education, employment and training but it is not always clear whether this has been an effective use of their time. There may come a point when further investment will cease to be cost-effective. Partnerships would benefit from greater analysis of interventions by Personal Advisers to establish the effectiveness of their work and to ensure they are deployed in a way that provides the best outcomes.

- 12 Some partnerships consider that the focus on the participation target detracts from the other valuable work that partnerships do. The Department has sought to clarify how the service to all young people should be delivered, but has found it hard to develop performance indicators to measure their success. The research they have commissioned into customer satisfaction could provide a good baseline for measuring how well partnerships are delivering the universal service.

- 13 The Department recognised that some schools feared a withdrawal of resources and therefore agreed transitional arrangements during the first year of Connexions to ensure that schools received at least the same level of help as they received from the careers service. To provide a safeguard within the system for individual schools, the Department issued guidance to partnerships that all schools should receive a minimum level of one day per week contact time with a Personal Adviser. Although Connexions holds no definitive data to show whether the guideline has been implemented for every school, our survey of schools found that the majority were receiving the minimum level of support. Only 13 per cent of schools (compared to 24 per cent prior to Connexions) reported an allocation that amounts to less than one day a week. We found that while overall resources provided to schools have increased by a mean of 117 hours per school per year, around half of schools report a reduction in the time they receive from Personal Advisers. The reduction varied from one day per year to three days per week. The evidence suggests that there has been a significant redistribution of resources between schools.



Rachel - Personal Adviser

A graduate with a Personal Adviser Diploma and careers guidance qualifications, Rachel works in an Education Out of School centre for children who can't be educated in mainstream. She also works within a secondary school, and works with the NEET group in her area. She says, "As well as offering careers advice and guidance we offer personal support in a vast array of areas - for poor attendance, family problems, not keeping up with homework, drugs and alcohol, teenage health, pregnancy - any issue preventing them having a successful life in and outside school."

Providing a good quality advice and support service for all 13-19 year olds

- 14 Personal Advisers play a critical role in the success of the Connexions Service. They must provide advice that is accurate, comprehensive, timely, realistic and readily understood by young people. Where Personal Advisers do not have specialist knowledge, they must be able to refer young people to someone who can help them. Partnerships have successfully recruited some 7,722 Personal Advisers, 95 per cent of the expected complement.
- 15 To be fully qualified, Connexions Personal Advisers must have an appropriate professional qualification to at least skill level 4 /NVQ level 4 or equivalent in a relevant professional discipline (e.g. careers guidance; youth work; social work) and have completed either the Diploma for Personal Advisers or the Understanding Connexions training programme. The diploma, which is the expected qualification for Personal Advisers working with a caseload of young people with multiple difficulties, takes around eight months to complete and is equivalent in level of difficulty to the second year of a degree programme. Take up of training has been slower than expected. As at September 2003, 50 per cent of Personal Advisers were fully or partly trained.
- 16 Those young people who have had contact with Connexions Personal Advisers rate the service they received highly. A large-scale departmental survey found that most young people who had met a Personal Adviser felt that Connexions had a lot to offer and that it had helped inform them of their options.
- 17 There are far fewer Personal Advisers now than was envisaged when the Connexions Service was being planned. If Connexions operated to the caseloads that were deemed to be manageable at the pilot stage, they would require in excess of 15,000 Personal Advisers. However, Connexions does not have the financial resources to employ this number of Personal Advisers. This places more pressure on schools and colleges to play their role in providing good quality advice to young people who are still in education.
- 18 Our survey of schools found that the majority feel that they do not have the capacity to provide appropriate levels of careers education and guidance for young people. At around two-thirds of schools, careers education and guidance is coordinated or delivered by staff without any formal qualifications in the field. Over a third of schools reported that staff are unable to identify and refer young people in need of specialist support. Two-thirds of schools consider that at present staff do not understand fully the role of Personal Advisers although a series of guidance notes to brief schools about the Connexions Service has been issued. The most recent publication, Building Connexions, a toolkit for the implementation of Connexions in schools was issued in March 2003. Some Connexions partnerships are working with schools to address these problems.
- 19 More than half of schools are satisfied with the contribution of Connexions to their school. While they are confident in the work that Connexions does with young people who most need specialist support, only half are satisfied with the level of response to the needs of other young people in schools. A high proportion of schools reported that they receive funding from their local partnerships to purchase guidance materials, though this is not mandatory under current contractual obligations. Colleges generally consider Connexions is having an input to a wide range of services, but their expectations of what Connexions should be doing are much higher. Areas in which more support would be appreciated include advice on sexual health issues and affordable housing.



- 20** Connexions is developing new ways for young people to access advice and guidance. For instance, Connexions Direct (www.connexions-direct.com) is a new service that provides information and advice on a wide range of topics via the telephone, the web, web chat facility, email or text message. Between April 2001 and August 2003, the service received 65,000 contacts from young people, mainly by telephone. The service will be available nationally by April 2004. In addition, over 400 one-stop shops bringing together a range of local services under one roof and 1,400 community access points for young people are open or planned by Connexions partnerships. On average, there are 40,000 visits to one-stop shops and community based access points each week.
- 21** Awareness of Connexions is paramount to its success. Following a £2.2 million national advertising campaign in summer 2003, departmental research found that 70 per cent of young people now have a basic awareness of the Connexions Service. More could be done to raise awareness among school staff of the range of advice and support the Service can offer in order to make appropriate referrals to the Service.

Building effective partnerships with other agencies



- 22** If Connexions is to succeed, it needs to build effective partnerships with other agencies. These partnerships should be based on trust, a clear understanding of each others' responsibilities and objectives, joint working to avoid duplication of effort, and sharing of resources and information. Services for young people should be coherent, so that by approaching Connexions, they can be confident of receiving the right advice from the most appropriate source.
- 23** The Connexions Strategy was launched with the joint commitment of seven Secretaries of State⁴. Where barriers to joint working have emerged, these have been local rather than national. The headquarters staff at the partner agencies and departments we consulted were broadly happy with their relationships with the Connexions Service and were clear about what Connexions wants to achieve. These partners did not feel that there were any structural reasons that would prevent Connexions partnerships working together with their staff at a local level. The partnerships we visited agreed that local relationships and personalities were the crucial factors determining how quickly they were able to move to true partnership working.
- 24** Partnership building and working at the local level has been successful. A MORI survey commissioned by the Department found that 78 per cent of stakeholders regard joint working between agencies providing services to young people in their areas as effective, compared with 40 per cent prior to the establishment of Connexions partnerships. A minority of stakeholders had concerns that resources were not allocated to the right services within the partnership, and that there was low awareness of the service in their area and confusion over what different services offered.

⁴ The secretaries of state who signed the Connexions strategy document represented the following departments: Social Security, Culture Media and Sport, Home Office, Environment Transport and the Regions, Education and Employment, Cabinet Office, and Health.

- 25** In most cases, partners regard relationships now as much better than when Connexions was first launched. Partners are clear about what they can expect from Connexions and are working well alongside them. Where problems still remain, the most common difficulty is the practical sharing of data on young people.
- 26** The relationship between Connexions partnerships and Local Learning and Skills Councils is a vital one in determining the success of the Connexions Strategy. Connexions partnerships must work with Local Learning and Skills Councils to ensure that learning opportunities in their area meet the needs of local young people. We found evidence of much goodwill between the bodies, but varying progress in the extent to which they share information. In the strongest partnerships, Local Learning and Skills Councils and Connexions work closely together to ensure that young people get the right opportunities at the right time. There were examples of innovative practices that could be replicated nationally, such as working to provide Further Education courses that start in months other than September.

Conclusion

- 27** The Connexions Service has made good progress in improving the way that young people receive advice and guidance. It provides good quality advice to young people who are seen by Personal Advisers, and is working well to build strong partnerships with other agencies. The proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training fell by 8 per cent in the established partnership areas between November 2002 and 2003, indicating that the Service is on track for achieving the target of a 10 per cent reduction in the proportion of young people not engaged in education, employment or training. This would be a significant step forward as the proportion has remained static for some years. The fact that 181,000 16-18 year olds were estimated to be outside of employment, education or training in 2002 (ONS/DfES First Release SFR 31/2003) demonstrates the importance of preventative work at an early stage in a young person's life. There is still a risk that not all young people who would benefit from advice are receiving it. This gap is due to Connexions operating with fewer resources than was originally anticipated, together with a lack of clarity regarding the respective role of schools and the Connexions Service in providing careers advice to young people. Closing this gap would help ensure that young people make the most of their opportunities.

Recommendations

28 Our findings and conclusions lead to the following recommendations.

The Department should:

- 1 **encourage partnerships to set local targets for reducing the level of young people not in education, training or employment that best reflect local conditions.** The ten per cent target is a national target, but all partnerships are expected to achieve it. While all the partnerships we visited were confident that they would achieve it, there were marked differences of opinion as to whether the target was sufficiently challenging. Each additional 1 per cent reduction nationally would mean 1,700 young people re-engaging in education, employment or training with economic savings of £165 million.
- 2 **use the data they now hold on young people and their case histories to analyse the optimum level of intervention for those who need intensive support.** The national database, when fully operational, will allow insights into how often young people leave education, training and employment, and for how long. This information could be used to explore whether the level and type of interventions by Personal Advisers has any influence on these outcomes. Such an analysis could inform the discussion on how far Connexions can expect to achieve a continued reduction in the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training.
- 3 **review whether schools have the capacity to provide adequate careers education and guidance to young people.** At present, not all schools are confident that all their pupils enjoy an appropriate level of support. The Department should identify the causes of this gap and ensure that all young people who need it have access to high quality, impartial advice and guidance. For example, it may be necessary to train a higher proportion of schools staff in qualifications that allows them to coordinate and deliver careers advice and guidance. It will also be essential to clarify the respective roles of Connexions and schools in providing careers education, advice and guidance.
- 4 **set a clear target for when the Department expects the majority of Personal Advisers to have completed Connexions specific training.**
- 5 **revise the current approach to funding partnerships so that partnerships have greater certainty over the budget they will receive over a three-year period.** At present, funds are allocated annually, so partnerships are wary of making long-term commitments to partners or making capital investments.
- 6 **develop measurable performance indicators for the full range of a partnership's activity.** These indicators could build on the research that the Department has already commissioned into customer satisfaction, looking at issues such as the value that young people place on advice and the perceived approachability and professionalism of Personal Advisers. It might be possible to include questions about the Connexions Service within existing omnibus surveys of young people.

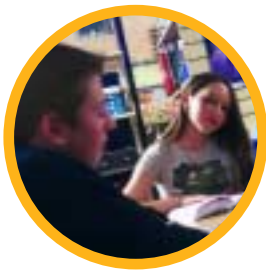


Connexions partnerships should:

- 7 **continue to work with partner agencies to implement data-sharing agreements, learning from and replicating the successes that have already been achieved in some parts of the country.** Partnerships should, where possible, take advantage of web-based electronic data-sharing to enable information on young people to be shared systematically with local partners. The Department should also remain apprised of and contribute to the development of a unique identification number for young people, making it easier to track their progress.
- 8 **work with schools to ensure that all staff fully understand the role of Personal Advisers and know when to refer young people for specialist support.** Many Partnerships already work with schools to advertise the presence and role of Connexions in schools. The level of success for Connexions depends on the extent to which schools cooperate with Connexions to coordinate support mechanisms for young people.

Partner departments and agencies should:

- 9 **encourage front-line staff to cooperate fully with Connexions partnerships,** being aware that the Connexions Strategy is a cross-cutting approach that has been endorsed by seven secretaries of state. In particular, all staff involved in data-sharing with Connexions partnership should implement data-sharing agreements as soon as possible, learning from the successes that have already been achieved in some partnership areas within the framework of data protection legislation.



Part 1

Background

1.1 The Connexions Service is the principal element of the Government's strategy to address concerns that over recent years the number of all 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training had remained fairly constant at about 10 per cent (**Figure 3**). As adults these young people - some 181,000 in 2002⁵ - are much more likely than their peers to earn less in work, to be in poor physical health, and to have a criminal record. Non-participation at this age is also a major predictor of unemployment at 21 and teenage motherhood. The Department estimates that the average cost of non-participation may be as high as £98,000 per individual. Participation in the United Kingdom is lower than in many competing economies (**Figure 4**).

3 Key elements of the Connexions Strategy

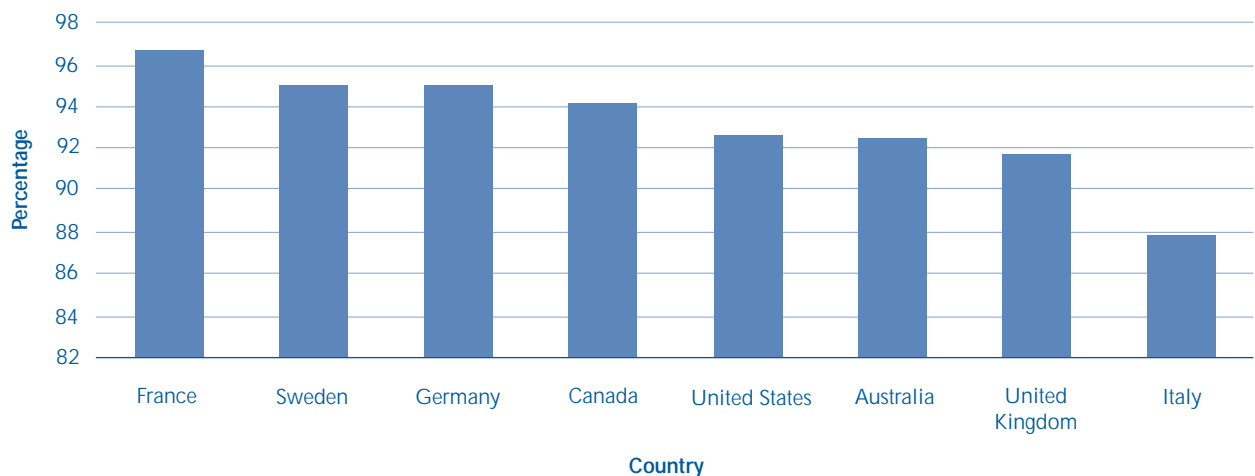
- the Connexions Service, launched in April 2001 delivered through a network of 47 Connexions partnerships in place from April 2003 with a total budget of £450 million in 2003-04;
- a Connexions Direct call centre to be operational by April 2004 with budget of £3.75 million for 2003-04;
- the Connexions Card, a "loyalty card" system for rewarding attendance at further education centres with discounts from participating retailers. The card was rolled out on a regional basis from January 2002. Overall budget of £109.7 million over seven years; and
- the development of databases to help identify and track young people not in education or training by 2004.

Source: National Audit Office

4 Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development figures on non-participation, 2000

Participation in education, training or employment by 16-19 year olds is lower in the United Kingdom than in many competing economies

Percentage of 16-19 year olds in Education, Training or Employment



Source: Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

1.2 The Department's decision to set up the new service was based on research⁶ which concluded that:

- a) there were inadequacies in the current support systems for young people, which meant that many were "falling through the gap";
- b) young people still lacked the career and decision making skills they needed to make effective career course or job choices and many lacked the confidence to seek help;
- c) although young people had more choices post-16 they did not feel they had sufficient information about opportunities to help to prepare them for independent living.

1.3 The Department aimed to change radically the way that young people were supported during their transition to adulthood, through encouraging them to stay in education and training until 19. It recognised that careers services - which Connexions has replaced - had had a significant impact in helping young people to stay in education and get qualifications⁷, but that more could be done to support young people, especially those who were multiply-disadvantaged, if it adopted the one-stop shop approach trialled in the Learning Gateway and other initiatives. At the same time, it announced financial incentives⁸ to stay in education and plans to enhance the range of educational opportunities.

1.4 This study focuses on the Connexions Service and the development of tracking databases, while also reporting on progress in the launch of Connexions Direct. We decided to examine the work of the service at a fairly early stage of its life, at the point at which roll out across England⁹ had just been achieved with a view to maximising the beneficial impact we could have on the way the service develops. We have not examined the Connexions Card, as it was only available on a pilot basis in a limited part of the country during the course of our fieldwork.

The Connexions Service is a comprehensive service for young people

1.5 The Connexions Service is much more than a replacement for the local careers services because it brings together the plethora of agencies providing help to all young people into a single integrated youth support service (Figure 5).

1.6 The Connexions Service consists of a central unit, the Connexions Service National Unit, based in the Department for Education and Skills, and 47 partnerships which are coterminous with the local Learning and Skills Councils. The Department develops the national policy, provides grant funding for the partnerships and monitors their performance. Contributions of resources from other agencies are an essential supplement to the grant. These are often in the form of shared facilities, and staff can be difficult to quantify. The nine Government Offices for the Regions monitor and support the Service locally on behalf of the Department (Figure 6). Local Authorities are not responsible for monitoring the service, although they may choose to be members of the management boards of Connexions partnerships. Connexions partnerships are subject to an Ofsted inspection regime.

1.7 The first 11 partnerships were launched in April 2001 (Figure 7 on page 16). After a phased implementation, all are now operational. There are two different models of partnership, reflecting the former careers service arrangements in each area:

- **direct delivery** (24) where partnerships are primarily companies limited by guarantee that have been established from a careers company or a merger of such companies;
- **subcontracting** (23) which are newly formed companies, limited by guarantee, which deliver through subcontracting services to providers. In most cases, the major front line services are delivered by ex-careers service companies, which may be either private sector or ex-partnership companies that have retained their former status.

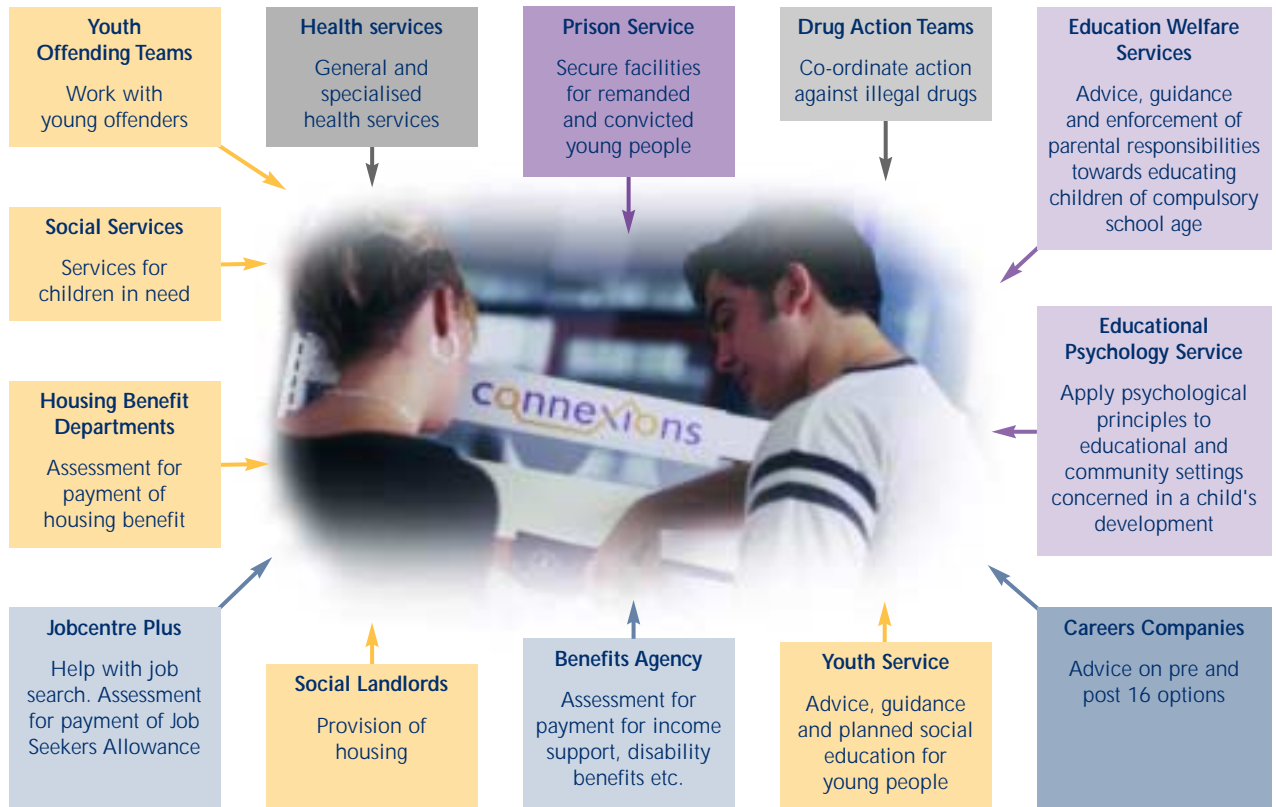
⁶ Evidence Base for the Connexions Service, Tim Shiles, 2002.

⁷ Shiles, p17, paras 45-46.

⁸ Also including Education Maintenance Allowances, piloted in 2003 and to be rolled out nationally in 2004.

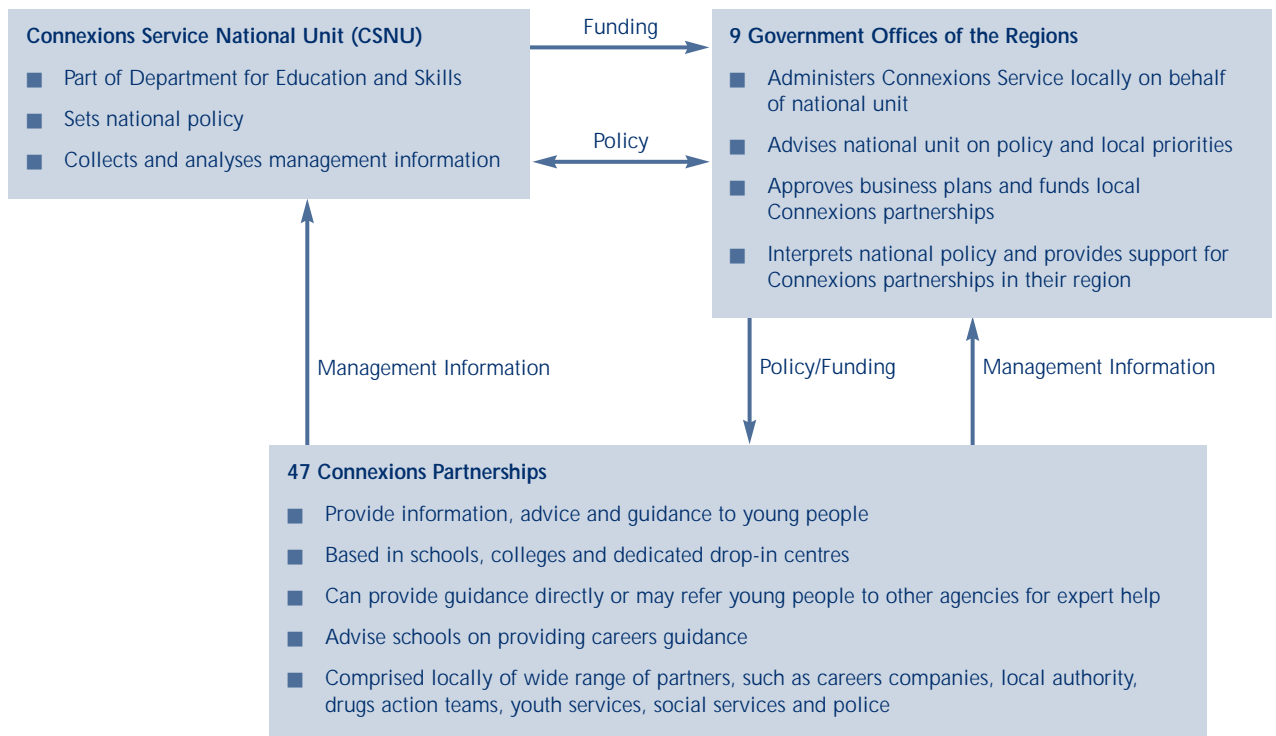
⁹ In Scotland and Wales, careers services for young people are delivered by Careers Scotland and Careers Wales respectively. These organisations provide careers advice for both young people and adults.

5 Agencies and services brought together under Connexions



Source: National Audit Office, based on, *Bridging the Gap*, (Social Exclusion Unit, 1999)

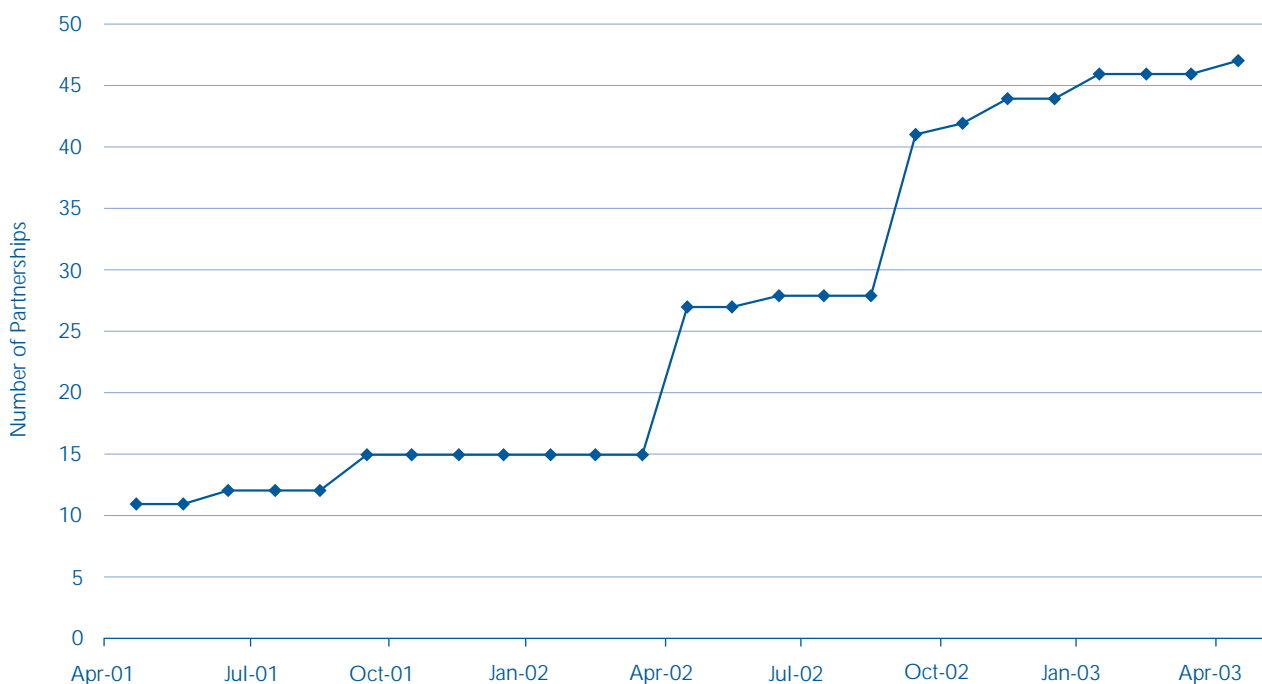
6 How Connexions is managed



Source: National Audit Office

7 Connexions partnerships were launched in phases between April 2001 and April 2003

By April 2003, the Connexions Service was available across all of England. Local services are supplied by 47 Connexions partnerships.



Source: Connexions Service

1.8 Central to the "gateway" approach, which had been used successfully for New Start¹⁰, the Learning Gateway¹¹ and New Deal for Young People¹² is the use of Personal Advisers to deliver the service. A new profession of Connexions Personal Advisers is being recruited and trained to provide advice and guidance to young people. They are not expected to be experts in all fields, but are able to identify individuals' needs, direct them towards the services they need and monitor their progress to ensure they are getting the necessary support. **Figure 8** illustrates the many ways in which a Personal Adviser can assist a young person. This needs-based approach differs from the previous approach of the careers services, under which it was common for all young people to meet a careers adviser at least once during their time in school. However, schools still have a duty to provide a programme of careers education for all pupils (**Figure 9**).

8 Examples of the range of interventions by Personal Advisers

A Personal Adviser has been working with the YMCA in Burton to support young people who have been made homeless. The Personal Adviser has helped young people to overcome a number of barriers which were holding them back from returning to education and training.

In Salford, Personal Advisers supported a young person with mental health issues as part of the local non-attendance at school initiative. After supporting her into learning, the young person used the Connexions Centre to successfully apply for a job, supported by her Personal Adviser.

A Personal Adviser offered intensive support to help a pregnant teenager complete her A levels with good results. She had been referred by her GP via Surestart Plus. Further support helped her to secure accommodation just before the birth, motherhood training, childcare support and a reserved Higher Education place.

A Personal Adviser, located with the team supporting young people leaving care in Blackpool, coordinates an intensive work placement programme with targeted young people. The programme has been successful in securing employment placements, including Modern Apprenticeships, for young people who would have otherwise struggled to transfer into employment.

Source: Department for Education and Skills

10 The New Start Strategy was introduced in England in September 1997 to increase the participation, achievement and motivation levels of young people in learning.

11 The Learning Gateway programme was launched in 1999 with the aim of ensuring that all young people continue in education and training until they are 19.

12 The New Deal for Young People, launched in April 1998, aims to improve the long term employability of 18-24 year olds who have been unemployed for more than six months.

9 How careers advice and guidance in schools has changed since the introduction of the Connexions service

| | Before Connexions | Now |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Access to a careers adviser | Advice was supplied by careers advisers who visit the school. The careers advisers tended to hold a career interview with most pupils in the school. In 1998, policy changes focused the work of careers advisers on young people deemed to be 'most in need'. | Schools identify young people in need of support and arrange for them to see a Personal Adviser. Young people may choose to contact Personal Advisers themselves, for example via their school or college, by calling the Connexions Direct helpline or by visiting a Connexions one-stop shop. There is a presumption that not all young people need to see a Personal Adviser. |
| Getting other types of advice | Young people needing advice on issues such as drugs, sexual health and financial matters needed to seek out specialist advice. | Personal Advisers can offer access to advice on a wide range of issues of concern to young people. |
| The role of schools | Schools have a duty to deliver a curriculum based programme of careers education. They also had a duty to provide the careers service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance. | Schools still have a duty to deliver a curriculum based programme of careers education. At present this applies to Years 9-11 but from September 2004 will apply to years 7-11. They also have a duty to provide the Connexions Service with access to young people in order to provide careers advice and guidance. |
| Performance targets | Careers services had input-focused targets, such as number of careers plans completed. | Connexions has outcome-based targets, such as reduction in number of young people who opt out of education, employment and training. |

Source: National Audit Office

The objectives of Connexions are to provide both a universal and differentiated service

1.9 The Service is intended to help all young people (Figure 10), and is concerned that young people should regard Personal Advisers as being there for everybody, not just for those with problems. Through this universal service Connexions helps to increase levels of participation and retention post-16, and helps to identify the support and learning opportunities that young people need. It works with other agencies, including the Learning and Skills Council to ensure that the right provision is made available.

1.10 In Autumn 2002 the Department informed partnerships that the key objective was to reduce the proportion of young people aged 16-18 not in education, employment or training (NEET) by 10 per cent by November 2004. The target was effective from November 2002, by which time 44 of the 47 partnerships had been launched. Achieving the target would reduce the percentage recorded as NEET by Connexions from 9.1 per cent to 8.2 per cent, with approximately 18,000 more young people participating in education, employment and training. To meet the target, Connexions must focus its work both on young people who have already dropped out of learning or employment, and on those who are at risk of disengaging from learning in the future. The priorities for the Service are shown in Figure 11.

10 Extract from Connexions Service Vision Statement

Connexions is designed to end the fragmentation of services for 13 - 19 year olds. It aims to give all young people the best start in life, helping them to become well-rounded adults who are committed to learning and development and contribute to economic prosperity.

Source: Youth Support Services for 13-19 year olds: A Vision for 2006 (Connexions Service)

11 Priorities of the Connexions Service

Within the context of a universal service, Connexions was set up to reduce the number of 16 - 18 year olds who are not in education, training or employment, and this is the key area where we need to achieve measurable outcomes.

In 2006, we will judge our progress by the proportion of young people who make a successful transition into further learning at 16, the proportion who stay on at 17, and the proportion of 16 - 18 year olds who are in either learning or work.

Through our drive to increase participation and retention in learning and work, we will also contribute to:

- improvements in young people's behaviour and a reduction in the number of young people who become involved in crime;
- better outcomes for young people from black and ethnic minorities; and
- improving the overall effectiveness of services in meeting young people's needs.

Source: Youth Support Services for 13-19 year olds: A Vision for 2006 (Connexions Service)

1.11 The Connexions Service has also been linked to a number of cross-government targets for which it does not have a predetermined share of responsibility (Figure 12).

12 Cross-government targets for the Connexions Service

On participation in education and training, LEA Education Development Plan Targets:

- for the reduction in the percentage of half days missed by pupils at maintained secondary schools;

On achievement, Local Education Authority Education and Development Plan targets for:

- the percentage of 16 year olds achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C and 95 per cent achieving 1 or more GCSEs at grades A*-G; and Local Learning and Skills Council target;
- increase in the number of 19 year olds achieving a qualification equivalent to NVQ level 2 between 2000 and 2004;

On care leavers, the National Priorities Guidance target:

- to increase the level of employment, training or education amongst young people aged 19 in 2002 who were looked after by local authorities in their 17th year to at least 75 per cent of all young people of the same age in their area by March 2004;

On drug abuse, the Government's Drug Strategy target:

- to refer young people, with a drug related problem, to specialist support;

On youth offending:

- 90 per cent of young offenders, on completion of their supervision orders, to be in education, training and employment by December 2004;

On teenage pregnancy:

- to reduce by 50 per cent the rate of conceptions amongst under 18 year olds by 2010, and establish a firm downward trend in the conception rates for under 16s;
- 60 per cent of 16-19 year old mothers to be in employment, education and training by 2010.

Source: *Connexions Service Planning Guidance, 2003-04*

Methodology

1.12 The issues on which we focused were:

- the extent to which Connexions is making progress towards the target to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training by 10 per cent by November 2004 (Part 2);
- the extent to which Connexions is meeting its wider objectives of providing a good quality advice and support service for all 13-19 year olds (Part 3); and
- whether Connexions has built effective partnerships with the other agencies that serve young people (Part 4).

1.13 Our work (details of which are shown in the Methodology on page 43) included:

- interviews with key staff at Government Offices of the Regions and Connexions partnerships;
- consultation with Connexions Service National Unit staff and other government departments;
- a postal survey of 1,500 secondary schools to which 580 responded;
- a postal survey of 150 further education colleges to which 94 responded;
- focus group of Local Learning and Skills Council staff;
- a review of Ofsted inspection reports for phase one Connexions partnerships;
- regression analysis; and
- forming an expert panel to advise and inform the study at key stages.

Part 2

Connexions is making progress towards its objectives but target setting and measurement is inherently difficult

- 2.1 This part examines whether the Connexions Service is making measurable progress towards:
- reducing the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET);
 - building a complete record of young people aged 13 to 19;
 - providing a universal service for all young people aged 13 to 19;
 - meeting planning guidelines that schools receive a minimum of one day per week contact time with a Personal Adviser; and
 - contributing to the cross-Government targets that Connexions shares with other government departments.

Reducing the percentage of young people who are not in education, employment or training

Connexions is on course to meet its objective of reducing the proportion of young people age 16 to 18 who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) by ten per cent between November 2002 and November 2004. It is unclear whether it will be possible to sustain a continued reduction in the level of NEET in the longer term.

The percentage of young people who are NEET fell by 8 per cent in established Connexions areas, and 3 per cent nationally between November 2002 and November 2003

- 2.2 Connexions partnerships constantly monitor the status of young people in their areas, updating their information for any changes notified to them either by Personal Advisers or other agencies. This tracking allows the Department to monitor changes in the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or

training. For reporting purposes, the proportion of young people who are NEET is calculated by reference to the number of young people aged 16 to 18 whose status has been confirmed by partnerships.

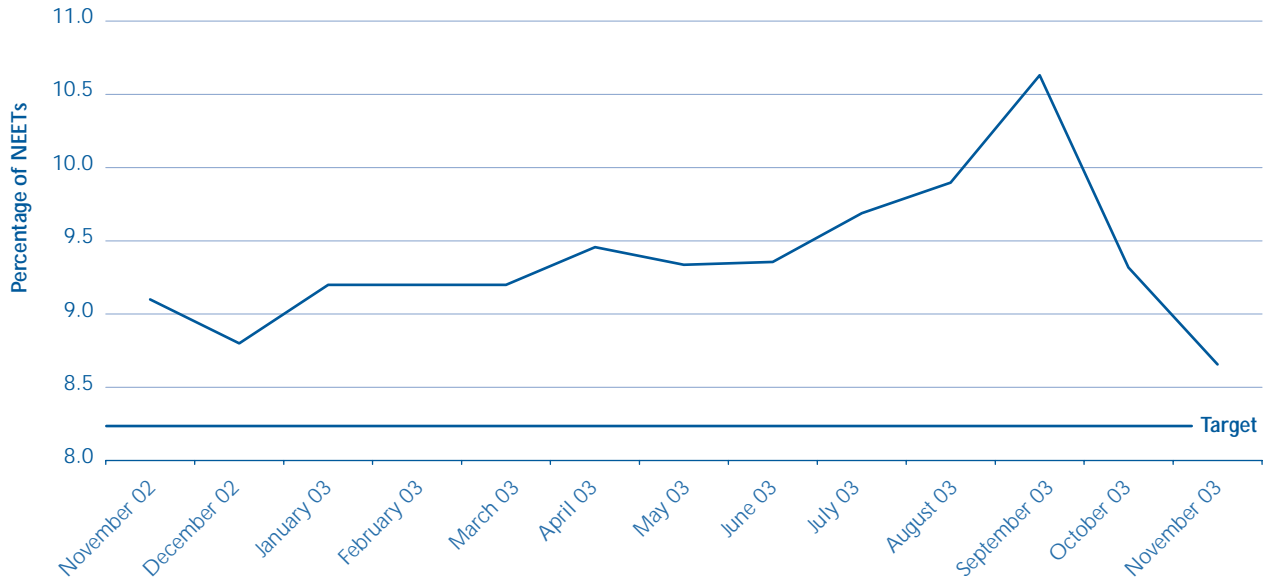
- 2.3 As at November 2003, 8.7 per cent of young people aged 16-18 whose status is known were not in education, employment or training. (Figure 13 overleaf). Connexions is unable to confirm the educational or employment status of all young people who are known to be in the cohort.
- 2.4 There is a high degree of churn, as young people move in and out of education, employment and training. In the year to November 2003, for example, 301,000 young people became NEET while 309,000 left it. As Connexions increases the sophistication of its measurement systems it will be able to carry out useful analyses of the duration and the number of episodes of NEET that young people experience.

There are wide variations in performance between partnerships

- 2.5 Trends in reducing the proportion of NEETs vary widely between partnerships and phases. Phase 1 areas reduced the proportion of 16-18 year olds who are NEET between November 2002 and November 2003 by an average of 4 per cent, and phase 2s by 12 per cent. The situation in phase 3 areas was very different, with the proportion of NEET rising by 8 per cent. This mirrors the experience on phase 1 and 2 partnerships in their first year, when they found more young people and only began to make an impact on NEETs in their second year.
- 2.6 A short-term rise in the proportion of people who are NEET does not necessarily mean that a partnership is failing. Increases can be caused by changes in the cohort, or in the number of young people whose activity is 'not known'. There are also seasonal variations, with the proportion of young people who are NEET rising throughout the academic year, and peaking in August/September as young people leave schools and colleges.

13 The percentage of young people known to be NEET, November 2002 - November 2003

The percentage of young people who are NEET as defined by Connexions has fallen by 3 per cent since November 2002. Connexions aims for a ten per cent reduction between November 2002 and November 2004.



Source: Connexions Service

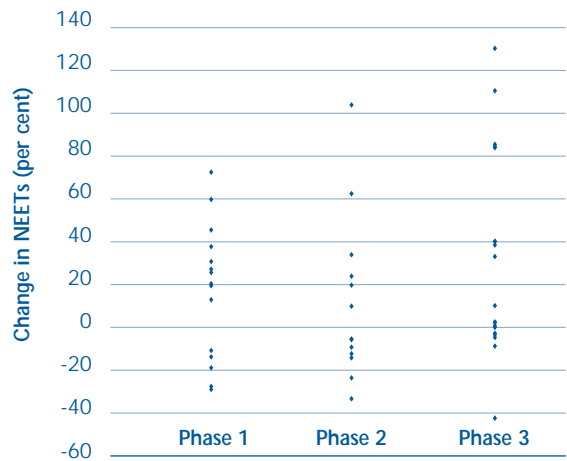
2.7 We used statistical analysis to determine the reasons why some partnerships have been more successful than others in reducing the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training. After discussions with practitioners, the Department and our reference panel, we tested more than 20 possible explanations. These included: the model used to deliver the Service; the phase in which the partnership was launched; and the amount of resources deployed by the partnership. The methodology we used is discussed in more detail on page 43.

2.8 We found that the only factor that has had a statistically significant impact on performance is the percentage of young people who were NEET at the time that the partnership was launched. All things being equal, those partnerships that recorded a higher percentage at launch had achieved a larger reduction by November 2003. Other factors such as launch date, delivery model and financial input have not had a significant impact.

2.9 Our analysis explained around 54 per cent of the variation in performance between partnerships. The remaining variation could be caused by factors that are hard to quantify, factors such as improved data collection systems, or by chance. For example, Ofsted has been critical of leadership and management in three of the partnerships inspected. These less tangible factors could have an impact on the reduction in young people not in education, employment or training in the long term, but too few partnerships have been inspected to allow a statistically valid analysis of the impact on performance.

14 Change in NEETs by partnership since launch

Partnerships have had varying success in reducing NEETs since they were launched. The partnerships that were launched earliest have not necessarily recorded the largest reductions in NEETs.



Source: Connexions Service

Partnerships are confident of meeting the NEET target

2.10 Chief Executives at eight of the ten Connexions partnerships we visited expect to meet the national target of a ten per cent reduction in the proportion of young people who are NEET. Some Chief Executives felt that the target could be made more stretching, so long as economic conditions remained favourable in their area. None of the partnerships we visited were among the five which had been consulted about the level of the target, which took account of the early performance of phase 1 partnerships.

It may become harder to sustain a continued reduction in the percentage of NEETs

2.11 Connexions partnerships have well developed but diverse systems for identifying young people requiring intensive support. Personal Advisers invest substantial amounts of time and effort in supporting those with multiple barriers to education, employment and training but it is not always clear whether this has been an effective use of their time. There may come a point when further investment will cease to be cost-effective. Partnerships would benefit from greater analysis of interventions by Personal Advisers to establish the effectiveness of their work and to ensure they are deployed in a way that provides the best outcomes.

2.12 All things being equal, the group of young people who need the most intensive support will make up an increasing proportion of the NEETs group over time. This may already be the case in areas where a strong local economy means that most young people are already in employment or learning. The partnerships we visited that covered more affluent areas commented that most young people who were not in education, employment or training in their area were hard to help. These comments also highlight the fact that the size and characteristics of the NEET cohort can be influenced by socio-economic factors outside the control of Connexions.

Approach to funding may discourage short and long term success

2.13 Chief Executives at five of the ten Connexions partnerships we visited said that the funding formula used to allocate funds to their partnership each year acts as a disincentive to reduce the number of people not in education, employment or training in their area. They were concerned that if they succeeded in reducing the numbers, they would receive less funding. The formula takes account of factors such as the number of young people in each partnership and the level of social deprivation. Ten per cent of the 2003-04 grant depends on the number of 16-17 year olds who are not in education or training in the area served by each partnership.

2.14 In practice, not all partnerships achieving a reduction in NEETs will receive less funding the following year. A partnership's allocation for this part of the grant is based on its share of the national total of 16-17 year olds who are not in education or training. If a partnership reduces its level of NEETs but other partnerships perform even better, then the first partnership will receive a higher share of the funding. The Department is considering currently whether it is feasible to introduce separate performance incentives to reward partnerships that succeed in reducing NEETs.

2.15 Partnerships also felt that the annual funding round discourages investment. In common with many other government programmes, partnerships do not know how much funding they will receive from year to year. Partnerships told us that this uncertainty prevented longer term planning and investment activities that may only produce results in the medium to long term. For example, partnerships told us that the uncertainty over future budgets has made it difficult for them to make long-term commitments to partner agencies and to invest in capital such as IT equipment. The Department has sought to increase flexibility in funding by enabling partnerships to carry forward five per cent of their surpluses. They also plan to revise the funding formula to provide for the core administrative costs that are incurred by partnerships each year.

Better quality information about young people

Connexions has significantly improved the quality of information about the education, employment and training activity of young people aged 13 - 19. As partnerships identify more who are not in education, employment or training, they will find it harder in the short term to meet their target of an overall reduction in the number of disengaged young people in their area.

The accuracy of data on the cohort has been improved by the development of a database rather than relying on the Labour Force Survey and administrative data

2.16 In July 1999, the Learning to Succeed White Paper¹³ and the Bridging the Gap¹⁴ report called for the new Connexions Service to develop a comprehensive record system which would:

- ensure that no young person becomes 'missing'; and
- ensure that prompt, co-ordinated action is taken if a young person stops being involved in education or training and risks 'dropping out'.

2.17 All Connexions partnerships now operate databases of young people in their area, building on systems inherited from former careers services. Connexions partnerships we visited inherited up to three different databases operated by careers services within their areas, which they have had to integrate. They also drew on information held on databases operated by a large number of agencies, including Drugs Action Teams, Jobcentre Plus, social services, Youth Offending Teams and voluntary groups. The Department is developing a central computer system (known as CCIS) that will extract data from partnership databases to automatically generate management information about young people and the activities of partnerships. Local systems must meet the national specifications, but can still be developed independently. The partnerships that we visited were - with a few exceptions - supportive of these new arrangements, as they can use and develop their own systems to capture information that they consider necessary.

2.18 Historically, information on the education, employment and training activities of young people has been held on a wide range of different databases held by different agencies. National trends have been and continue to be reported in an annual publication¹⁵, drawing on the Labour Force Survey and national educational and trainee databases. The number of people who are not in education, employment or training is a residual figure left over when those young people known or imputed to be in education or employment are deducted from the estimates of population size. This figure represents a snapshot of the situation at one point in the year. Its accuracy is dependent on the level of response to the survey and it is published some six months after the period on which it reports. The Connexions recording system provides the most complete national picture to date of the activity of young people. It avoids the problem that disengaged young people might not respond to the survey, provides a more detailed breakdown of young people's current activity, and enables partnerships to have updated data monthly.

2.19 Using their databases, Connexions partnerships can now carry out more sophisticated analyses of trends. For example, they can examine closely the reasons why people become NEET and their destinations when they leave the NEET group (see good practice example below). Partnerships also identify geographical areas where NEETs are overrepresented (NEET 'hot spots'), and match the NEET group to education and training provision, working with partner agencies to address any gaps identified.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Using data to target services

The **Coventry & Warwickshire** partnership uses its database to analyse the routes by which people become NEET. It has broken down the NEET group in the area by former school, postcode, ethnicity and gender. This approach has enabled the partnership to target resources at areas of most need. By identifying young people who are more likely to become NEET, the partnership can also act to address the causes and so prevent other young people from entering the NEET group.

¹³ Learning to Succeed: a new framework for post-16 learning, CM4392, July 1999.

¹⁴ Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities For 16 -18 Year Olds Not In Education, Employment Or Training, Social Exclusion Unit, July 1999.

¹⁵ Participation in Education, Training and Employment by 16 to 18- year-olds in England, National Statistics/Department for Education and Skills.

Much progress has been made on improving completeness by sharing of data between different agencies but there is further to go

2.20 The Department and other agencies recognise the importance of sharing data on young people while complying with data protection legislation. It can be a major task to bring together all the relevant data held about young people. Obtaining data from other agencies, rather than any technical issues, is perhaps the main obstacle that Connexions has had to overcome when developing their local databases. As a result, not all partnerships are expected to have data sharing agreements with all the agencies they work with in place by April 2004.

2.21 Much progress has been made in agreeing how data should be shared between other agencies and Connexions partnerships. Partnerships have had to work hard to assure partners that data-sharing arrangements will be consistent with the confidentiality that is offered to clients of partner agencies, that privacy will be respected, and that data will not be stored or used in ways that might threaten the safety of young people. Many partnerships now have formal data-sharing protocols in place that establish how they will obtain their data from key partners within the framework of data protection legislation. In some cases, these protocols followed protracted negotiations, generally due to concerns among partners that they might infringe data protection legislation or client confidentiality. In others, pre-existing good relations with other agencies meant that data was shared more freely.

2.22 Few of the partnerships we visited felt that they needed more guidance from the Department on data-sharing protocols, while the success of some partnerships demonstrates that data protection issues can and have been resolved. Instead, problems tended to arise locally over the practicalities of implementing the protocols. Connexions partnerships and other agencies should try to identify practical solutions to enable data-sharing to happen, with the essential factors captured in an agreement. Half of the partnerships that we visited felt that uncertainty over data-sharing was still holding up the effective transfer of data. In particular, electronic data-sharing is rare, although the good practice example below illustrates that it can be achieved.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Electronic data-sharing

The **Derbyshire** partnership is developing the use of web-based communication, allowing partners to link their databases electronically with the Derbyshire database. Users can choose which fields they want to make available to their partners, taking account of confidentiality considerations. The benefits are that data-sharing can be automated, thus saving time and money, plus users retain close control over which types of data are shared.

In Derbyshire, the Identification, Referral and Tracking (IRT) database being established by the Children and Young People's Unit to track vulnerable youngsters will use the Connexions database to extract designated fields from the Connexions database, and will use a similar web-based approach for tracking younger people.

The search for better quality information about young people could make performance targets more difficult to reach

2.23 Partnerships are committed to seeking out young people who are not in education, employment or training. They track all young people until they are 19 and those with special needs until they are 24. As they do so, they make it harder for themselves to achieve a percentage reduction in NEET in the short term by:

- reclassifying as NEET young people whose status was previously unknown;
- discovering young people who had previously been omitted from the Connexions database.

2.24 Partnerships do not know the current activity of around 15 per cent of the cohort. These young people are thought to live in the partnership area, but their records are not sufficiently up to date to record their activity as current. If the Connexions Service is to demonstrate convincingly that participation in learning and employment is increasing, it is important that partnerships are able to minimise the number of young people whose status is not known. In 2004, partnerships will be expected to work towards meeting a specific target for the not knowns in their area.

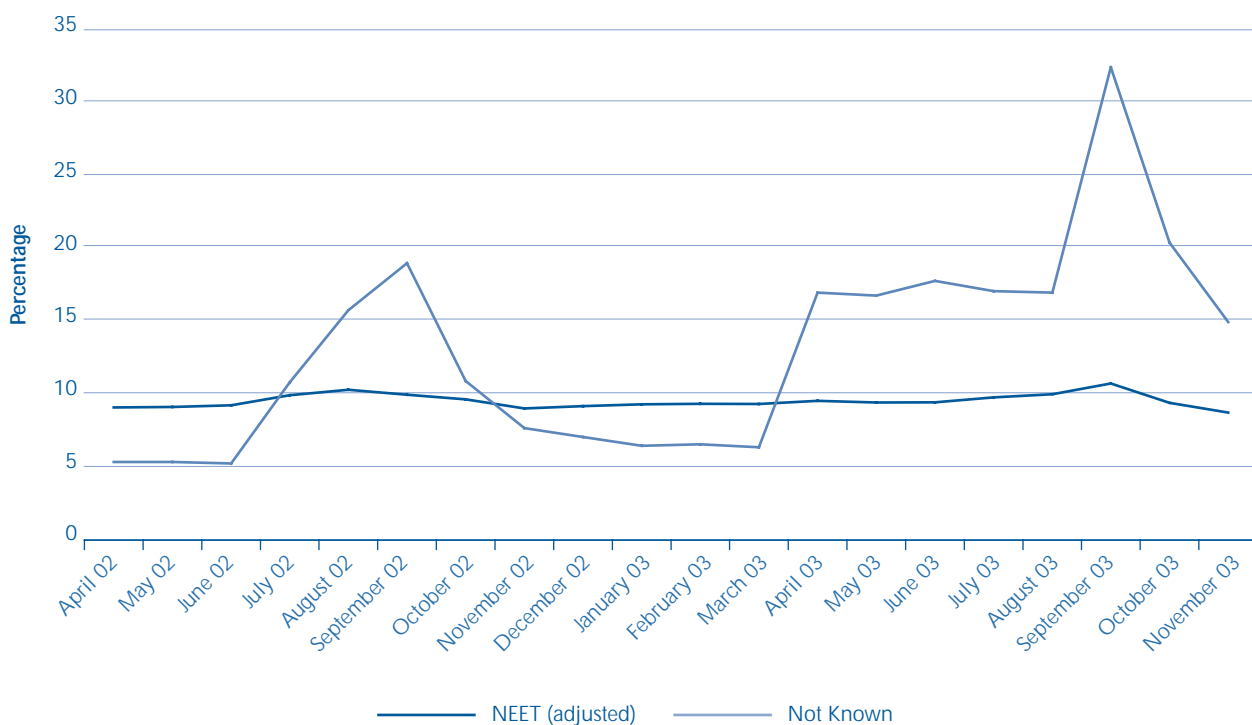
2.25 **Figure 15** shows that the percentage of young people whose status is not known has increased since the launch of the Connexions Service. This upward trend has been caused in part by the introduction of requirements for client tracking in April 2002, whereby young people whose records are not sufficiently up to date to meet the requirement are recorded as activity 'not known' until their current activity can be confirmed.

2.26 It is assumed by Connexions that young people whose status is not known are inherently more likely to be either in employment or NEET than to be in education or training. As partnerships re-establish contact with these young people, their status will be reclassified as appropriate (see paragraphs 2.3-2.4). It is too soon to say with certainty what proportion of the 'not known' group of young people are NEET and what proportion are in employment. If a large proportion of the group are found to be NEET when contact is re-established, it will be harder for the partnership to record an overall reduction in the number of young people not in education, employment or training in their area.

2.27 There have been notable successes in discovering young people who had previously been omitted from the Connexions database. For example, Greater Merseyside partnership found 400 more individuals who were not in education, employment or training when it first started working with Youth Offending Teams. In November 2003, partnerships were tracking 40,000 more young people than in November 2002. Connexions estimate that more than half of this increase is due to partnerships identifying previously unknown young people, rather than due to underlying changes in the size of the cohort. It is not able as yet to determine how many were NEET when they were identified. This valuable work makes it harder to reduce the overall level of young people who are not in education, employment or training.

15 Percentage of NEET and young people whose status is not known, 2002-2003

The proportion of young people recorded as 'situation not known' rose significantly in April 2003 as a result of the new client tracking arrangements (see paragraph 2.25). Assumptions were made about the proportion of these young people likely to be NEET, based on their last known occupation, and the per cent NEET was adjusted accordingly. The seasonal peaks in the percentage of young people whose status is not known in September each year are caused by the start of the academic year, when it is not yet clear how many young people have enrolled in education and training. Data for April 2003 onwards was then affected by the new follow-up arrangements, which caused not knowns to rise.



Source: Connexions Service

Providing a universal service

More could be done to highlight the importance and impact of providing a universal advice and guidance service for young people via Connexions and its partners, including schools. In the absence of quantified targets for the universal service, partnerships feel that there is not enough recognition of the full extent of their work, such as preventative programmes to encourage young people to stay in learning and employment, and the contribution they make towards the NEETs target.

Partnerships want more recognition of their efforts to provide a service for all young people

2.28 The Connexions Service is available for all young people. The decision to move away from providing an automatic careers interview for all young people was taken with the view that this would free up resources to support those young people most in need of advice and guidance. It also recognised that some young people need more flexibility in the way that they access advice and guidance. The Department has stated that Connexions aims to 'give all young people the best start in life, helping them to become well-rounded adults who are committed to learning and development and contribute to economic prosperity'¹⁶. The Department has sought to reinforce this message by issuing to partnerships a definition of the universal service, explaining that all young people are entitled to an introduction to the purpose of the Connexions Service and access to advice and guidance for every teenager who needs it. The Department has also stressed the important role that schools play in both providing a careers education programme and ensuring that young people understand the range of support available from Connexions.¹⁷

2.29 While Connexions has a clear and well-publicised target to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training by ten per cent, it has proved harder to develop quantified targets for the services that Connexions partnerships provide for all young people. Six of the partnerships we visited felt that the absence of a clear target or objective specifically for the universal service focuses undue attention on the NEETs target, which only measures one aspect of their work. Some also considered that they were not being given due encouragement or recognition for carrying out preventative work which would lead to a long-term reduction in the level of NEETs.

2.30 The Department considers that the objectives of the universal service are closely aligned with the target to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training by ten per cent. Providing a good quality universal service is essential if partnerships are to improve young people's chances of making a successful transition at 16, and reduce the number of young people entering the NEET group. The partnerships we visited did provide good examples of their preventative work (see good practice example below). In addition, Ofsted inspectors report a wide range of preventative activities, such as:

- working closely with schools and colleges to identify young people at risk of dropping out of education and training and provide an alternative curriculum where appropriate;
- increased promotion of one-stop advice and guidance facilities in schools and colleges; and
- working with local Learning and Skills Councils to increase the number and geographical spread of work-based learning opportunities.

2.31 While not conclusive, the available management information suggests that support for 13 - 16 year olds who are at risk of leaving education, training or employment is in fact increasing, rising from 26 per cent of all interventions by Personal Advisers in the first half of 2002-03 to 30 per cent in the same period of 2003-04. However, there are wide variations between partnerships (Figure 16).

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Preventative work

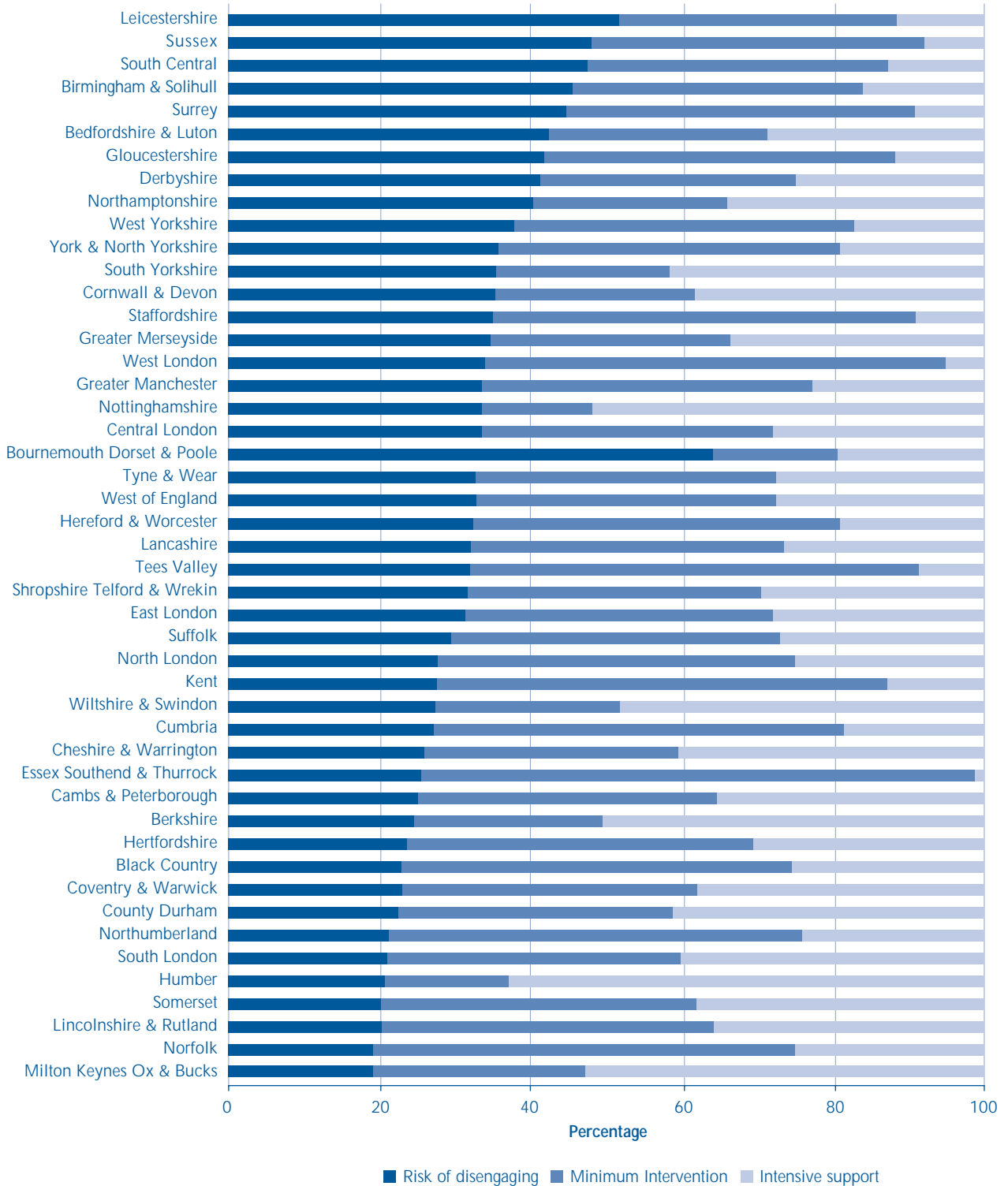
The **Coventry & Warwickshire** partnership is encouraging further education colleges to understand the reasons why people drop out of courses, and to act to prevent drop-out e.g. by persuading young people to try different styles of learning.

16 Youth Support Services for 13-19 year olds: A Vision for 2006, DfES 2002.

17 Careers Education and Guidance in England: A National Framework 11-19, Department for Education and Skills (March 2003).

16 Partnerships differ in the proportion of their workload devoted to encouraging young people to stay in education, training or employment

This chart shows how the proportion of work by Personal Advisers with young people at risk of disengaging compared with the proportion of interventions with those requiring intensive support or minimum support between April and September 2003. Work with young people at risk of disengaging ranged from 19 per cent in one partnership to 52 per cent in another.



NOTE

This diagram has been prepared on the basis of "interventions" which are recorded when a Personal Adviser offers some element of substantial or meaningful assistance to a young person. A young person may receive multiple interventions, so the number of recorded interventions does not equate to the number of young people assisted by Connexions.

Source: Connexions Service

There is scope to highlight better the impact of the universal service

- 2.32 The Department has commissioned research - including surveys of young people and partners - that could form the basis for a range of performance indicators in areas such as accessibility of services, customer satisfaction and usefulness of advice. Survey data is available at partnership level, allowing partnerships to compare their performance against national trends. We also found good examples of partnerships working to measure the impact of their work (see good practice example below).
- 2.33 The Department intends to use the survey results as a baseline to monitor shifts in opinion over time. However, no specific targets have been set as yet. By highlighting performance in areas such as customer satisfaction with Personal Advisers, and the impact over time of advice on all young people, Connexions could better reflect the valuable services that partnerships can provide for all young people. It would also be appropriate to look at young people's perceptions of the accessibility and availability of the Connexions Service.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Measuring the impact of the universal service

The **Derbyshire** partnership is developing a Personal Adviser checklist to measure 'distance travelled' by clients of each Personal Adviser and the effectiveness of the processes that young people are taken through.

Safeguarding resources for schools

Connexions has not measured whether schools are receiving the minimum of one day per week contact time with a Personal Adviser, as recommended in planning guidance to partnerships.

- 2.34 The Connexions Service marks a radical change of approach from that of the former careers service. While the careers services endeavoured to see all young people at least once, the Connexions Service offers access to all young people without necessarily seeing everyone face to face. In addition, guidance may be offered outside the traditional school setting. The Department recognised that some schools feared a withdrawal of resources and therefore agreed transitional arrangements during the first year of Connexions to ensure that schools received at least the same level of help as they received from the careers service. To provide a safeguard within the system for individual schools, the department issued guidance to partnerships that all schools should receive a minimum level of one day per week contact time with a Personal Adviser. The Department had established through a sample survey of schools that a significant number (24 per cent) did not receive this level of help from the careers services.



2.35 The one day per week minimum has been a consistent feature in the annual planning guidance issued by the Department to partnerships. Although Connexions holds no definitive data to confirm that individual schools are receiving the minimum contact time, our survey of one thousand secondary schools showed that:

- partnerships decide independently what resources to allocate to schools. In 70 per cent of cases, schools are not able to negotiate how much resource they will receive;
- the average number of hours that Personal Advisers spend in schools overall appears to have increased by a mean of 117 hours per school per year (based on comparative data for staff time before and after Connexions from two fifths of respondents). However, the mean does not reflect the complexity of trends at an individual school level. About half of schools reported a clear reduction in hours, but fewer schools have very low time allocations, with only 13 per cent (compared to the department's estimate of 24 per cent prior to the launch of Connexions) reporting an allocation that amounts to less than one day a week. The evidence suggests that there has been a significant redistribution of resources between schools, boosting the resources available to schools who previously received the least resources but leaving other schools with less resources than before.
- Personal Advisers appear to be focusing more on a smaller number of young people than was the case before the launch of Connexions (based on comparative data on caseloads from 11 per cent of respondents).



Performance against cross-Government targets has been patchy, while Connexions contribution to meeting them is impossible to measure

2.36 Connexions is expected to contribute to a large number of cross-Government targets (see Part 1, paragraph 1.11), some of which were established before the launch of the Connexions Service. In some cases, for example the target that 90 per cent of young offenders should be in education, employment and training on completion of their supervision orders, Connexions did not have a role in setting the target.

2.37 It has proven difficult to establish reliable baselines for some of these targets. For targets such as increasing the proportion of teenage mothers and care leavers who are in education, employment or training, much of the work of Connexions has necessarily been on identifying the individuals concerned in the absence of any other local information.

2.38 The nature of such targets makes it very difficult to determine through management information alone how successful Connexions has been because of the impossibility of apportioning credit between the individual agencies involved. However, partnerships were able to provide case studies and examples of the impact they had on the target groups. Our survey confirmed that virtually no schools were able to attribute entirely to Connexions success in areas such as reducing truancy or improving educational attainment. Nevertheless, around 13 per cent of schools considered that Connexions had made some contribution to reducing truancy, while 11 per cent said Connexions had been partly responsible for increasing the level of attainment at key stage 4. For some targets, such as reducing the rate of conceptions among under 18 year olds by 2010, it is too early to say whether Connexions and the other relevant agencies have been successful.

2.39 **Figure 17** shows progress against a number of targets that are more specific to Connexions.

17 Performance against cross-government targets

| Demographic | Target | Target date | Progress as at March 2003 |
|------------------|---|-------------|--|
| Care leavers | To increase the level of employment, training or education amongst young people aged 19 who were looked after by local authorities in their 17th year to at least 75 per cent of all young people of the same age in their area | 2004 | Levels for the care leavers group were 64 per cent of those for the population as a whole. |
| Young offenders | 90 per cent of young offenders to be in education, employment or training on completion of their supervision orders | 2004 | 68 per cent of young offenders were in education, employment or training on completion of their supervision orders. |
| Teenage mothers | 60 per cent of 16-19 year old mothers to be in education, employment or training | 2010 | Of the 12,000 teenage mothers identified by March 2003, 13.9 per cent were in education, employment or training. Progress is difficult to assess given the lack of information on teenage mothers prior to the launch of Connexions. |
| Substance misuse | To refer all young people identified as having a drug related problem to specialist support | Ongoing | Connexions identified and referred to specialist support 400 young people in 2002-03. Partnerships report that some young people have asked for this very sensitive information not to be recorded. |





Zoe - Personal Adviser

Zoe, who is an American studies graduate with Personal Adviser and careers guidance diplomas, joined careers services in 1998, has worked with all age ranges and abilities. She comments, "We deal with issues that that schools aren't necessarily aware of. Young people know there's one single place to access information. We're able to spend time with them unpicking issues and helping them to make better decisions. It works really well."

David - Personal Adviser

David is a psychology graduate with qualifications in youth and community studies, and careers guidance, as well as in mental health. He works as a mental health support worker and youth worker. He points out that as a Personal Adviser "you're able to offer consistency to young people, working with them from 13 to adulthood and developing links with a whole host of other agencies. It has gone really well in engaging young people who are hard to reach".

Sue - Personal Adviser

Sue, who has a psychology and social science degree and holds a diploma in careers guidance, has worked on City Challenge and the Learning Gateway. She is now the Link Adviser for a Youth Offending Team, a Leaving Care Team and a Pathways to Work youth project. She holds weekly surgeries for young people, visits a young offenders institute. She says "We work with Youth Offending Teams, prisons, housing people, employers and others and often parents or carers. There's a lot of partnership working to ensure they don't slip through the net."

Astrid - Personal Adviser

Astrid's qualifications include a degree combining psychology and sociology, business administration, careers guidance diploma. She is based in a school, dealing with 13-16 year olds and some older children including those with special needs. She comments "There's a huge amount of support in the school already - my work complements that as an impartial adviser. I listen, encourage, advise and signpost elsewhere where appropriate. I also deliver the curriculum side of careers education and guidance in the school. We support young people to support themselves."

Part 3

Connexions provides a good quality service to young people who meet Personal Advisers, but not all young people who would benefit from advice are receiving it

3.1 This part looks at how successfully Connexions is meeting its wider objective of providing a service for all young people through its network of Personal Advisers. Specifically it looks at:

- the importance of the Personal Adviser role and the extent to which advisers are fully trained;
- the quality of the services provided by Personal Advisers to customers; and
- the availability of advice and guidance to those in education, employment or training.

The importance of the Personal Adviser role and the extent to which advisers are fully trained

The effectiveness of Connexions depends on having properly trained Personal Advisers and having the capacity to meet the demand from young people. Too many Personal Advisers are not yet fully trained and the take up of training has been slower than expected. There are less Personal Advisers than Connexions originally envisaged necessary which may put pressure on the Service as awareness of it increases. The introduction of Connexions Direct, the national helpline, may help to absorb any increase in demand for support.

The Personal Adviser is a skilled role requiring detailed knowledge of a range of disciplines

3.2 Personal Advisers are the first point of contact most young people have with the Connexions Service. Their remit is much wider than that of former careers advisers but they do not need to be experts in all issues affecting young people. If a young person needs specialist help from others, the Personal Adviser will act as a link, co-ordinating the necessary services, and monitor progress. The main duties are to:

- provide careers advice for those who wish for it and for those who are unsure of the training and job opportunities open to them;
- offer access to personal development opportunities;
- help young people access the opportunities they want; and,
- support young people through multiple problems, such as substance misuse, bullying, teenage pregnancy, homelessness or lack of confidence.

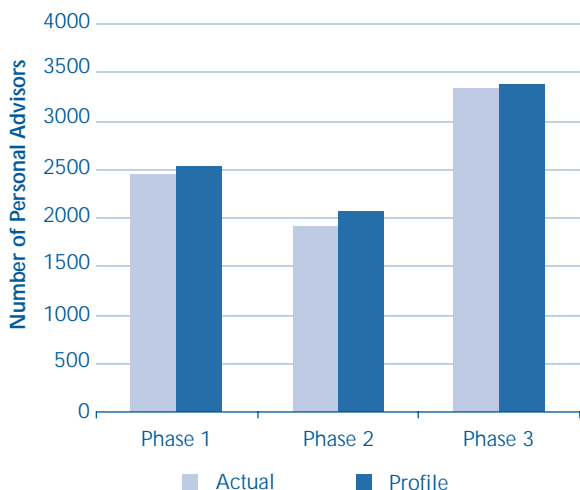
Partnerships have successfully recruited Personal Advisers to deliver the service but overall the number of staff is much less than expected when the Connexions Service was envisaged

3.3 There were 7,700 Personal Advisers delivering the Connexions Service as at September 2003. Some 70 per cent of Personal Advisers are former careers advisers. The remainder have been recruited by partnerships, or are seconded from a range of different agencies. Partnerships have recruited a further 2,400 staff who are not Personal Advisers, but who have direct contact with young people. The Personal Advisers and other delivery staff are supported by some 2,600 managerial and administrative staff. The Connexions Service is committed to recruiting a diverse workforce that reflects the population it serves. A survey in 2003 of the characteristics of Connexions staff showed that three quarters were female and one in ten Personal Advisers were from ethnic minorities (82 per cent were white with 8 per cent providing no ethnic information).

3.4 Most early partnerships have now successfully filled all their posts (Figure 18). Only a few partnerships in London and some other city locations have reported any recruitment difficulties. Later partnerships still have some vacancies due to the timing of their launches.

18 Actual and profile numbers of delivery staff by phase of partnership

Most partnerships are operating at 90 per cent or more of their full complement



Source: Connexions Service

3.5 Despite the general perception that the number of Personal Advisers and other delivery staff is higher than the number of careers advisers prior to the advent of Connexions, there is an overall concern that caseloads are higher and that staff may be under increasing pressure as the demand for help increases, especially as young people's awareness of the Service improves. Early estimates were that 15,000 Personal Advisers would be required, 9,000 of whom would be necessary to support just those requiring intensive support - considerably more than the 7,700 Personal Advisers and 2,400 other front line staff currently in post.

3.6 The Department's estimates took account of Connexions pilots and experience from Learning Gateway and Youth Offending Teams, and were based on caseloads as shown in **Figure 19**. During our fieldwork we found that advisers working specifically with those young people requiring intensive support often had case loads of between 40 and 50 young people, almost double the number anticipated. Some partnerships told us they had increased staff support arrangements to help advisers manage the higher case loads.

3.7 Offering a service that is differential according to needs has released some resources for targeting on those who most need the Service. The Department expects that the provision of one-stop shops and Connexions Direct (which will be rolled out nationally with effect from April 2004) will increase the capacity for Connexions to meet the demands of all young people and will be a more useful mechanism for many of them to access general advice. Partnerships we visited, however, remained concerned that both initiatives may stretch the capacity of Connexions because they are likely to result in additional demand for detailed or individual follow-up advice from Personal Advisers.

3.8 Research commissioned by the Department suggests that partnerships are now moving towards using more generic Personal Advisers, merging the intensive support and universal roles, whilst encouraging advisers to maintain or develop individual areas of expertise. Partnerships we visited felt that this should prevent individual advisers having very high and difficult case loads and spread the needs of the intensive group out across the partnership as a whole.

19 Anticipated and estimated current caseloads for Personal Advisers

Estimated current caseloads are much higher than originally envisaged.

| | Young people facing substantial and multiple problems | Young people at risk of dropping out or making unrealistic choices | Low risk |
|--------------------------------|---|--|----------------|
| Originally envisaged caseloads | 20-30 | 250-300 | 800-1000 |
| Estimated current caseloads | 40-50+ | 400-500 | Not applicable |

NOTE

Caseloads for low risk young people are notional, as it is not expected that Personal Advisers will deal one-to-one with all the young people in this category.

Source: Department for Education and Skills

The take up of Connexions training has been poor across partnerships and the majority of Personal Advisers are not yet fully trained

3.9 To be fully qualified, Connexions Personal Advisers must have an appropriate professional qualification to at least skill level 4 /NVQ level 4 or equivalent in a relevant professional discipline (e.g. careers guidance; youth work; social work) and have completed either the *Diploma for Personal Advisers* or the Understanding Connexions training programme. The diploma, which is mandatory for Personal Advisers working with young people with multiple difficulties, takes around eight months to complete and is equivalent in level of difficulty to the second year of a degree programme.

3.10 We analysed take-up of training across all partnerships and found:

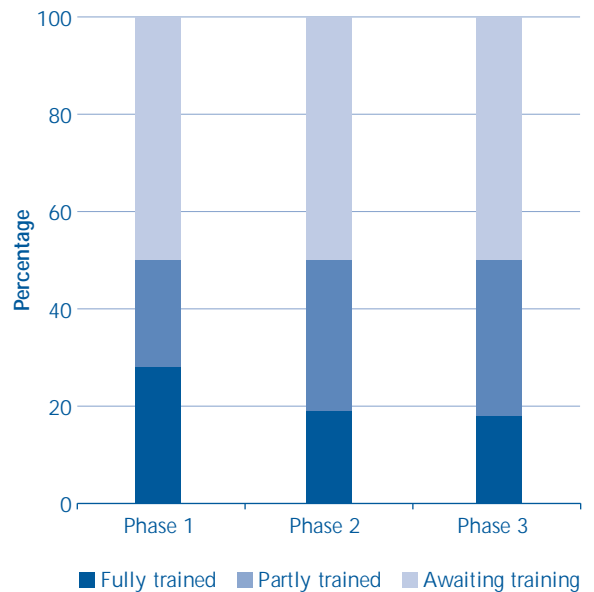
- 50 per cent of all advisers have still not undertaken any formal Connexions training;
- about four fifths of advisers are professionally qualified¹⁸ in related disciplines such as youth work and teaching;
- almost half of all partnerships have less than 20 per cent of advisers fully trained;
- in all but four of phase 1 partnerships over half of the advisers are still awaiting or are undergoing training (Figure 20); and
- partnerships based in areas covered by careers services which were contracted out to commercial firms have a lower proportion of fully-trained Personal Advisers (Figure 21 overleaf).

3.11 Partnerships recognised the importance of training for all staff, but that it can be a major drain on the availability of staff which can in the short term reduce the capacity of partnerships to deliver the service locally. One told us that releasing advisers for training would necessitate operating with only one third of their staff. Managers have to balance the need to train staff quickly against working towards meeting their local target to reduce the number of young people not in education, employment or training. Capacity should increase as more advisers complete their training. One partnership told us that it is trying to limit these effects by reducing the number of support staff and maximising the number of delivery staff.

3.12 Connexions also provides training for partner agencies and Connexions staff other than Personal Advisers. Those who have attended training include Connexions managers, support staff and representatives of the voluntary sector, police and social services as well as schools.

20 Training status of Personal Advisers by phase

The majority of Personal Advisers have not yet completed their Connexions specific training



Source: Connexions Service

Quality of services provided by Personal Advisers

Those young people who have had contact with Connexions Personal Advisers rate the service they received highly. In nine of the twelve inspections Ofsted have found that in general young people are receiving high quality individual interactions with Personal Advisers.

Young people who consult a Personal Adviser are positive about the service they receive

3.13 The Department's winter 2003 survey of 16,000 people showed that the majority of young people who had made contact with an adviser considered that the Service had had a positive impact upon them¹⁹. Staff were also highly regarded, being perceived as friendly, knowledgeable and easy to contact. Some 68 per cent had been helped to make a decision about their future.

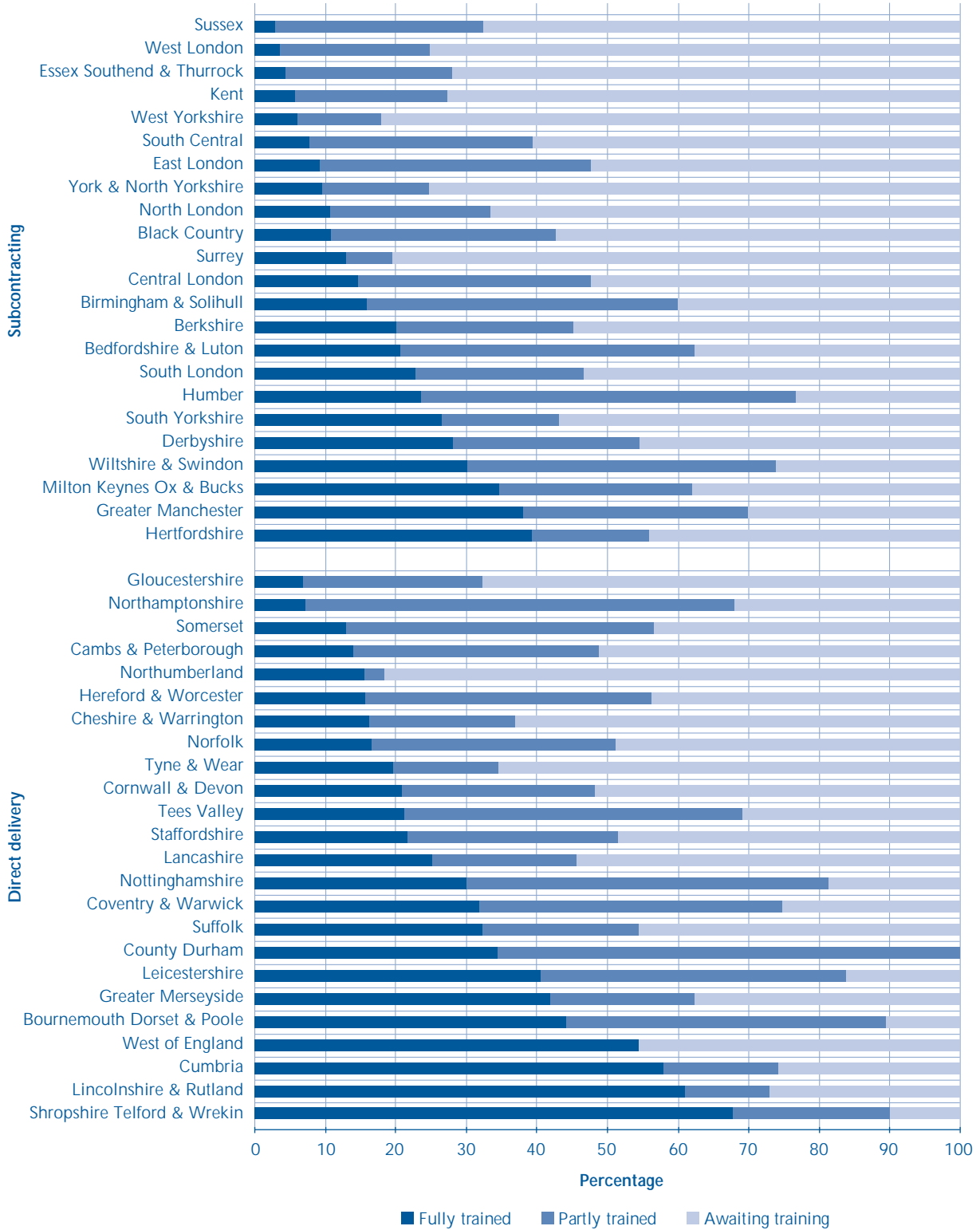
3.14 Some partnerships are undertaking assessments of satisfaction amongst young people of specific elements of the service they provide. One we visited had used website polls and customer feedback forms to gauge the reactions of young people to their contact with the Connexions Service.

18 Relevant qualifications to S/NVQ level 4 or equivalent.

19 Customer Satisfaction Survey: 'Improve your Connexions', Department for Education and Skills Research Brief RBX-0903, May 2003.

21 Direct delivery partnerships tend to have a higher proportion of fully trained Personal Advisers as at September 2003

There is a statistically significant difference between the two types of Connexions partnership (subcontracting and direct delivery) in the proportion of Personal Advisers who are fully trained. On average, the partnerships which have adopted the direct delivery model have a higher proportion of fully-trained Personal Advisers. However, some direct delivery partnerships still do not have many fully-trained Personal Advisers.



Source: Department for Education and Skills

3.15 Both of these initiatives have focused on those people who have used the Connexions Service, rather than young people more generally. Such a survey is likely to provide an insight into the views of the most-disaffected who have traditionally not sought help from Connexions, but whom Connexions is particularly keen to target. In the evaluation of its recent advertising campaign (paragraph 3.32), Connexions has begun to research the views of young people who have not necessarily contacted the Service.

Ofsted rates the quality of Connexions partnerships inspected good overall

3.16 Ofsted aims to inspect all partnerships over a four-year period. The main aims are to:

- give an independent public account of the standards achieved, the quality of the provision and the efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are managed by Connexions partnerships;
- help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and proposing key issues for action; and
- keep the Secretary of State informed of the standards, quality and efficiency of Connexions partnerships and whether they provide value for money²⁰.

3.17 Based on twelve partnerships inspected as at October 2003, Ofsted judged the quality of Connexions practice as satisfactory or better, with some variations between the twelve partnerships inspected. 60 per cent or more of the practice observed was good or better. But in a third of all partnerships visited, Ofsted found that 10 per cent of the practice was unsatisfactory. Examples were young people not being encouraged sufficiently to take responsibility for their personal development or for establishing realistic goals.

3.18 Ofsted concluded that achievements amongst people who had interacted with Connexions were generally satisfactory, but tended to be marginally better where the interaction had been on a one-to-one basis rather than group sessions, or where meetings had been held away from schools and colleges. Where Personal Advisers carry out holistic assessment, planning, implementation and review, a better level of service is provided, with generally better outcomes for young people.

Availability of advice and guidance

Not all 13-19 year olds may have access to the good quality advice they need to make informed decisions on career and further education options. In particular, many schools do not have the capacity to play their part in providing good quality, impartial careers advice which will enable them to make learning and career choices. The Department is developing new ways for young people to access advice and guidance including one-stop shops and Connexions Direct. The recent advertising campaign has boosted young people's awareness of the services that Connexions offers.

Schools do not at present have the capacity or expertise to provide young people with good quality and impartial advice

3.19 In our reports on retention and achievement in further²¹ and higher²² education we highlighted the importance of students getting good quality advice, not just on individual courses of study but also on educational opportunities and how best to help them achieve their career aspirations. Under the Education Act 1997 schools have a duty to ensure that pupils have access to appropriate careers education. Ensuring that young people know what advice and guidance services exist and how to access them is becoming increasingly important, now that not all pupils are expected to receive a careers guidance interview in Year 11.

3.20 Our survey of secondary schools (see Methodology on page 43) found that 94 per cent of schools reported that either some or a great deal of development is needed to the careers education and guidance they provide in school (as distinct from the support from Connexions). Of these schools, 57 per cent wanted more time allocated to careers education and guidance in their timetable, while 48 per cent wanted more provision for young people who are not likely to become NEET (both aspects are matters for the school to determine rather than Connexions). The Department has issued guidance to schools setting out what it expects them to cover on careers education, advice and guidance as part of the curriculum. But over half of schools indicated to us that they did not have sufficient time to develop the school's curriculum to incorporate careers education. One respondent commented that competition with other curriculum areas restricted the opportunity for developing careers education "which has to find its place among the PSHE/Civics/form-time allocation".

²⁰ *Connexions Partnerships: A Framework for Inspection, Ofsted, April 2002.*

²¹ *National Audit Office: Improving Student Performance, HC 276 Session 2000-01, March 2001.*

²² *National Audit Office: Improving Student Achievement in English Higher Education, HC 486, Session 2001-02, January 2002.*

3.21 In nearly two thirds of schools, advice and guidance was being coordinated or delivered by staff without any formal qualification in the field. This appears similar to Ofsted's findings in 1998 when only one third of careers coordinators had gained a recognised qualification relating to careers education and guidance.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLE

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough partnership operate a 'Personal Learning Planning' programme - schools are paid to deliver a service to all young people in order to identify cases where careers guidance is required. A £300,000 grant is paid to schools to deliver this. The aim is to have tutors at schools dealing with most of the referral work. Those young people identified as having issues are passed to a universal Personal Adviser to deal with. Those identified as having further issues are then passed on to more specialised Personal Advisers and, where appropriate, (e.g. those with mental health issues), to specialists from external agencies.

3.22 School staff are not always clear when it is appropriate to refer a young person to the Connexions Service. Two thirds of schools considered that at present staff do not fully understand the role of Personal Advisers, while two fifths considered that their staff were uncertain how to identify and refer children in need of specialist advice. But this referral process is especially important if schools are to be able to intervene early and help young people before they reach Year 11 or before they have developed multiple problems. Only a few schools reported that Connexions staff are involved in training teachers and other school staff to identify young people who need specialist advice, and even where training is given, schools are divided as to its effectiveness.

3.23 Some Connexions partnerships are providing additional resources for guidance material. Most schools indicated that they have been in direct receipt of discretionary funding from their local partnership and more than three quarters of schools for example had received funds to purchase guidance materials. A similar proportion received funds for the purchase of guidance related software. Many also noted improvements in physical resources such as enhancements to careers libraries or their facilities for guidance interviews. Despite these enhancements, many schools reported that further development was needed, in particular library and interview space and IT based materials.

3.24 Partnerships told us that they had some concerns about schools' ability to provide impartial advice and guidance on the full range of career and further education options. Schools with sixth forms have a financial incentive to encourage their most able pupils to remain within the school as their academic success would serve to enhance the school's reputation and attract future students. A particular concern was that staff may not have the breadth of knowledge about other educational opportunities, particularly work-based learning.

Although schools and colleges are generally satisfied, both feel that the level of service from Connexions could be improved

3.25 Schools are generally positive about the contribution of the Connexions Service to their school. Over half of respondents to our survey were either 'satisfied' or 'very satisfied', while a further 21 per cent were neither 'satisfied nor dissatisfied' (Figure 22). The Department remains concerned that some schools judge the success of the Connexions Service on the basis of how closely it mirrors the approach of the former careers services. Our survey tended to support this view as it showed higher levels of satisfaction centred around the provision of specialist services, rather than careers advice more generally. The areas where schools are most satisfied with the contribution of the Connexions Service are:

- providing specialist advice and guidance to *individual* young people (82 per cent of respondents);
- providing specialist advice and guidance to *groups* of young people (69 per cent of respondents); and
- identifying the students most in need of specialist advice (68 per cent of respondents).

22 School satisfaction with the Connexions service

Of the 580 schools that responded to our survey, 75 per cent were either positive or neutral about the contribution of the Connexions Service to their school.

| Overall, how satisfied are you with the contribution of the Connexions Service in your school? | Percentage |
|--|------------|
| Very satisfied | 17 |
| Satisfied | 37 |
| Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied | 21 |
| Dissatisfied | 15 |
| Very dissatisfied | 6 |
| No response | 4 |

Source: National Audit Office Survey

3.26 Just under half of schools are satisfied with the level of response to the needs of other young people in schools. Schools generally considered that teachers were the "key personal adviser" for most pupils but the limited guidance opportunities for the more able students was a particular concern (Figure 23). Only six per cent of schools reported that gifted and talented young people were a priority group who were targeted by Personal Advisers.

23 Extract from response to our survey of schools

"I feel very strongly that our careers adviser [sic] has too little time in school and is only able to meet with the NEET group and underachieving students at KS4. There are many Year 11 students who would benefit from a careers interview who are hardworking, high achieving students, but [the personal adviser] does not have time to see them individually and due to timetabling restrictions, it is difficult to arrange a time to meet them as a group."

Source: National Audit Office

3.27 Our survey identified which types of schools reported receiving the most support from Connexions, and which types of Connexions partnerships were judged to be having the greatest impact. We found that:

- schools who achieved the lowest at Key Stage 4 perceived that they received greater input from Connexions than those who achieve the highest results at Key Stage 4;
- schools report a greater input from Connexions in phase 1 areas (launched in 2001), compared to those in phases 2 and 3 (launched between April 2002 and April 2003);
- schools perceived a greater impact from the work of Connexions in areas where the service was provided under a direct delivery model than a sub-contract model; and
- schools in the highest achievement band at GCSE had lower levels of both school provision and perceived support from Connexions than any other group of schools.



- 3.28 Our survey of colleges showed that colleges welcomed Connexions, contribution to careers guidance and there was scope to improve it further. Colleges also have wider expectations of the service and would like further assistance on health issues, financial support and behavioural management (Figure 24). The scope for delivering these improvements may be limited as a large number of colleges are served by part-time advisers.
- 3.29 Colleges considered that Connexions had had a positive impact on increasing attainment and reducing course switching, and had improved retention of young people in colleges. Three quarters of those who attributed improvements in student retention to Connexions were sub-contracting partnerships. Overall, colleges in areas where partnerships sub-contract services appeared to attribute more success to the partnership. For example, 17 per cent of colleges from sub-contracting areas attributed reduced switching in part to Connexions compared to only 3 per cent of direct delivery areas.

The Department is developing new ways for young people to access advice guidance including one-stop shops and Connexions Direct

3.30 Connexions Direct is a new service for young people that offers access to information and advice on a wide range of topics through Connexions Direct advisers. Young people can contact advisers via the telephone, or text message or by webchat and email from the Connexions Direct website (www.connexions-

direct.com). There are currently 38 partnerships now involved in Connexions Direct and it is expected that the remaining partnerships will join by April 2004. From April 2001, when the pilot was started, to the end of October 2003 the helpline handled 100,000 contacts from young people, mostly by telephone. Although helpline advisers handle a wide range of calls, the majority of those to date have related to careers and learning opportunities. This trend is however changing with an increase more recently in the number of calls around relationships and health issues. In a significant number of cases, advisers on the helpline are able to answer a young person's query straightaway. However, in some cases young people might self refer or be referred to a local Personal Adviser, increasing caseloads locally. There is no evidence of the impact of Connexions Direct on local caseloads at present.

3.31 A recent survey of Connexions partnerships found that over 400 one-stop shops providing young people with access to local services under one roof were open or planned for the future (Figure 25). More than 1,200 local partners providing services to young people were operating from the one-stop shops. More than half of one-stop shops open outside of normal office hours, with 70 per cent of these open some time during the weekend. There were also more than 1,400 access points outside of schools either open or planned in local communities providing additional support for young people. Partnerships estimated that around 40,000 young people visited one-stop shops and community access points each week. This equates to over 2 million visits per year.

24 Colleges' perceptions of sources of advice for students

Colleges consider that Connexions has made a wide contribution

| Provision of: | Percentage of respondents | | | |
|--------------------------------|---------------------------|----------------------------|-------------------------|-------------|
| | College only | Some input from Connexions | Not provided in college | No response |
| Pre-entry guidance | 46 | 53 | 1 | 1 |
| Induction | 48 | 52 | 0 | 1 |
| Financial advice | 68 | 28 | 0 | 4 |
| Financial support | 86 | 11 | 0 | 3 |
| Academic support | 82 | 14 | 0 | 4 |
| Counselling | 75 | 20 | 2 | 3 |
| Health Education | 75 | 15 | 6 | 4 |
| Housing advice | 60 | 28 | 6 | 6 |
| Personal development | 55 | 39 | 0 | 6 |
| Behaviour guidance/management | 70 | 24 | 0 | 6 |
| Careers education and guidance | 2 | 96 | 0 | 2 |

Source: National Audit Office survey of colleges

25 Accessing guidance through the Central London Connexions Partnership

- Central London Connexions comprises the seven London Boroughs of Camden, Islington, Kensington & Chelsea, Lambeth, Southwark, Wandsworth and Westminster.
- There are 13 One-Stop Shops in the partnership, with a further three planned within the next 18 months.
- More than half of the One-Stop Shops are open outside of normal office hours.
- On average a total of 1,379 young people use the One-Stop Shops in any one week. Some of the shops are fairly new and all centres reported a growing number of users as they establish an identity within the area.
- There are 17 Access Points within the partnership, with a further four planned in the next 18 months.
- On average a total of 540 young people use Access Points in any one week.
- The most popular partners working within One-Stop Shops are: (most popular first)
 - Youth Service
 - Housing agencies
 - Youth Offending Teams
 - Teenage pregnancy
- Other partners/advice offered includes youth counselling, refugee & asylum seekers support, benefits advice, student support, sexual health advice & drugs support.

Source: Central London Connexions Partnership

The Department now has a £2.2 million national advertising campaign in place to improve awareness

- 3.32 The Department recognises that to be successful, Connexions needs to be visible and accessible. To help this, it introduced a clear branding and sought to publicise the service widely, including a national campaign in June 2003. Previously, there had been limited national advertising of Connexions because the service was not available across the country. Research commissioned by the Department and carried out in April/May and September 2003 suggests that awareness of Connexions is increasing following the recent marketing campaign which involved TV advertising as well as radio and other media. Two-thirds of young people were aware of the Connexions Service, compared with around half of young people in December 2002. Young people had a better understanding of what Connexions does, and three quarters considered that Connexions is useful. About half said that they were likely to contact Connexions if they wished to discuss something that they could not discuss with friends or family.
- 3.33 During their inspections Ofsted inspectors criticised efforts at marketing and awareness in five out of twelve partnerships. In one partnership area for example schools and young people were not aware of the range of support available to them through Connexions, beyond the provision of careers guidance. The Department's own customer satisfaction survey found that awareness of other aspects of the Connexions Service, including the Connexions Card, was extremely low.

Part 4

Working with others

4.1 This part looks at whether the Connexions Service has benefited young people through partnership working. We found that the Connexions Service has been meeting its objective to improve the coherence of services to young people. The experience of creating a new network of local partnerships offers important lessons for future programmes that are built on partnership working.

Partnership working

Partnership building and working at the local level has been very successful. Where Connexions partnerships have encountered problems, these have been due to specific local tensions rather than due to fundamental, intractable differences between Connexions and its partners.

The Connexions Service has made progress in ensuring that services delivered alongside other departments and agencies run more smoothly than in the past

4.2 The Connexions Strategy was launched in 2000 with the joint commitment of seven Secretaries of State (see footnote 4, page 8). They wanted to tackle a situation in which 'teenagers, and those who try to work with them, are still all too often let down by a system which tends to treat the problems and challenges that young people face in isolation, and to deliver a piecemeal response down separate channels and through professionals only able to deal with issues one by one'.²⁴

4.3 Departmental research provides strong evidence that services for young people are now more coherent. In January 2003, Connexions surveyed 709 representatives of its partners across the 15 Phase One partnerships²⁵. The survey was designed to assess the extent to which Connexions has brought together organisations responsible for delivering services to young people and improved their effectiveness. The main findings of the survey are summarised in **Figure 26**.

26 Key findings of the 2003 Connexions Stakeholder Survey

- 83 per cent of respondents believe that the objectives of Connexions are consistent with those of their own organisation;
- 78 per cent currently regard joint working between agencies providing service to young people in their areas as effective, compared with 40 per cent prior to the establishment of Connexions partnerships;
- 73 per cent say that their Connexions partnership has identified gaps in services for young people. These are being addressed by additional and/or targeted funding and staff, joint working, and strategic/business planning;
- 67 per cent report improvements in ways of working with different agencies to target resources to those young people most in need;
- 66 per cent rate the progress of their Connexions partnership since it was set up as good;
- 62 per cent believe that the service to young people with multiple barriers to learning or work has improved, while only one per cent believe that it has deteriorated;
- 49 per cent feel that Connexions had improved how their organisation planned or delivered services to young people;
- 41 per cent believe that the service to young people who are engaged in learning or on course has improved; and
- 38 per cent report improvements in support for young people with learning difficulties or learning disabilities.

Source: Department for Education and Skills

²⁴ *Connexions: The best start in life for every young person, Department for Education and Skills, 2000.*

²⁵ *Connexions Stakeholder Survey, Department for Education and Skills Research Brief RBX 07-03, April 2003.*

- 4.4 The majority of those surveyed felt that Connexions had improved the way that services are delivered for young people. The main benefits for young people that they highlighted included:
- improved information/improved access to advice and support;
 - co-ordination of services; and
 - having a single point of contact.
- 4.5 There was still room for improvement. Respondents felt that the main problem was a lack of resources. A fifth of respondents felt that resources within the partnerships were not allocated to the right services. These respondents were disproportionately likely to represent voluntary and community organisations. In addition, around 15 per cent of respondents felt that there was low awareness of the Service in their area and confusion over the different services offered.
- 4.6 By working alongside other professionals, the Personal Advisers are able to enhance their skills and to provide a more joined-up service for young people. There are many practical examples of the Connexions Service working together and sharing resources with its partner agencies (see good practice examples below). For example, it is common in many partnerships for

Personal Advisers to be seconded to Youth Offending Teams. Similarly, partner organisations have funded some 600 delivery staff to work alongside the Personal Advisers funded by the Connexions Service.

- 4.7 Where barriers to joint working have emerged, these have been local rather than national barriers. The headquarters staff at the partner agencies and departments we visited were broadly happy with their relationships with the Connexions Service and were clear about what Connexions wants to achieve. These partners did not feel that there were any structural reasons that would prevent Connexions partnerships working together with their staff at a local level.
- 4.8 The partnerships we visited consistently felt that local relationships and personalities were the crucial factors determining how quickly they were able to move to true partnership working. Initially, the feeling that Connexions was a potential threat to existing agencies was also a barrier to closer working in some partnerships. Partnerships were sometimes frustrated that local managers and frontline staff were not acting fully on the commitments made by their national sponsors. At the same time, the fact that seven Secretaries of State were party to the Connexions Strategy put the partnerships in a stronger position to request co-operation from potential partners.
- 4.9 In most cases, relationships are now much better than when Connexions was first launched. Partners are clear about what they can expect from Connexions and are working well alongside them. Where problems still remain, the most common difficulty is the practical sharing of data on young people.

Close working between Local Learning and Skills Councils and Connexions is essential to the success of the strategy and further improvements are possible

- 4.10 The relationship between Connexions partnerships and Local Learning and Skills Councils (LLSCs) is a vital one in determining the success of the Connexions Strategy. Connexions partnerships need to work with the Local Learning and Skills Councils to:
- plan learning provision, making sure that it suits the needs of young people;
 - help those young people having difficulty finding or staying in suitable provision, and to encourage the development of new and innovative forms of learning which better meet their needs;
 - encourage employers to provide high quality work-based learning opportunities for young people; and

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Sharing resources with partners

Derbyshire: Outside Derby, all 40 full-time youth workers will train as Personal Advisers and operate as Personal Advisers for at least ten per cent of their time. The next stage of resource allocation would be to accommodate the contributions of other agencies into the needs-led resource allocation model so that allocations to each local community take account of the contributions of others (e.g. voluntary work, local council work) and are comparable across communities.

Cheshire & Warrington: The health and education services have both seconded staff in to work for Connexions. Connexions also provide services to its partners. It is expected that a minimum of five per cent of the partnership's budget will fund other projects and initiatives, in particular voluntary organisations. Funding has also been allocated to develop capacity and quality assurance strategies in voluntary and community sectors.

Central London: Connexions is working in schools with five other agencies to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. Where staff are seconded inwards, Connexions pays for their training.

- help find suitable high quality work experience opportunities for young people which will help them make informed decisions about their post 16 learning and career objectives.²⁶

4.11 We found evidence of much goodwill between LLSCs and Connexions partnerships. However, the partnerships and the councils are both young organisations, and it is therefore taking time for each to settle and for relationships to become embedded.

4.12 Progress has been quicker in some parts of England than in others. For example, there are sharp variations in the extent to which partnerships and LLSCs share data. In some partnerships, information on young people is shared on an ad hoc basis only and there are data-protection problems to resolve before sharing data on individual young people; in others, information about individual young people has been shared for many years.

4.13 There are very good examples of LLSCs and partnerships working together to focus on providing the right opportunities for young people at the right time. These practices could usefully be replicated nationally. In the best cases, partnerships examine where, when and why young people drop out of courses. This has led to innovative approaches to preventing young people from disengaging from learning.

4.14 In less strong partnerships, lack of understanding and cultural differences between Connexions and LLSCs hamper progress in ways that have been solved elsewhere. For example, some LLSCs do not always receive the data they need for planning. Other LLSCs have tackled this issue by funding partnerships to provide what they need. Cultural differences can mean that LLSCs focus more than Connexions partnerships on the mainstream provision of learning. They feel that partnerships may have unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved for those young people who are harder-to-help, and do not feel that partnerships understand the lead times required for setting up new training. In addition, they feel that Connexions could make more use of labour market information supplied by the LLSCs when advising young people about careers prospects. As partnerships mature and share their experiences with other partnerships, we would expect these differences to be resolved.

GOOD PRACTICE EXAMPLES

Improving retention

Coventry & Warwickshire partnership is working with the LLSC to boost take-up and retention by:

- co-funding work at those training providers with the highest turnover rates, in order to help them to promote retention; and
- Meeting demand throughout the year by working with LLSCs and training providers to provide courses that start in months other than September.

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough partnership has a joint project with the LLSC which organises events for the purpose of identifying barriers which prevent young people going into employment, education and training. The aim is then to break down these barriers by enlisting the assistance of outreach workers (post-16) and student support workers in schools (pre-16).

Nottinghamshire partnership has established joint arrangements with the LLSC in Nottingham that have resulted in the opening of a new purpose built Entry to Employment centre in one of the prime NEET hot spots and new provision in Newark and Worksop.

Staffordshire partnership has shared its analysis of the NEET group in Stoke on Trent with the LLSC. As a result new processes have been put in place to clearly identify the reason for early dropout/non completion so that better assessments can be made on the quality of provision. As a consequence, a more varied Entry to Employment programme has been developed with better linkage of key providers.

26 From Connexions: Working with Us, www.connexions.gov.uk.

4.15 Connexions partnerships and LLSCs told us that tensions can arise due to the Learning and Skills Council and the Connexions Service having different targets for reducing the number of young people not in education, employment or training. While the Learning and Skills Council wants young people in work to also be in receipt of training, the Connexions target does not require partnerships to direct young people towards employment with recognised training. In some cases, Personal Advisers may feel that it is in the best interest of their clients not to dissuade them from taking a job without recognised training. Conversely, LLSCs are concerned that this approach undermines the government policy to boost the skills of the UK workforce.

4.16 There is scope to build a consensus between these differing perspectives. During our fieldwork, staff from both the Connexions Service and LLSCs told us that it is important to create an environment where taking a job at age 16 does not mean that a young person writes off the opportunity of further education or training. The Connexions Service can continue to follow the progress these young people make and, where appropriate, help them to consider the possibility of re-entering education or training. There are already good examples emerging of partnerships and LLSCs working to target young people in jobs without training.

Lessons for future delivery programmes

4.17 The Connexions Service is a good case study of the use of multi-agency, local partnerships to deliver national policy objectives. During our fieldwork, we identified a number of lessons that would be of value to anyone considering using a similar model to deliver services in the future. These lessons are summarised in **Figure 27**.

27 Lessons for future programme design

| | |
|---|--|
| <p>Gain ministerial commitment: When forming partnerships, it is valuable to have a visible sign that all parties are signed up to the policy at the highest level. This provides credibility to the new approach and puts partnerships in a stronger position to pursue cooperation when it is not initially forthcoming. It is also essential that this commitment is communicated effectively to all relevant front-line staff.</p> | <p>Have a clear message: It is important that the new service and its partners know exactly why the initiative has been launched and what it hopes to achieve. Many Connexions partnerships and other agencies told us that the <i>Vision for 2006</i> document was very important in understanding and communicating what Connexions is trying to achieve.</p> |
| <p>Manage expectations: Existing organisations may be confused or threatened by the role of the new initiative. Many Connexions partnerships were seen as potential cash-cows by other parties, or as a universal solution to the issues facing disengaged young people. Partnerships have worked hard to explain that the Connexions Service is one part of a wider Connexions Strategy which requires partnership working in order to succeed.</p> | <p>Reduce the measurement burden: Even where targets are shared with other agencies, there are cases where measurement and reporting work is duplicated due to conflicting reporting structures and cycles. Wherever possible, this duplication needs to be identified and stripped out.</p> |
| <p>Share credit along with resources: Where other agencies have offered resources and co-operation to the partnership, it is important that they receive due credit and recognition for their contribution to its success.</p> | <p>Forming partnerships is time-consuming: Creating new working arrangements requires time and effort. One should not under-estimate the work required and achievement of running a successful partnership involving many different players. It would be useful to look at the qualities of those people who are best able to make partnerships work.</p> |
| <p>Share local lessons: Many problems that arise in one Connexions partnership have already been tackled in another one (e.g. data-sharing). Knowing that the problems are not insurmountable will benefit other partnerships, as will the detailed knowledge gained.</p> | <p>Train together with partners: Through its use of multi-agency training, Connexions has encouraged staff from a range of backgrounds and organisations to learn together and to develop a better understanding of how to work together within partnerships.</p> |

Appendix

Methodology

- 1 Our methodology comprised:
 - interviews with key staff at Government Offices of the Regions and Connexions partnerships;
 - consultation with Connexions Service National Unit staff and other government departments;
 - a postal survey of secondary schools;
 - a postal survey of Further Education Colleges;
 - a focus group of Local Learning and Skills Council staff;
 - a review of Ofsted inspection reports for phase one Connexions partnerships;
 - regression analysis; and
 - forming an expert panel to advise and inform the study at key stages.
- 3 The Government Offices of the Regions we visited were East England, East Midlands, London, North West, and West Midlands.
- 4 The Connexions partnerships we visited were Cambridgeshire & Peterborough, Cheshire & Warrington, Central London, Coventry & Warwickshire, Derbyshire, Greater Merseyside, Hertfordshire, Leicestershire, London East and Staffordshire.

Consultation with Connexions Service National Unit staff and other government departments that work with the Connexions Service

- 5 We interviewed a number of policy and operational staff at the Connexions Service National Unit to understand the policy environment in which the Connexions Service operates. In addition, we interviewed staff at a number of partner agencies to find out whether they were satisfied with the contribution that Connexions was making to providing coherent services for young people. These bodies included The Countryside Agency, Drugs Strategy Directorate, Health Development Agency, Learning and Skills Council, Sure Start Plus, Teenage Pregnancy Unit and Youth Offending Teams.

Interviews with key staff at Government Offices of the Regions and Connexions Partnerships

- 2 We carried out structured interviews with staff at five Government Offices of the Regions and ten Connexions partnerships. At the Government Offices of the Regions we interviewed the team leaders responsible for Connexions in their region, while at partnerships we interviewed a team of managers, always including the Chief Executive. Our interviews covered in particular the following areas:
 - **roles and responsibilities:** to see if partnerships and Government Offices were clear about their current and future responsibilities;
 - **resources:** to see if partnerships have sufficient resources to deliver the universal and targeted services;
 - **information on young people:** progress in establishing complete databases of young people;
 - **working with others;**
 - **impact:** to see if targets are sensible and achievable; and
 - **advertising strategy:** to see how Connexions partnerships draw young people to the service.
- 6 We commissioned the National Foundation for Education Research (NFER) to undertake a survey of secondary schools in England. The aim of the survey was to determine changes in the services available to young people in schools since the introduction of the Connexions Service. In 2000 NFER carried out a large-scale survey of schools to examine the quality of career education and guidance in schools. Where possible we have sourced comparators from this work. The key objectives for the survey were to determine:
 - whether the availability and accessibility of careers guidance in schools has changed since the implementation of Connexions; and
 - schools' perceptions of the quality and provision of services provided by Connexions.

Postal surveys of secondary schools and Further Education colleges to examine how they are working with Connexions

- 7 NFER selected a stratified random sample of 1,000 schools. Responses were received from 580 schools in time for analysis, representing a 58 per cent response rate. Subsequently, 51 more schools returned completed questionnaires but these arrived too late to be included in the statistical analysis.
- 8 With the assistance of NFER, the Learning & Skills Council and the Connexions Service, we also carried out a postal survey of Further Education colleges in England to determine:
 - how services to young people in colleges has changed since the introduction of Connexions; and
 - whether colleges are satisfied with the contribution of the Connexions Service to their college.
- 9 The Learning and Skills Council selected for us a stratified random sample of 150 colleges. Responses were received from 94 colleges in time for analysis, representing a 63 per cent response rate.

Focus groups

- 10 To measure the views of Local Learning and Skills Councils, we held a focus group with representatives of the ten LLSCs that are coterminous with the Connexions partnerships that we visited.

Review of Ofsted inspection reports on Connexions partnerships

- 11 We reviewed the twelve inspection reports that Ofsted has published on phase one Connexions partnerships.

Statistical analysis of departmental management information to explore reasons for variations in partnerships' performance

- 12 The Connexions Service has a target to reduce the proportion of young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) by 10 per cent between November 2002 and November 2004. Performance to date has varied between partnerships.

- 13 We used multiple regression to identify factors that explain why performance has varied. Multiple regression allows us to examine the effect on performance of several explanatory variables simultaneously. For example, it could be that the performance of a partnership depends on the number of trained Personal Advisers it has, whether it is delivered by a certain delivery model, or how long it has been up and running. Using multiple regression, one can measure the effect that any one of these variables has on performance, having allowed for the effects of the other explanatory factors.
- 14 The aim is to develop a statistical model that best explains the reasons why performance varies. The model is made up of a number of explanatory variables. As well as looking at the impact of individual factors, it is also possible to compare models to see which one best explains why performance varies. We used models that included many of the variables that could be expected to determine performance. In addition, we tried to develop the strongest possible model using the least possible number of explanatory factors.
- 15 Before looking at reasons why performance varies, we needed to define the measure of performance. We chose as our definition 'percentage reduction in NEET since launch of partnership'. This definition had the following advantages:
 - it looks at the measurable impact of the Connexions Service compared to the situation that each partnership inherited;
 - it would not exclude any early impact made by Phase 1 partnerships. If we chose an arbitrary later date as our starting date, any reduction in NEET levels prior to that date would have to be ignored; and
 - most partnerships and Government Offices we visited in our fieldwork commented that a reduction in NEETs had been an important part of their work since they were launched.

16 We drew on advice from practitioners, our expert panel and the Department in developing a list of possible explanations why performance varies. The factors we used in our analysis were as follows:

- delivery model
- geographic region (i.e. North, South, East or West)
- phase in which partnership was launched
- size of cohort
- resource input by Connexions Service National Unit
- number of Personal Advisers
- number of fully trained Personal Advisers
- percentage of Personal Advisers who are fully trained
- number of interventions by Personal Advisers
- number of interventions with young people requiring intensive support
- percentage of all interventions that are with young people requiring intensive support
- percentage of all staff who are classed as delivery staff rather than administrators
- percentage of NEETs who are unemployed
- percentage of young people classed as NEET when the partnership was launched
- number of 15 year olds with less than 5 A-C GCSEs
- number of 15 year olds with less than 5 A-G GCSEs including English & Maths
- number of 16 & 17 year olds not in education & training
- number of 18-24 year olds unemployed for six months or more

- number of 18-24 year olds claiming income support
- number of young people aged 13-19 whose status is not known
- percentage of young people aged 13-19 whose status is not known
- index of rurality
- months that partnership has been in operation.

The sources were either Departmental management reports or publicly available data.

17 We found that the only important explanatory factor for the variation in performance (significant at the 95 per cent level) was the percentage of young people classed as NEET when the partnership was launched.

18 The model that best explains the variation in performance is shown below.

Expert panel to advise and inform the study at key stages

19 The members of our reference panel were:

- | | |
|------------------|---|
| David Andrews | Careers Education and Guidance consultant and trainer |
| Sheila Brown | Ofsted |
| Ian Chapman | Connexions |
| Rob Macpherson | Connexions |
| Aileen Murphie | National Audit Office |
| Maggie Startup | Ofsted |
| Helena Stockford | KPMG Education & Skills Advisory Services |
| Richard Wragg | Government Office for London |

| Variable | Unstandardised coefficients | Significance |
|--|-----------------------------|--------------|
| Constant | -67.43 | .000 |
| Percentage of young people classed as NEET when the partnership was launched | 11.007 | .000 |
| North | -13.789 | .250 |
| South | -22.914 | .096 |
| East | -16.534 | .140 |
| Size of cohort | 4.041E-03 | .014 |
| Number of 15 years olds with less than 5 GCSE A-C grades | -1.631E-02 | .087 |
| Resource input by Connexions Service National Unit | -5.613E-06 | .197 |

This model explains around 54 per cent of the variation in performance between partnerships (Adjusted R² = 0.542).

Published by TSO (The Stationery Office) and available from:

Online

www.tso.co.uk/bookshop

Mail, Telephone, Fax & E-mail

TSO

PO Box 29, Norwich NR3 1GN

Telephone orders/General enquiries 0870 600 5522

Fax orders 0870 600 5533

Order through the Parliamentary Hotline

Lo-call 0845 7 023474

E-mail book.orders@tso.co.uk

Textphone 0870 240 3701

TSO Shops

123 Kingsway, London WC2B 6PQ

020 7242 6393 Fax 020 7242 6394

68-69 Bull Street, Birmingham B4 6AD

0121 236 9696 Fax 0121 236 9699

9-21 Princess Street, Manchester M60 8AS

0161 834 7201 Fax 0161 833 0634

16 Arthur Street, Belfast BT1 4GD

028 9023 8451 Fax 028 9023 5401

18-19 High Street, Cardiff CF10 1PT

029 2039 5548 Fax 029 2038 4347

71 Lothian Road, Edinburgh EH3 9AZ

0870 606 5566 Fax 0870 606 5588

£10.75

The Parliamentary Bookshop

12 Bridge Street, Parliament Square,

London SW1A 2JX

Telephone orders/General enquiries 020 7219 3890

Fax orders 020 7219 3866

TSO Accredited Agents

(see Yellow Pages)

and through good booksellers

