



Office for Standards
in Education

Handbook for inspecting Connexions partnerships

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in Education**

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Introduction

This *Handbook* is published by Her Majesty's Chief Inspector (HMCI) of Schools in England. It provides guidance for Connexions partnerships and for inspectors from the Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and the Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) on the implementation of *Connexions Partnerships: A Framework for Inspection* HMI 441 (Ofsted, 2002) to be referred to from this point as the framework.

The *Handbook* is in two parts:

- Part 1: The organisation and management of inspections. Guidance to inspectors and partnerships on the preparation for, and conduct of, inspections.
- Part 2: Guidance to inspectors and partnerships on the evaluation requirements. Guidance on how inspectors will approach each of the seven key questions in the framework.

This *Handbook* will be widely available to Connexions partnerships and other organisations to ensure that partnerships are well informed about the process and procedures of inspection. It seeks to balance the need for consistency in inspections with the flexibility required to respond to the individual circumstances of each Connexions partnership to be inspected. It should, therefore, be regarded as an account of procedures normally governing inspection, rather than a set of inflexible rules. This *Handbook* has been designed to take account of the responsibilities placed on Ofsted, the ALI and partnerships by the Special Educational Needs and Disability Act (SENDA) 2001 and its associated codes of practice for schools and colleges, and the Race Relations Act 1976, as amended by the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, with effect from 31 May 2002.

Definition of terms

Where possible, the framework uses single terms to cover a number of different situations. For example, the term 'young people' refers to students, trainees and clients. This *Handbook* uses terminology most appropriate to the inspection of Connexions partnerships. The following terms are used:

Achievement The acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding demonstrated by young people in the range of provision managed or sub-contracted by the partnership. Where long-term outcomes for young people are a clear result of the work of Connexions staff, they constitute achievement. Achievement is judged by evaluating the accumulated gains in learning and development, and ascertaining the progress made by individuals from their original starting points.

Connexions partnership The local organisation made up of a number of partners, established to put into practice the principles of the Connexions service in a designated geographical area.

Connexions service The national service which provides integrated information, advice and guidance, and access to opportunities for personal development for all young people aged 13 to 19.

Connexions services The full range of support, guidance and learning provision, overseen by the local partnership, available in a given area.

Connexions staff People who work within the Connexions partnership and who are employed or managed directly or indirectly through contracting arrangements by the Connexions partnership. The term also applies to adults and young people who work as volunteers with the Connexions partnership.

Learning The discernible outcome of effective teaching, intervention and support, combined with young people's personal qualities and attitudes.

Practice All interventions by Connexions staff in their work with young people – direct instruction, support, giving information and guidance, facilitation, and organisation of learning – which are designed to enable young people to learn and make progress.

Transition The changes young people experience as they move from one environment to another – for example: from one school to another; from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4; from Key Stage 4 to sixth form, college or training provision; from education and training to work; or from care to independence.

Part 1: Organisation and management of inspections

Background to the inspection arrangements

The Connexions service

The Connexions service was established to provide integrated information, advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for all young people aged 13 to 19. It aims to help young people engage in learning, achieve their full potential and make a smooth transition to adult life. The Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) within the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) is responsible for developing the policy for the Connexions service and, together with its partners in government offices, administers the service through 47 Connexions partnerships. These partnerships share boundaries with the local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs) and have overall responsibility for the local provision of Connexions services. Local management committees are responsible for bringing together partners in their area and for overseeing the management of local delivery of the Connexions service. Central to the Connexions service is a network of personal advisers (PAs) who work with young people to enable them to obtain the information, advice, guidance, development opportunities and other support that they need.

Purposes of inspection

The Learning and Skills Act 2000 gave Ofsted the lead responsibility for inspecting the provision made by the Connexions partnerships, the main purposes of inspection being 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
- keep the Secretary of State for Education and Skills informed of the standards, quality and efficiency of Connexions partnerships and whether they provide value for money.

Ofsted's role in Connexions inspections

Ofsted's functions in relation to the inspection of Connexions partnerships include:

- managing and administering the inspection programme
- planning and leading the inspection of the work of individual Connexions partnerships

- publishing individual inspection reports
- assuring the quality of inspections and the work of inspectors
- collating inspection data to provide benchmarks for future inspections
- reporting on inspection findings, including the standards achieved, the quality of practice, and the quality of leadership and management, in HMCI's annual report
- assessing a partnership's progress, with the implementation of action plans where provision is judged to be unsatisfactory.

Ofsted will also:

- establish and keep under review the framework and the *Handbook*
- provide training for all inspectors
- maintain a list of inspectors who can take part in inspections as members of inspection teams.

Under race relations, special educational needs (SEN), disability and discrimination legislation, Ofsted is bound by the general duty to promote equality and inclusion. This means it must examine and report on whether Connexions partnerships are meeting their general and specific duties according to the legislation.

The role of the ALI

The ALI will provide two inspectors for each inspection team. The ALI's lead inspector will first tackle the issues which relate to work-based training, carrying out some of the fieldwork and providing professional guidance to other inspectors. Both of the ALI inspectors will spend a substantial part of their inspection time on work-based training issues.

Inspection programme

Ofsted will select partnerships for inspection and decide when the inspection will take place. The views of the CSNU will be considered when planning the programme. It is expected that all Connexions partnerships will have been inspected within a four-year cycle ending in summer 2006.

The framework

Connexions inspections will be guided by the principles set out in the framework. All inspections will focus on professional practice and the impact of this on outcomes for young people. Inspectors will evaluate and report in five broad areas which incorporate the seven key questions:

- the quality and effectiveness of the partnership, including value for money
- the achievement of young people
- access and participation
- the quality of assessment, support, guidance and programmes of learning
- leadership and management.

Self-assessment and inspection

Connexions partnerships should rely primarily on the guidance provided by the CSNU which:

- emphasises that rigorous self-assessment and good development planning should be an integral part of an organisation's management
- sets out the requirement to produce an annual self-assessment report which makes judgements against Connexions national targets and Ofsted quality statements under each of the key questions in the framework
- requires partnerships to produce a development plan that shows how they will address weaknesses and build on strengths.

Inspectors and inspection teams

Training and registration

Ofsted is responsible for ensuring that inspectors are competent, and maintains a list of inspectors approved to inspect Connexions partnerships. Before taking part in the inspection of Connexions partnerships, each inspector must satisfactorily complete a training course provided by Ofsted. Members of inspection teams will collectively have the expertise and experience to inspect all aspects of the provision covered by the inspection. Action will be taken which is designed to increase the proportions of inspectors of black and minority ethnic origin. Training for inspectors will cover the responsibilities of Ofsted with regard to the general duty to promote equality of opportunity.

Role of the reporting inspector

The reporting inspector (RI) manages the inspection team and is responsible for the quality of the inspection. On most inspections, the RI will be assisted by an assistant RI (ARI). It is the responsibility of the RI to:

- ensure that due account is taken of the Code of Conduct in planning and conducting the inspection
- plan the inspection and communicate the inspection plan to the partnership
- ensure that members of the inspection team are fully briefed before the inspection begins

- establish a programme of team meetings, with clear agendas, and ensure that evidence and judgements are communicated to, and shared by, all members of the team
- ensure that judgements about the partnership are fair and accurate, that they are based on secure evidence, and that they cover the evaluation requirements in the framework
- ensure that key judgements are corporately agreed by the inspection team
- ensure that inspectors follow a consistent approach to collecting and recording evidence, and in how they conduct themselves during the inspection and in their feedback to Connexions staff
- keep a careful check on the sampling of the partnership's work and the extent of observation of individual staff
- monitor and, if necessary, intervene in the work of individual inspectors to ensure that the framework is complied with, and that evidence and judgements are secure
- ensure that the chief executive is informed of emerging issues throughout the inspection.

Before the inspection, the RI will prepare the pre-inspection notebook (PIN). This will draw on several sources: for example, the partnership's business plan, self-assessment report and reports to the regional government office, the Connexions performance report (CxPR) produced by Ofsted from performance data supplied by the CSNU, and any previous inspection reports.

The RI will send the PIN to inspectors to ensure that they are fully conversant with the partnership's performance and other aspects of its work. The PIN will also be sent to the chief executive, prior to the inspection, for information.

Role of inspection team members

The RI will identify inspectors responsible for reporting on the key questions set out in the framework.

All inspectors will contribute to the overall evaluation of the partnership and provide evidence and judgements on key questions. This information will inform corporate judgements on the partnership as a whole. Inspectors will plan and use their time carefully and efficiently to collect the evidence necessary to support their judgements. They will be sensitive to the impact of the inspection on Connexions staff, their partners and other agencies. They will abide by the Code of Conduct set out below.

Principles of inspection

The following principles apply to all inspection activities carried out by or on behalf of Ofsted. They are intended to ensure that:

- the findings of inspection contribute to improvement
- the process of inspection promotes inclusion
- inspection is carried out openly with those being inspected
- the findings of inspection are valid, reliable and consistent.

The principles

- Inspection acts in the interests of children, young people and adult learners and, where relevant, their parents and carers to encourage high-quality provision that meets diverse needs and promotes equality.
- Inspection is evaluative and diagnostic, assessing quality and compliance and providing a clear basis for improvement.
- The purpose of inspection and the procedures to be used are communicated clearly to those involved.
- Inspection invites and takes account of any self-evaluation by those inspected.
- Inspection will, as far as possible, minimise disturbance to the work of the institution concerned.
- Inspection informs those responsible for taking decisions about provision.
- Inspection is carried out by those who have sufficient and relevant professional expertise and training.
- Evidence is recorded and is of sufficient range and quality to secure and justify judgements.
- Judgements are based on systematic evaluation requirements and criteria, are reached corporately where more than one inspector is involved and reflect a common understanding in Ofsted about quality.
- Effectiveness is central to judging the quality of provision and processes.
- Inspection includes clear and helpful oral feedback and leads to written reporting that evaluates performance and quality, and identifies strengths and areas for improvement.
- The work of all inspectors reflects Ofsted's stated values and Code of Conduct.
- Quality assurance is built into all inspection activities to ensure that these principles are met and inspection is improved.

Code of Conduct

Inspectors must:

- evaluate the work of the partnership objectively, be impartial and have no previous connection with the partnership which could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and fairly, ensuring that judgements accurately and reliably reflect what the partnership does and achieves
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- do all they can to minimise stress, in particular by ensuring that the work of no individual is over-inspected
- act with the best interests and well-being of staff and young people as priorities
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with staff, and communicate judgements on the work of the partnership clearly, frankly and respectfully
- guarantee, where legally permissible, the confidentiality of information about young people and staff, and of judgements made about the work of individuals.

The inspection

Inspection activities

Partnerships will normally receive a minimum of 12 weeks' notice of their inspection. The CSNU and the regional government office will be informed at the same time. Shortly afterwards, the RI and ARI will meet the chief executive to outline the inspection process, collect basic information and begin to plan the inspection. For stage one, a small core team of inspectors will visit the partnership. The main focus of stage one is key questions 1, 3 and 7. However, evidence will be collected for all key questions and recorded in the PIN. Requests for paperwork will be kept to a minimum. Inspectors will draw, as far as possible, on existing partnership documents.

For the second stage of the inspection, the main focus will be on the observation of work with young people. A team of inspectors working together will gather evidence from a range of provision that reflects the nature of the partnership. They will evaluate the quality of the partnership's work and contribute to team judgements about the seven key questions and the effectiveness of the partnership. They will:

- observe staff working with young people in a variety of settings
- visit work-based trainees, and talk to employers and work-placement providers
- visit community-based provision
- evaluate data on young people's retention, achievement and progression rates
- talk with young people, Connexions staff, local management committees and board members, teachers, trainers, employers and, where appropriate, parents and carers
- evaluate the impact of key documents, including plans, policies, procedures and records of young people's progress
- evaluate records relating to young people with learning difficulties or disabilities, focusing on how effectively the records are used to improve provision for individuals. Documents include individual learning plans, statements, annual reviews and transitional reviews.

Inspectors responsible for co-ordinating evidence and judgements on each key question will gather evidence from a range of sources including meetings with Connexions service managers, other staff and young people, and through the inspection of documents.

ALI inspectors' focus

The inspection team will work as one unit. However, a particular focus for ALI inspectors will be to assess the extent to which Connexions partnerships:

- influence the range of work-based learning opportunities
- influence and contribute to the range, quality and effectiveness of the life-skills training provision in the area
- provide access to information about work-based learning
- provide advice and guidance relating to work-based learning
- manage and monitor referrals to work-based learning
- provide support to young people involved in work-based learning
- identify and engage young people outside education, training and work.

Observation of sessions and other activities

Observation of Connexions practice will be done in a way that minimises disruption to programmes and activities. Inspectors will not take part in sessions. However, when suitable opportunities arise, inspectors may talk informally with young people and look at their work. The programmes and activities observed

will be part of the partnership's normal programme of work. Inspectors will not expect or require changes to them. When they enter a session, inspectors may ask the staff for appropriate information to understand the context of what is taking place, and any supporting material. They may ask for information that enables young people of different age groups, ethnic groups and those who are engaged in different programmes to be identified. Assessment records and individual learning plans for a range of young people will be examined. Inspectors will make written notes during the observation session.

As far as possible, the sample of sessions will cover a range of activities which reflect the nature of the partnership. For example, it may include group or individual activities and learning, taking place in a variety of settings. The sample of Connexions staff will be as wide as is practical. Inspectors will not observe all Connexions staff.

Inspectors may stay for the whole or part of a session. They will spend enough time in sessions to enable them to make valid and reliable judgements on the quality of what is taking place and its impact on young people. Normally, this will not be less than 30 minutes. Each session observed will be assessed on the seven-point scale (see Annex B) in three areas: practice, learning and achievement.

Discussions with young people

Discussions with young people provide evidence of what they know, understand and can do. This will help inspectors to establish young people's progress and whether they are achieving their potential. Discussions may take place with individuals or with groups. Inspectors will seek to find out young people's views of the partnership, their attitudes to programmes and activities, their interests, the progress they feel they have made, and the extent to which they feel that they are guided and supported effectively. Sources of evidence will include:

- arranged meetings with individuals or representative groups of young people
- informal discussions with individuals or groups
- brief discussions with young people during sessions, where appropriate.

Inspectors will also gather evidence from:

- young people's responses to questions asked by Connexions staff
- the quality of questions asked by young people in sessions and in meetings with inspectors
- surveys of young people's views.

Discussions with members of the board, local management committees, staff and others involved in the work of the partnership

Discussions with the chair of the board, chief executive, members of local management committees, senior managers and other Connexions staff provide important evidence of roles and responsibilities, procedures and policies. They clarify how and why decisions are taken and how the impact of those decisions is evaluated. Discussions help inspectors to establish the context for their observations. Inspectors will also meet, where possible, employers, providers of work-based training and staff from other partner organisations, for example, youth justice, the youth service, the local education authority (LEA), the local LSC, and the voluntary and community sector.

The RI and a contact person nominated from the partnership will plan meetings with a range of people who represent the broader work of the partnership. Inspectors should avoid calling meetings at short notice and, where possible, indicate in advance the matters to be discussed. The following principles apply to all meetings:

- inspectors will introduce themselves and explain the purpose of the meeting
- inspectors will be sensitive to the needs of those with any disability so that they can play a full part in the meeting
- the length of meetings will be agreed in advance. Normally, they will not exceed one hour
- inspectors will offer the opportunity for those attending the meeting to ask questions and make points
- when providing feedback, inspectors will not attribute to specific individuals comments made in meetings.

Inspection team meetings

The inspection team will meet for an initial briefing on the first day of the inspection. At the initial briefing, the RI will ensure that inspectors are aware of:

- their responsibilities and expected standards of conduct
- the context in which the partnership works and the performance of its young people
- the key issues to be covered during the inspection
- any issues raised by the partnership
- organisational and administrative arrangements.

Throughout the inspection, the RI or ARI will meet the other inspectors to discuss emerging findings and to review the evidence gathered.

Quality and effectiveness of the Connexions partnership

At the end of stage two of the inspection, the RI will hold a final team meeting. In this, the inspection team is required to come to a judgement on the quality and effectiveness of the Connexions partnership (key question 1) – that is, how successful the partnership is in implementing the aims of the Connexions service.

The judgement is an overarching evaluation which summarises, and therefore must be consistent with, the findings and judgements made in relation to the other key questions. In particular, there should be a clear link between the judgement made about the quality and effectiveness of the partnership and those relating to:

- the achievement of young people (key question 2)
- the responsiveness of the partnership to the needs of the young people in the area (key question 3)
- the effectiveness of Connexions practice (key question 4)
- the leadership and management of the partnership (key question 7).

One or more of the following would normally indicate that the partnership is not effective in implementing the aims of the Connexions service:

- the partnership consistently fails to meet its primary targets
- there is a significant amount of unsatisfactory Connexions practice, or there are unacceptably wide variations in the quality of practice across the partnership area. As a rough guide, the amount of unsatisfactory practice is a cause for concern if over 12% of sessions (one in eight sessions) observed are unsatisfactory
- there are significant groups of young people who are not well served by the partnership
- there is little involvement of young people in the operation of the Connexions partnership
- the leadership and management of the partnership are less than satisfactory
- there are inadequate arrangements for ensuring the quality of services.

At the end of the inspection

The regional government office will be invited to attend the formal feedback and the accuracy check. A copy of the published report will be sent to the partnership, the CSNU and the government office. An action plan will be required and must be submitted by the partnership within one month of receipt of the report. This will be monitored by the government office on a quarterly basis.

In the event of a partnership being judged to be ineffective

If there are significant concerns about the quality and effectiveness of the partnership, Ofsted will alert the CSNU to the possibility of an inadequate outcome as soon as possible, and confirm or retract the judgement at the end of the inspection. Both the government office and the CSNU will be invited to attend the formal feedback. The following will be put in place:

- an action plan will be required and must be submitted within one month of receipt of the report. This will be monitored by the government office on a quarterly basis. The government office will send a copy of the action plan to Ofsted (c/o PCED, Manchester office) for onward delivery to the Her Majesty's Inspector (HMI) responsible for Connexions inspections. Ofsted may comment to the government office on the quality of the action plan in addressing the issues raised in the inspection
- Ofsted will undertake a programme of monitoring visits commencing six months from the publication of the report. The focus will be primarily on the issues identified as areas for improvement. The partnership, the government office and the CSNU will be notified in writing of the outcome of the monitoring visits against key issues. If adequate progress has been made and no other issues have arisen during the course of the monitoring, provision will be deemed to be satisfactory and Ofsted intervention will cease
- the cycle of inspection over a four-year period will continue for each partnership, irrespective of monitoring visits. The CSNU may request Ofsted to bring forward the inspection of a partnership in the inspection programme, but Ofsted will take the final decision within the agreed volumes of inspection.

General points about feedback

The outcomes of inspection remain provisional until publication of the report. Inspectors' findings are confidential to the staff of the partnership and its board until publication of the report. All oral feedback is confidential to those receiving it. Whatever the circumstances, inspectors will present their findings in a way which:

- is well structured and clear
- emphasises, with reasons, what has been done well and what could be improved
- provides, where appropriate, well-chosen examples
- allows opportunities for discussion and clarification of inspectors' findings
- gives clear indications of the areas in need of improvement, without offering detailed advice on matters which are the partnership's responsibility.

Feedback to Connexions staff

Oral feedback will be offered to all Connexions staff observed, normally at the end of the session. In some cases, however, feedback later in the day may be more convenient or appropriate. The objective is to let the member of staff know what went well, what was less successful and what could be done more effectively; feedback will not include grades or grade descriptions.

Inspectors will identify key strengths and weaknesses. They will not comment on every aspect of the session, but their general conclusions may be illustrated with specific examples. Weaknesses will be linked to how they affect young people's learning, and will be considered in the context of the practice observed, rather than by identifying a member of staff. Where appropriate, inspectors will provide reasons for the judgements reached.

Where an observation of Connexions provision takes place in a school, brief feedback will also be provided to the headteacher, confirmed in writing and copied to the partnership's chief executive.

Feedback to the chief executive and senior staff

The RI and ARI will normally meet with the chief executive every day at a mutually convenient time to apprise each other of the progress of the inspection and discuss any issues arising from the inspection process. At the end of the week, after the final team meeting, the RI will notify the chief executive of the overall judgement on the quality and effectiveness of the partnership. The meeting will not include detailed comments on strengths and weaknesses.

Feedback to the board

The RI will provide formal feedback to the board, the chief executive and senior managers two to three weeks after the inspection. A representative of the regional government office will be invited to attend. The main inspection findings will be presented clearly and frankly, so that senior managers can start planning their responses to inspectors' findings. Those attending will have the opportunity to ask for clarification about the findings, and to explore with inspectors the priorities for action. The feedback will focus on:

- what the partnership does well and what can be improved
- significant judgements based on the key questions in the framework
- whether or not the partnership is effective.

Inspection report

Published reports will provide judgements about: the quality and effectiveness of the partnership overall as well as judgements about the achievements of young people; access to programmes and activities, and the extent to which young people participate in them; the quality of assessment, support, guidance and programmes of learning; and leadership and management. Reports will identify strengths and areas for improvement, and incorporate the views of young people. The main judgements will be included in a summary. Annex C provides the outline structure for reports.

Shortly after the inspection, the draft report will be shared with the partnership to enable the accuracy of factual information to be checked. The local government office will be invited to attend the accuracy check. The final report will normally be published within 12 working weeks from the end of the inspection. Copies will be sent to the partnership, the CSNU and the local government office.

Assuring the quality of inspections

Ofsted reviews each inspection for which it is responsible to ensure that the inspection provides an accurate and fair picture of the partnership, and that each inspection has been conducted well. As part of the process, partnerships will have the opportunity to evaluate aspects of their inspection. Quality assurance of inspections includes assessment of:

- the quality, standard and management of the inspection
- the competence, effectiveness and conduct of inspectors
- the quality and standard of inspection reports.

Where possible, Ofsted also carries out on-site quality assurance of inspections. Where this happens, an HMI will join the inspection team towards the end of an inspection. The main role of this inspector is to check that inspectors' evidence is adequate to support their judgements and that evidence is properly recorded.

Complaints procedure

Ofsted takes complaints about inspection seriously. Concerns should be raised initially with the RI during the course of the inspection. Where opportunities for normal debate have been exhausted, partnerships may refer to the Ofsted internal review and complaints procedure. There are two types of complaint:

- a request for internal review of inspection judgements by Ofsted
- a formal complaint about the conduct of the inspection or inspectors.

An electronic publication of the internal review and complaints procedure is available on the Ofsted web site, www.ofsted.gov.uk.

Part 2: Guidance to inspectors and partnerships on the evaluation requirements

Introduction

Part 2 has five sections corresponding to the broad headings in the framework. Each of the seven key questions is addressed in the appropriate section. For each key question, the guidance contains:

- the evaluation criteria as stated in the framework
- an introduction to the section, emphasising the features on which inspectors will focus
- a section on making judgements that deals with bringing evidence together. The sections on characteristics of very good, satisfactory and unsatisfactory provision are included to assist inspectors' judgements. They are not intended to be definitive or exhaustive
- a section on guidance, dealing with interpreting and applying the evaluation criteria.

Section A: The quality and effectiveness of the partnership

Question 1: How successful is the partnership in implementing the aims of the Connexions service?

To answer this question, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- how well the partnership
 - meets its agreed primary targets for participation and achievement
 - contributes to government targets relating to particular groups of young people
- how actively the partnership involves young people at every stage of its operation
- how well the partnership takes into account the interests of all young people within its area
- how successfully the partnership works with external agencies to provide an integrated support service for young people.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which the partnership:

- demonstrates that national and local targets are being met
- has enabled young people to exert a real influence within its structures

- is representative of the main statutory and voluntary agencies involved in working with young people in the area
- contributes to the planning decisions of strategic bodies and institutions involved in the provision of education and support services
- has mechanisms for ascertaining the quality of the services to which it directs young people
- enhances the opportunities for learning and development in its area through close liaison with local businesses, community groups and other relevant bodies.

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Inspection focus

At the end of the inspection, inspectors will make a judgement about the overall quality and effectiveness of the partnership, including whether it provides value for money. The framework, taken as a whole, ensures that judgements are made on the extent to which the partnership ensures an integrated support service that enables all young people in the area to make a successful transition to further education (FE), training and employment.

The work of the Connexions service is underpinned by eight principles.¹ The publication, *Youth Support Services for 13–19 year olds: A Vision for 2006*, sets out key priorities and outcomes for Connexions services and how these should be achieved. When using the framework, inspectors should bear these principles and the key priorities in mind. Their remit is not to judge the principles and priorities themselves, but the extent to which they are being translated into effective practice for the benefit of young people. The focus throughout is on effects rather than intention.

¹Connexions – *The best start in life for every young person*, Department for Education and Employment (DfEE) – now Department for Education and Skills (DfES), 2000

The eight principles are:

- raising aspirations – setting high expectations for every individual
- meeting individual needs and overcoming barriers to learning
- taking account of the views of young people, individually and collectively
- inclusion – keeping young people in mainstream education and training, and preventing them moving to the margins of their community
- partnership – agencies collaborating to achieve more for young people, parents and communities than they could working in isolation
- community involvement and neighbourhood renewal through involvement of community mentors and PAs brokering access to local welfare, health, arts, sport and guidance networks
- extending opportunity and equality of opportunity – raising participation and achievement levels for all young people, influencing the availability, suitability and quality of provision, and raising awareness of opportunities
- evidence-based practice – ensuring that new interventions are based on rigorous research and evaluation of what works.

In this section of the framework, inspectors should comment on whether national and local targets are being met. They will assess the extent of the contribution made by the partnership in meeting targets through effective collaboration and through joint and statutory plans. The partnership should systematically take account of the interests of all young people.

The involvement of young people is a key principle of the Connexions service. Inspectors should make a clear and unequivocal judgement on the extent to which young people are involved at all levels of the partnership's work in the design, planning, implementation and evaluation of provision, and the extent to which their involvement contributes to the effectiveness of the partnership.

Inspectors will evaluate the value for money given by the partnership. The judgement will be based primarily on the quality of outcomes achieved by the partnership. In particular, inspectors will take into account:

- the achievement of young people
- the effectiveness of Connexions practice
- how well the partnership measures its cost effectiveness.

Inspectors will also take into account audited financial data in reaching their value-for-money judgement.

Making judgements

Overall judgements about how successful the partnership is in implementing the aims of the Connexions service must be consistent with the other judgements made elsewhere in the inspection. In particular, judgements about the quality and effectiveness of the partnership must reflect those relating to: the achievement of young people (key question 2); the responsiveness of the partnership to their needs (key question 3); the effectiveness of Connexions practice (key question 4); and the leadership and management of the partnership (key question 7).

Sources of evidence include:

- business and delivery plans
- minutes of meetings of the board, local management committees and partners
- partnership agreements and protocols
- performance reports
- analysis of data on the achievement of targets and other management information
- user surveys
- discussions with young people, staff, partners and other stakeholders
- the influence and impact on the policies and statutory plans of strategic partners
- quality assurance systems and measures
- compliments and complaints
- cost-effectiveness measures.

The following characteristics illustrate judgements about the quality and effectiveness of the partnership:

Very good

The partnership fully meets or exceeds its primary targets, and makes a significant contribution to the cross-cutting targets in its area. A wide and representative range of young people contributed to the formation of the partnership. Young people are integral to its planning, implementation, monitoring, evaluation and review processes, and are enabled to exert a positive influence on all aspects of the partnership's operation. The partnership has effective mechanisms for identifying and analysing the needs and interests of all young people in its area, and takes informed action based on the outcomes of consultation. It seeks to promote equality of opportunity and the removal of barriers to participation and achievement for young people, taking into account

such factors as gender, race, disability, learning difficulties and other specific forms of disadvantage. The partnership works closely and effectively with the full range of key agencies and other partners, involving them in strategic and operational decisions and reciprocating widely. It applies strong and consistent mechanisms for determining and assuring the quality of all the services to which it directs young people. Almost all young people benefit from the planned services. Swift and effective action is taken to help those whose progress may be unsatisfactory. The partnership provides very good value for money.

Satisfactory

The partnership meets the majority of its primary targets and makes a positive contribution to the cross-cutting targets in its area. Young people have contributed to the partnership's formation and are involved in many stages of its operation. Their contribution has some impact on decisions taken and the resulting action. The partnership has an awareness of the needs and interests of most young people in its area and takes account of these needs in its planning. Equal opportunities and the removal of barriers to participation are effectively promoted. Links have been forged with all key agencies, and the partnership secures adequate provision for young people's needs. Quality assurance mechanisms of providers are in place but implementation is not totally consistent. Support services are in place but are not fully integrated. Most young people benefit from the planned services. There is some evidence that the outcomes of consultation and representation are having a discernible effect on the future development of the partnership. Relationships with external agencies are leading to the steady development and use of services for young people. The partnership provides satisfactory value for money.

Unsatisfactory

One or more of the following may indicate that the quality and effectiveness of the partnership are unsatisfactory:

- the partnership consistently fails to meet its primary targets
- there is little or no evidence that it is contributing to the cross-cutting targets in its area
- young people have minimal involvement in most stages of the partnership's operation and little influence on the partnership's decisions
- the partnership has scant awareness of the needs and interests of young people, and consequently takes little account of these in its planning
- the Young People's Charter is out of date or is unclear about the role and entitlement of young people
- arrangements to ensure equality of opportunity and the removal of barriers to learning are inadequate

- the partnership has weak links with external agencies, leading to minimal development and use of services for young people
- 12% or more of observed practice is judged to be unsatisfactory
- guidance and support services are fragmented
- arrangements for ensuring the quality of services are sporadic and have limited coverage
- leadership and management are judged to be unsatisfactory
- the partnership provides unsatisfactory value for money.

Guidance on using and interpreting the criteria

Meeting targets

- The partnership demonstrates that national and local targets are being met.

Inspectors will assess the extent to which the partnership has achieved its national and local targets. They will analyse the Connexions performance report and give details of trends. This will give an indication of the progress made by the partnership in working towards the targets set for participation and achievement. Inspectors should form a judgement about the relative performance of the partnership compared with similar ones.

Involvement of young people

- The partnership has enabled young people to exert a real influence within its structures.

An effective Connexions partnership should benefit from the involvement of young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of its services. The Young People's Charter should demonstrate clearly how young people across the age range and representative of different social, racial or cultural groups are fully involved in developing the services. Young people's influence should be demonstrated at all levels of the partnership's work, including governance, management, delivery and review of services. Inspectors will judge the extent to which young people's views influence provision locally so that it meets their needs.

The young people involved in the service should be representative of the diversity of the communities in which they live, and include those who are in the Connexions service's priority groups.

Inspectors should seek evidence that the partnership has acted on the feedback received from young people, and evaluated the impact of their contribution to the planning and delivery of provision. Inspectors should ensure that judgements are consistent with those made in other aspects of the framework which are concerned with the involvement of young people, their response to provision and the opportunities they have to influence the work of the partnership.

Composition of the partnership

- The partnership is representative of the main statutory and voluntary agencies involved in working with young people in the area.

Membership of the Connexions partnership should include all key partners or stakeholders. Inspectors will judge to what extent the partnership board and local management committees are representative of these partners. Key partners might include the local LSC, local authorities and other statutory agencies, the statutory youth service, schools, colleges and other educational establishments, voluntary and community organisations, employers and training providers, and other representation from the private sector. Inspectors will judge how successfully partners work together strategically and operationally to deliver an effective, integrated support service. These judgements will be consistent with those made about inter-agency co-operation under the leadership and management section (page 70).

Influencing the plans of others

- The partnership contributes to the planning decisions of strategic bodies and institutions involved in the provision of education and support services.

The partnership should have effective arrangements to ensure that clear, accurate, relevant and timely information is provided about young people's aspirations and needs with respect to learning and support. Inspectors will assess the extent to which the partnership is involved with partners in representing the interests of all young people when making strategic decisions about provision and the promotion of equality of opportunity.

Inspectors will assess the extent to which the partnership influences the statutory plans of strategic partners, such as the education development plan, the community plan and the strategic area review of the local LSC. They will also assess the impact of the partnership on the policies of other stakeholder groups, including primary care trusts, local authority social services, the employment service, employer bodies, youth offending teams, youth services, probation services, local crime and disorder partnerships, police authorities, drug action teams and voluntary organisations.

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Coherence of provision

- The partnership has mechanisms for ascertaining the quality of those services to which it directs young people.
- The partnership enhances the opportunities for learning and development in its area through close liaison with local businesses, community groups and other relevant bodies.

Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which the opportunities for young people are enhanced through joint planning and collaboration. Such opportunities should be broad and coherent, increase inclusion and avoid duplication. Inspectors should consider the extent to which the partnership ensures that every provider and referral agency meets the needs of young people and has appropriate quality systems of an agreed standard. Inspectors will also judge to what extent such services are involving young people. These judgements will be consistent with those made under leadership and management.

An effective partnership will have identified and recorded in its plans the range of partners and organisations which work together to deliver the Connexions services. Inspectors will evaluate the success of partners in providing, through liaison and joint planning where appropriate, a broad and coherent range of services which, while avoiding unnecessary duplication, widen opportunities for young people and increase the likelihood of their participation in learning.

Good contacts with employers and the local LSC will:

- encourage job-creation activity, persuading and assisting employers to offer a training component to their vacancies
- develop a full understanding of the local labour market
- ensure that the planning of services, the guidance given and education and training are appropriate to the needs of employers locally and nationally
- support the development of young people's skills by involving employers as mentors and offering opportunities for work experience
- encourage employers to widen young people's access to employment.

Section B: Achievement

Question 2: How well do the young people within the partnership achieve their goals?

To answer this question, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the success of young people in achieving
 - qualifications and individual learning targets
 - goals for personal and social development
- young people's progress relative to their prior achievement and their potential
- how well young people engage with, and participate in, the services available to them.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which young people:

- acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to raise their aspirations and achievement, and to support their social and educational inclusion
- have a broad and accurate knowledge and understanding of the world of work, and of the education, training and employment opportunities that are available locally, regionally and nationally, including higher education (HE)
- are well informed about the range of social, voluntary and leisure-based opportunities for learning and development
- know their own strengths and weaknesses, personal qualities and preferences
- cope with their lives and new roles and situations, such as starting work, moving on to FE or living independently
- assume increasing responsibility for their personal development
- are effective in making choices in relation to anticipated education, training and employment
- set themselves realistic personal goals and develop plans of action to achieve them
- recognise and overcome potential barriers to learning and social inclusion
- view the work of the partnership positively
- form and maintain constructive relationships
- respect other people's differences, particularly their feelings, values and beliefs.

Inspection focus

Inspectors will evaluate how well young people are achieving, particularly in relation to national benchmarks. They will focus on the standards reached and whether they are high enough, taking into account their age and prior educational attainment and achievement. The inspection report will include judgements on the accomplishments of young people and how well they acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding that enable them to make a successful transition in education, and into training and employment. Inspectors will evaluate how successfully young people gain qualifications and meet their learning targets and goals for personal and social development. The report should note the opportunities that young people have to receive accreditation for their achievements.

When judging achievement, inspectors will focus on the extent to which young people:

- show improvement in their examination and test performances, and gain qualifications
- are effectively re-integrated into education, training and work
- participate regularly and actively in partnership provision
- improve their patterns of attendance at school, college and work and in training, and reduce truancy
- understand themselves – their strengths and weaknesses and the factors affecting their development, progression and relationships with others
- plan ahead and set targets
- achieve realistic and demanding targets
- have up-to-date knowledge of the range of opportunities in education, training and broader community participation
- make well-informed and realistic decisions about their future
- are prepared for their next transition
- resolve and overcome difficulties affecting their personal development, demonstrate positive changes in behaviour and attitude, and reduce exclusions.

This section is concerned with how young people respond to the partnership in their attitudes to learning, training and employment, their behaviour and values, and their personal development. The criteria cover young people's responses to the provision made by the partnership, notably the extent to which they participate in the opportunities available to them and how well they relate to Connexions staff and each other.

Making judgements

Before and during the inspection, inspectors will analyse data on achievements provided by the partnership as evidence of the progress made by the young people. An important element of such data will be the number of young people staying on in education and training, and evidence of the partnership's success in helping them to re-engage with learning. Other evidence of achievement will include: young people's performance in national qualifications; tests and accreditation; achievement of local accreditation and certificates; improvement in attendance; punctuality; behaviour; and attitudes to learning – where appropriate, leading to a reduction in exclusions. Evidence of achievement by particular young people, for example, grouped by gender and ethnic origin, or by vulnerable young people such as those leaving care, will also be considered. Discussions with young people and scrutiny of any written or formally presented work will also enable inspectors to judge the standards achieved. Inspectors should expect to evaluate such evidence before, during and after a direct observation of practice in most settings.

Judgements about achievement will also be made on the basis of directly observed sessions with individuals or groups of young people. Inspectors will assess the impact of the work of the Connexions practice on young people's choices and decision making, their individual planning, and achievement of their goals. Inspectors should make judgements about how effectively young people develop their self-awareness, confidence, independence and understanding of available opportunities for education, employment and training, including sources of information and wider support for the personal issues they face. In making these judgements, inspectors need to be aware of progress in relation to young people's prior achievement or personal circumstances. In evaluating the gains made by young people, inspectors should take into account the extent to which they have high, but realistic, aspirations for their future learning and career opportunities. Any differences between the achievements of different groups of young people will be reported.

Sources of evidence include:

- analysis of data on achievements
- direct observation of group sessions and individual interactions with Connexions staff
- discussions with young people
- progress files and individual action plans
- portfolios and other records of work, such as videos and tapes
- discussions with Connexions staff
- individual records, including assessment information.

The following characteristics illustrate judgements about achievement:

Very good

The proportion of young people staying on in education and training, as a result of the work of the partnership, exceeds the agreed national target. A high and increasing proportion of disaffected young people identified by the Connexions partnership are successfully re-engaged in education and training. The number of young people who achieve accreditation and qualifications over time has increased and results are good compared with statistical neighbours. Young people whose achievements were well below national and local averages or expectations show year-on-year improvement. Young people from different gender or ethnic groups, or who are particularly vulnerable, have good or improving achievement. Most young people make appropriate choices about the routes to follow, and there are significant improvements in attendance and retention rates across programmes and activities. Young people know about the range of voluntary and statutory agencies available to them and they use such provision effectively to gain advice and information and to help them resolve difficulties.

Most young people negotiate and agree challenging and realistic individual learning and development targets, and have a good success rate in achieving them. They have a good understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, and opportunities in education and training. They skilfully review their experiences and achievements, have a clear idea of their future goals and take appropriate action to meet them. They are well prepared for, and confident about, future transitions, and they cope well with new roles and situations. Young people whose relationships, lifestyle, behaviour, attendance or attitudes to learning are barriers to their progression, overcome the difficulties they face and make good or very good progress. In organised sessions, all or most young people participate enthusiastically, ask searching questions, respond positively, and show consideration and respect for others. They are adept at working together to acquire new skills, solve problems and seek information. The majority of young people recognise that the Connexions service is making a positive contribution to their personal and career development.

Satisfactory

The proportion of young people staying on in education and training as a result of the work of the partnership is at, or close to, the agreed national target. An increasing proportion of disaffected young people identified by the Connexions service are successfully re-engaged in education and training. The number of young people who achieve qualifications improves in line with national averages, and results are comparable with statistical neighbours. There is improvement among young people whose achievements are well below national and local averages or expectations – although not across the whole cohort. Young people

make appropriate choices about the routes to follow, and there are signs of improved attendance and retention rates across programmes and activities. Young people have a broad understanding of the range of agencies available to assist them, and an increasing number use such provision to obtain further information and advice.

Most young people negotiate and agree individual learning and development targets, most of which they achieve. Young people understand their strengths and weaknesses. The majority of young people have a clear idea of their future goals and are aware of the actions they need to take to meet them. Most are prepared for, and fairly confident about, future transitions, and they can generally cope with new roles and situations. Young people facing significant barriers to their progression make satisfactory progress in improving their relationships, behaviour, attendance or attitudes to learning. In organised sessions, most young people show an interest, ask relevant questions, work co-operatively on agreed tasks and demonstrate mutual respect. Most young people recognise that Connexions is making a positive contribution to their personal and career development.

Unsatisfactory

One or more of the following may indicate unsatisfactory levels of achievement:

- there is little evidence that the proportion of young people staying on in education and training is improving
- the proportion of young people achieving qualifications shows little improvement compared with national and local averages
- there are few signs of improvement among young people whose achievements were well below national and local averages or expectations
- the achievements of young people from specific gender or ethnic groups, or who are particularly vulnerable, are poor and show little or no evidence of improvement
- young people are largely unaware of available education, employment and training opportunities, and the range of voluntary and statutory agencies that could assist them
- young people are making unrealistic decisions and choices, and are unable to resolve their difficulties
- too many disaffected young people identified by the Connexions partnership are not being successfully re-engaged in education and training
- young people have little self-awareness or understanding of their strengths and weaknesses
- the majority of young people have neither developed a clear idea of their future goals nor negotiated and agreed individual learning targets with Connexions staff

- most young people are inadequately prepared for future transitions
- many young people feel that the Connexions service makes little or no contribution to their personal and career development
- in organised sessions, most young people pay intermittent attention, are easily distracted and show little consideration for their peers and others
- many young people do not work well with one another, do not respect other people's differences and display sexist or racist attitudes that go unchallenged
- few young people are able to articulate either what they have learnt or the relevance of the session to them.

Guidance on using and interpreting the criteria

Knowledge, skills and understanding

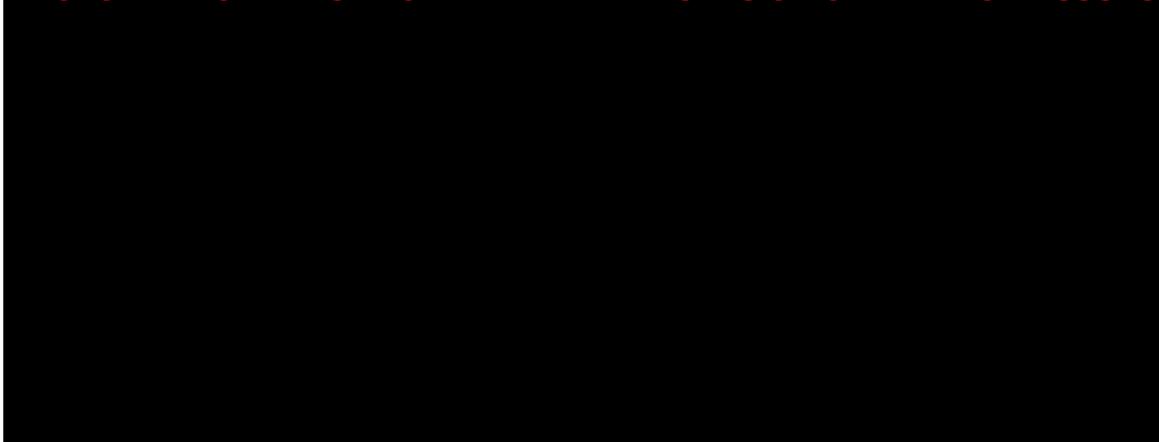
- Young people acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to raise their aspirations and achievement, and to support their social and educational inclusion.
- Young people have a broad and accurate knowledge and understanding of the world of work and of the education, training and employment opportunities that are available locally, regionally and nationally, including HE.
- Young people are well informed about the range of social, voluntary and leisure-based opportunities for learning and development.
- Young people know their own strengths and weaknesses, personal qualities and preferences.

The evidence for these criteria is extensive and wide-ranging. Young people may make gains in knowledge, skills and understanding from their involvement in a broad variety of provision that may include:

- one-to-one sessions with Connexions staff
- activities in groups or individually
- participation in strategic and operational management activities such as partnership meetings, recruitment and selection of Connexions personnel, development projects and participation in consultative forums
- peer education and other activities where young people design and deliver Connexions services, represent their views and act on behalf of other young people
- access to electronic databases, publicity material and other sources of information
- taught programmes of personal, social and health education (PSHE), careers education and guidance (CEG), and education for citizenship.

Inspectors will judge the extent to which young people have a rounded knowledge of their own strengths and weaknesses, personal qualities and preferences, and whether they have a balanced view of their self-worth and potential: for example, how well they are aware of their academic, vocational and personal strengths, and what they should work on in order to improve. Some young people face particularly significant difficulties. These young people should be aware of the causes of their difficulties and be developing an awareness of what solutions are available. The partnership has a responsibility to ensure that young people know about where and how to obtain help in making their decisions and choices. Young people should be able to identify local sources of information and guidance, and know how to gain access to these.

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In making judgements about young people's personal and social development, inspectors will assess how far young people:

- have developed confidence and responsibility, and know how to make the best of their abilities
- understand, and know how to maintain, a healthy, safe lifestyle
- have developed good relationships, and respect the differences between people.

CEG advisers are concerned with helping young people to develop their roles as learners and workers. Young people should understand the arrangements for CEG in their school or college, and use their entitlement to services provided by the Connexions partnership within and beyond formal education settings. Inspectors should judge young people's achievements in relation to the three broad learning outcomes in CEG,² namely the extent to which young people:

- understand themselves and develop their capabilities
- explore and investigate careers opportunities
- make and adjust plans to manage change and transition.

² See also *Learning outcomes from careers education and guidance*, QCA, 1999 and *Careers Education and Guidance in England*, DfES, 2003

In making such judgements, inspectors will evaluate how well young people:

- know the world of work (including self-employment), the organisation of the workplace, and the local and national job market
- are aware of the types of occupation, working conditions, job satisfaction, qualifications needed and levels of entry
- have a sound knowledge of the overall structure of opportunities for education, training and work.

Connexions partnerships play a key role in promoting young people's involvement in summer activities, volunteering and community work, and linking with a wide variety of statutory, voluntary and community agencies. Such involvement is intended to help young people to develop into better informed and more active citizens able to contribute more fully to their local communities. Inspectors will judge to what extent young people are informed about such opportunities, their level of participation and the impact of their involvement. In forming judgements, inspectors will evaluate the extent to which young people are developing:

- knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens
- skills of enquiry and communication
- skills of participation and responsible action.

Young people's management of their development

- Young people cope with their lives, and new roles and situations such as starting work, moving on to FE or living independently.
- Young people assume increasing responsibility for their personal development.
- Young people are effective in making choices in relation to education, training and employment.
- Young people set themselves realistic personal goals, and develop plans of action to achieve them.
- Young people recognise and overcome potential barriers to learning and social inclusion.

Central to young people's achievement is their growing ability to manage their own development, to cope with the range of transitions within their lives and to be active in seeking solutions to the problems and difficulties they face. Informed by a realistic awareness of their strengths and weaknesses, young people should have a degree of self-confidence, a sense of personal

worth and, thus, a positive view of their intended contribution to the community in later life. Inspectors should look for evidence of young people increasingly taking responsibility for their actions and decisions. Judgements on the progress made by young people should be made in relation to the context in which they find themselves and their starting points. Young people's own views on their ability to cope and what it means for them to take responsibility are important sources of evidence.

Inspectors will assess young people's knowledge of how to manage transitions, and their success in making them – for example: from Key Stage 3 to Key Stage 4; from Key Stage 4 to sixth form, college or training provision; from one school to another; or from education and training to work. Inspectors should be aware of the significant transitions faced by some young people, such as leaving or moving into public care, coping with bereavement or family separation, making changes to their lifestyle, arriving in the United Kingdom from another country – sometimes in very difficult circumstances – or, as might be the case for some young people with learning difficulties or disabilities, moving to a specialist residential college.

Records kept by Connexions staff, other agencies and young people themselves should provide evidence of achievement. Inspectors should also look at individual learning and development plans, and discuss these with young people and Connexions staff in order to make judgements about how these have been formulated and the extent of young people's involvement in their formulation. In judging achievement, inspectors should consider whether young people's aspirations and goals are appropriately informed by impartial guidance, and realistic yet high enough. In discussion, young people may show they have analysed earlier decisions, perhaps adapting their plans in the light of later information and advice.

Inspectors should consider to what extent young people:

- are engaged in seeking help, advice and information
- make effective use of the support available
- recognise influences on their decision-making
- effectively plan courses of action and record their achievement
- demonstrate the practical skills they need in order to look for and obtain places in FE and HE, training and employment. These skills include:
 - analysing and comparing occupations and different forms of education and training
 - job search
 - preparing CVs and writing applications

- presenting themselves at interviews
- communicating well orally
- finding their way to interviews and placements
- working well on their own and in teams
- understanding their rights and responsibilities at work
- develop the skills and confidence for independent living – for example, managing personal finances.

Young people with complex and special educational and social needs, who may also require support for living, should demonstrate that they are well prepared for their transition to adulthood and have exercised a degree of choice in their future plans. Inspectors will assess whether these young people are able to explain their career ideas cogently – if necessary, using technological aids, sign language or symbols – to those who can help them.

Connexions partnerships should be helping young people to become self-reliant and self-motivated. Inspectors will judge the extent to which young people show initiative in researching their career ideas, take responsibility for managing their career planning – including taking the action agreed with PAs – and have the capacity to continue doing so in later life.

In judging young people's effectiveness in making choices and setting goals, inspectors will assess how well young people:

- know the full range of options open to them
- know the implications of possible choices, and are able to make informed decisions in a systematic way
- know which jobs and other kinds of work interest them, and which subjects and skills are useful for the courses and jobs that they are considering
- take account of the changing nature and future of work when making their plans
- know the main sources of careers information relevant to their needs, and use research skills to obtain information from books, videos, television and computer programs
- can apply the information to their own circumstances and decisions
- make realistic decisions and choices in the light of the information available.

Relating to others

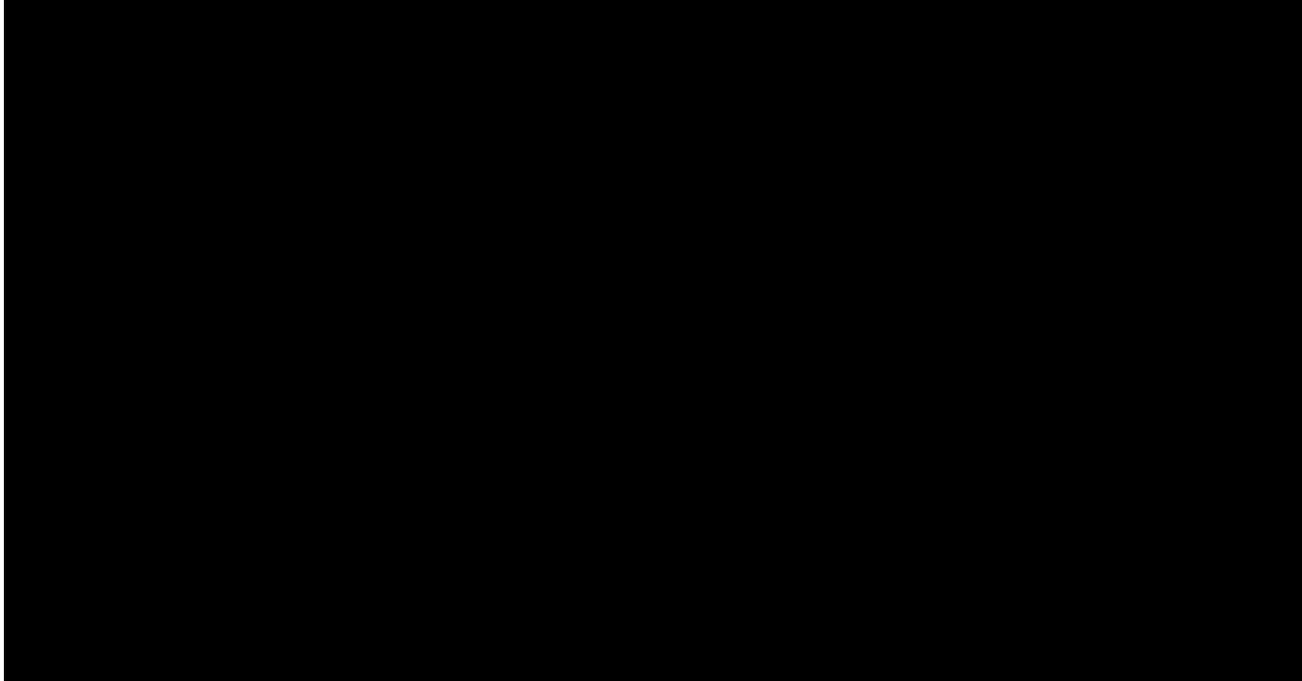
- Young people form and maintain constructive relationships.
- Young people respect other people's differences, particularly their feelings, values and beliefs.
- Young people view the work of the partnership positively.

Based on discussions with young people, observation of their interactions with their peers and others, and scrutiny of records of progress and achievement, inspectors will judge the extent to which young people:

- understand and appreciate the diversity of beliefs, attitudes and traditions in society in general, and in the workplace in particular
- are sensitive to, and avoid, stereotyping of people and occupations, and are minded to avoid stereotyping on the basis of ethnicity, gender and ability
- demonstrate a commitment to equality of opportunity.

In making judgements about relationships, inspectors will look for evidence of how well young people, particularly those from different backgrounds and with differing experiences and abilities, work together in activities. They will evaluate how well young people understand and respect differences and understand the feelings, values and beliefs of others. Inspectors will assess the extent to which young people are confident in articulating their own views and attitudes, and how far they are also willing to listen to what others have to say and take an interest in views, ideas and experiences different from their own.

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Section C: Access and participation

Question 3: How responsive is the partnership to the range and diversity of young people in the area?

To answer this question, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the partnership's assessment of the needs and demands of the young people in the communities it serves
- how well the partnership ensures that young people in its area are aware of the services available to them
- how successfully the partnership provides an inclusive service, tailored to individual requirements.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which the partnership:

- has collected comprehensive up-to-date information about the young people in its area
- understands the nature of the area and the communities it serves
- consistently involves young people in the identification and assessment of their needs
- has effective strategies to enable all young people to gain access to support and provision that is responsive to their needs
- ensures that relevant programmes are provided in a range of locations easily accessible to all young people, and at times convenient to them
- has a clear and realistic action plan for work with its agreed priority groups, both for the short and the long term
- is sensitive to, and provides for, the diverse needs of young people within the target age group, taking into account such features as gender, ethnicity and disability
- promotes its work across the area.

and the extent to which young people:

- view the services as being relevant and free from barriers to access
- participate fully in the services which respond to their needs.

Inspection focus

The evaluation of the partnership's response to the range and diversity of the young people in the area is central to the inspection. The success of the partnership in identifying, understanding and meeting the needs of young people underpins the Connexions service, as reflected in the key principles. Inspection should focus on the quality and use of the information that it collects about young people and their communities, the steps taken by the partnership to assess their needs, and ways in which it responds to those needs.

Inspectors will assess the effectiveness of the partnership's strategies and systems for ensuring that a complete range of services and opportunities is offered and promoted widely. Integral to this is the principle of extending opportunities, and of equality of opportunity, by raising levels of participation. Judgements will focus on the effectiveness of the partnership in ensuring that services are accessible, inclusive and responsive to the demands and needs of individual young people. Inspectors will assess the extent to which the partnership is in contact with young people at key points of transition and at times of greatest need, and is able to engage them in education, training or employment. Young people should know how, when and where to gain access to the services they need, and consider them to be accessible and relevant. Account should be taken of the views of young people, individually and collectively, on how successfully the partnership operates locally. The report should include an evaluation of how well the partnership ensures that young people in its area are aware of the services available to them.

Making judgements

Inspectors will assess the accuracy and comprehensiveness of the information collected by the partnership on the needs of young people. They will look at how these needs are met by a range of services which are effectively promoted and involve partners at appropriate points, and whether the services are responsive and inclusive. In particular, they will make judgements about the extent to which all young people who require help get the support they need, when and where they need it.

Sources of evidence include:

- the partnership's business and delivery plans
- needs assessment and mapping, including community profiles, demographic and socio-economic data, and key trends
- formal consultations and user surveys
- participation and tracking data collected centrally by the partnership and by individual providers, including data relating to participation and progression by gender and ethnic groupings, and national or local priority groups

- description of the provision secured by the partnership
- strategy documents of partners and key providers
- observations and minutes of meetings of relevant partners and groups
- policy documents, including those relating to equality of opportunity and inclusion
- discussions with managers of the partnership, partners and other stakeholders
- internal and external quality assessments of the accessibility of accommodation and the adequacy of resources
- promotional events and materials such as brochures, newsletters and the web site, and presentations to young people, community agencies and organisations
- discussions with representative groups of young people and, where appropriate, their advocates, parents and carers
- observation of Connexions practice, such as assessment and advice sessions, detached and outreach activity, and school and college councils.

The following characteristics illustrate judgements about the quality of access and participation:

Very good

The partnership has detailed, comprehensive and current information from a wide range of sources about the young people in its area. It uses this information well to gain an accurate overview of the communities it serves, to plan its work and monitor its effectiveness. The partnership consistently involves a wide range of young people in identifying their needs, and the work of the Connexions service is tailored in response. Business and delivery plans identify priority groups, and outline realistic targets, the actions to be taken and measures of progress. The partnership's plan for work with these priority groups, both for the short and the longer term, is understood by all partners and is translated effectively into local contexts. The provision secured by the partnership is inclusive and takes full account of gender, ethnicity, disability, and personal and domestic circumstances. Staff in post reflect the diversity of the community served. The nature, location, duration and timing of Connexions activity ensure that young people have access to services when and where they need them. Programmes and services are relevant and reflect the interests, culture and age of the participants. Young people with a wide range of needs use the services provided and receive support relevant to them. Connexions services are promoted effectively to young people and to organisations working with, or on behalf of, young people. Young people in a range of settings and from the partnership's priority groups know about the Connexions service and display a growing understanding about its aims and the work of PAs.

Satisfactory

The partnership has a clear knowledge of its area and secure information about the young people within it. This information has been used to determine the partnership's business and delivery plans and priority groups, and to monitor the progress made in implementing these plans. Young people contribute to the overall assessment of needs in their area through regular consultation. There are well-defined strategies to meet the needs of all young people, irrespective of gender, ethnicity, disability, and personal and domestic circumstances. Measures are in place to ensure that services are inclusive. The partnership is in contact with a reasonable cross-section of young people in the area. The provision secured by the partnership is broad, generally accessible and consistent, but not all programmes are sufficiently well designed or relevant to meet some of the very specific or complex needs of young people – or there is some duplication of effort within the partnership area. Information about the Connexions service is widely available, and young people have a basic understanding of the services available. Young people generally perceive these services as being relevant to them.

Unsatisfactory

One or more of the following may indicate that access and participation are unsatisfactory:

- the partnership's knowledge of the area is cursory, and assessment of need is incomplete
- the partnership does not consistently involve young people in the identification and assessment of their needs
- the partnership does not have a sufficiently clear and realistic action plan for work with its priority groups, both for the short and the longer term
- data about the participation and achievement of young people do not inform the work of the partnership
- programmes are not sufficiently accessible to the majority of young people and lack the necessary diversity and differentiation to meet the range of young people's needs in the area
- the work of the Connexions service is poorly communicated to partners and other organisations working with young people, and few links have been established with community groups in the area
- most young people are poorly informed about the Connexions service and are unaware of the role of the PA
- young people do not view the services as being relevant and free from barriers to access

- the partnership fails to make contact and engage with sufficient numbers of young people from its priority groups
- young people do not participate fully in the services available.

Guidance on using and interpreting the criteria

Partnership intelligence

- The partnership has collected up-to-date, comprehensive information about the young people in its area.
- The partnership understands the nature of the area and the communities it serves.

For the partnership to operate effectively, it requires current, comprehensive and accurate information about the needs of the young people in its area and the provision available to them. This information will come from a range of sources, often derived from its work with partners. It includes data on young people's educational achievement, their destinations in terms of progress into education, training and employment, their health and social factors, and the barriers that they face at key points of transition. These data should include breakdowns based on gender, ethnicity and vulnerable priority groups. Contributing to this needs analysis will be a profile of the communities being served, taking into account such factors as the age profile, the proportions of minority ethnic groups, employment patterns and the level of unemployment, the availability of housing and other socio-economic data. At the same time, the partnership should know the types, location and availability of provision for young people that is intended to promote their personal and social development and to meet their information, support, advice and counselling needs. Inspectors should evaluate the effectiveness of the methods used by the partnership to assess and map young people's needs. In particular, inspectors will make judgements about the success of Connexions in identifying disaffected young people and helping them to engage in learning and/or employment. They should also judge how well the partnership uses the data available to describe the nature of the communities it serves and the needs of the young people, to identify gaps in services or provision and to plan improvements to the provision. Inspectors will judge how good an understanding the partnership has of those young people in its area who are likely to need:

- relevant and appropriate information and advice on educational, vocational, health and social issues
- detailed guidance and support to overcome barriers to progression
- sustained, integrated specialist support and tailored provision

- outreach and more targeted support in order to become re-engaged with the services available
- assessment of their learning needs
- specialist supported housing.

Involvement of young people

- The partnership consistently involves young people in the identification and assessment of their needs.

Inspectors should assess how extensively and effectively the partnership involves young people in identifying and analysing local needs. Obtaining the views of young people is essential in order to provide a service which is based on their needs and to increase participation. The partnership will obtain information about young people's needs through informal and formal assessment procedures and from consultations with groups of young people.

Young people's views, including their feedback on provision, should be collected and recorded regularly and in a systematic way. Emphasis should be placed on including the views of young people from black and other minority ethnic groups, and those young people who are hard to reach or who resist being involved in learning. Consultation with young people with learning difficulties or disabilities should make use of appropriate resources and may need to include the views of advocates, parents and carers. In addition, partnerships may seek the views of young people through their participation in youth or student councils, strategic boards and management committees, or in specific programmes such as peer education.

In judging the effectiveness of the arrangements for involving young people in assessment of need, inspectors should consider the extent to which the partnership uses the information gained in the evaluation and development of the Connexions service locally and in the area. Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which this has been achieved and take account of this in the evaluation under question 1: 'How successful is the partnership in implementing the aims of the Connexions service?'

Ensuring access for all young people

- The partnership has effective strategies to enable all young people to gain access to support and provision responsive to their needs.
- The partnership ensures that relevant programmes are provided in a range of locations easily accessible to all young people and at times convenient to them.

- The partnership has a clear and realistic action plan for work with its agreed priority groups, both for the short and the longer term.
- The partnership is sensitive to, and provides for, the diverse needs of young people within the target age group, taking into account such features as gender, ethnicity and disability, and ensuring equality and equity.

The Connexions service is a universal service which must respond to the support needs of all young people in the 13 to 19 age range – irrespective of ability, age, gender, ethnicity and area of residence. At the same time, the service provides support tailored to the needs of young people who are at the greatest risk of not making a successful transition to adulthood. Inspectors will judge the extent to which the partnership uses the outcomes of its needs assessment and analysis to agree with its partners the priorities for its work and to determine the nature of interventions and the level of support for specific groups of young people.

In order to plan its provision, the partnership should also map and assess the quality of existing provision. Work carried out with a wide range of partner agencies and organisations should be central to strategies aimed at providing a universal, integrated support service. Partnerships should have identified a range of locations, including schools, colleges, young offenders' institutions, youth and community centres and outreach centres, where young people should be able to gain access to the Connexions service. The mapping exercise will have also identified sources of funding for delivering Connexions services. Inspectors will judge whether the partnership has used its knowledge and understanding of local provision in the planning and development of the Connexions services. Inspectors will also assess the extent to which the provision secured by the partnership matches the needs identified in its assessment.

Inspection should evaluate the quality of the partnership's plans for work with agreed target groups for the short and longer term, and how these reflect the analyses of needs. Priority groups are likely to include young people:

- with learning difficulties or disabilities
- from black and other minority ethnic groups
- for whom English is an additional language
- with a fractured educational background
- who feel marginalised or are hard to reach
- who are homeless, in care or care leavers
- who have experienced, or are experiencing, significant disruption or change in their life, such as pregnant teenagers and teenage parents.

In making judgements about the extent to which the partnership provides an inclusive service, inspectors will examine the partnership's aims and objectives, policies and operational standards, and plans and targets for under-represented groups of young people. Discussions with young people from a range of backgrounds will provide important evidence of the way in which the partnership responds to their needs. Inspectors will assess how effectively the partnership and its partners respond to the requirements and expectations of legislation and guidance in relation to the provision for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, for young people from black and minority ethnic groups, and for those for whom English is an additional language. Inspectors will evaluate the impact of the provision in helping raise the level of participation, achievement and aspirations of young people with a history of underachievement and limited participation in education, training or employment.

Promoting the work of the partnership

- The partnership promotes its work across the area.

Inspectors will examine the partnership's marketing strategy, and the materials and activities that it uses to promote the Connexions service to young people, partners, community groups and agencies. The range of methods may include brochures, posters, presentations and other public events, and web sites. The Young People's Charter is an important element of the partnership's public statement of its commitment, and the provision it offers. The strategy and methods used should reflect the specific nature of the area and the communities served by the partnership, and provide sufficiently clear information about the services available to young people – for example, providing material in languages other than English, or access to a helpline in community languages. Inspection will focus on how effectively the partnership explains its role and the nature of the Connexions service. Through observations and discussions, inspectors will also judge the extent to which young people, their parents, carers and other stakeholders are aware of the Connexions service and know how to gain access to, and influence, its services.

Awareness and participation of young people

- Young people view the services as being relevant and free from barriers to access.
- Young people participate regularly in the services which respond to their needs.

A key indicator of the effectiveness of the partnership in meeting the range and diverse needs of young people is their response to, and level of participation in, services. As the work of the partnership develops, young people in all settings should become increasingly aware of the Connexions service and the work of PAs. In their observations and discussions with young people, inspectors will assess whether they know how to gain access to the services and learning opportunities available, and feel able to do so. They will also evaluate how actively the partnership has sought to contact and engage those who need its services, but who are not using them. For many young people, their contact with the Connexions service may be limited to a small number of sessions; for others, it is more sustained and intensive. Inspectors will assess how well the services are used by those for whom they are intended, how relevant they are to their needs, and how well young people themselves consider that their needs are being met.

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Section D: Quality of assessment, support, guidance and programmes of learning

Question 4: How effective is Connexions practice – assessment, support, guidance, teaching and learning?

To answer this question, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the effectiveness of provision for all young people, referring to:
 - the assessment of young people’s needs
 - support and guidance
 - the teaching and learning associated with Connexions goals
 - young people’s response to what is provided for them
- the tracking of young people’s progress and its use in developing their learning and support plans.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which Connexions staff:

- have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and key processes underpinning their work, including how the principles of equality and equity are applied in practice
- challenge and inspire young people, and encourage them to make the most of themselves
- respect and are receptive to young people’s views
- plan effectively, setting clear objectives for their work
- establish and sustain positive working relationships with young people which help them to identify and achieve their academic and/or vocational and personal goals
- assess young people’s needs accurately, and negotiate with them individual learning and support plans that they understand
- use a range of methods to enable all young people to learn effectively
- provide impartial information, advice and guidance appropriate to young people’s needs
- assess young people’s progress, work thoroughly and constructively, and use assessments to inform subsequent teaching and learning support
- prepare young people for transition to the next stage of education, training or employment

- support young people in their progress through the learning and support plan and, in consultation with them, evaluate and record their progress
- observe appropriate guidelines on confidentiality
- have up-to-date information about, and links with, a wide range of support structures, specialist services and other opportunities for learning to which they can refer young people when necessary
- work effectively with parents, carers and all those with a legitimate interest in the progress made by individual young people.

and the extent to which young people:

- engage effectively in learning in informal and formal settings and in employment
- have high aspirations, and are involved in constructing and implementing their learning plans
- become self-confident and acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding
- understand what they are doing, how well they are progressing and what further steps they need to take.

Inspection focus

Evaluation of the quality and impact of Connexions practice is central to inspection. Connexions practice is fundamental to the quality of the support services that the Connexions service offers young people, and is the main avenue through which the partnership contributes to young people's achievement and progress. The effectiveness of Connexions practice and the consequent rate, breadth, depth and consolidation of young people's learning and development are closely connected.

Judgements about the effectiveness of Connexions practice focus on the quality of assessment, support, guidance and teaching associated with Connexions goals, and on the nature of young people's response as learners. Inspectors will identify practice which works well and that which is ineffective. They will not be proscriptive about particular approaches, since different methods work well with different young people, but will, nevertheless, consider the effectiveness of mandatory methods of assessment, planning, implementation and review.

When evaluating the quality of Connexions practice, inspectors will concentrate on:

- the quality and impact of the interactions between Connexions staff and young people

- the relevance, breadth and depth of the subject matter and how it relates to the young people, their needs and prior experiences
- the quality and methods of assessing individual young people's needs and how the outcomes of assessment are used
- the quality of recording, tracking, brokerage and referral and, where appropriate, advocacy – and how these ensure that young people receive the support that they need when they need it
- the extent to which young people are involved in determining their goals and learning and support plans, and in evaluating their progress
- the progress that young people make as a result of the interaction with Connexions staff.

Making judgements

Inspectors will conduct detailed observation of Connexions practice in a range of settings. The evidence from such observation will be complemented by discussions with the young people involved and an analysis of the quality of assessment, planning, recording and resources related to this and earlier work with the young people. During the session, observation of what young people do and say, and their response to Connexions staff and the activities provided will enable inspectors to evaluate the extent of their learning. Discussion with young people after the observed session and scrutiny of any written or other work produced by them before or during the session will also provide evidence of whether the young people are learning as much as can be expected.

Sources of evidence include:

- direct observation of group sessions and individual interactions with Connexions staff
- discussions with young people
- individual learning plans, care plans and behaviour management plans
- progress files and records of achievement
- portfolios and other work
- discussions with Connexions staff
- individual records, including assessment information
- session plans.

The following characteristics illustrate judgements about the effectiveness of Connexions practice:

Very good

Staff are well qualified for the work. They use their skills, experience and expertise to provide young people with stimulating, creative and challenging programmes and activities. Assessment of need is linked coherently to individual and group learning plans. The planning, implementation and evaluation of the work are significantly improved by the sustained involvement of young people. Good relationships are maintained with young people and clear boundaries established. Young people grow in self-confidence, and have high aspirations and a clear understanding of their own progress and the pathways they wish to take. They can clearly describe what they have learnt and how it relates to their plans for the future. A range of methods is used to ensure that programmes reflect young people's needs and organisational requirements. Elements of challenge, motivation and a clear educational focus are consistently applied. Firm commitment to equality of opportunity is reflected in practice. Individual and group tasks and activities prepare young people well for transition to FE, HE and employment. Thorough records are maintained and used effectively to inform planning and development with young people. Support and guidance are of the highest quality, and observe clear protocols. Use of specialist referral agencies is regularly reviewed, and referral is timely and relevant. Relationships with significant organisations and adults in young people's lives are maintained and valued.

Satisfactory

Staff are qualified and have appropriate skills and knowledge. They plan well and are receptive to young people's views and interests. Relationships between staff and young people are positive. Assessment of young people's needs is used to inform planning. Programmes and activities meet needs and extend young people's aspirations. Staff have a range of methods and strategies to help young people identify and achieve their personal and academic goals. Young people are challenged to go beyond their immediate level of capability. Young people have access to information about FE, training and employment – but sometimes staff do not encourage them to pursue issues and interests independently or within peer groups. Young people participate well in programmes and activities. They increase their self-awareness and develop a better understanding of the world of work. Personal support for young people observes protocols and signposts to further specialist support services are in place. Records are maintained, but place insufficient emphasis on individual learning targets and the monitoring of young people's progress. Young people can generally describe the progress that they have made during the session and over time.

Unsatisfactory

One or more of the following may indicate that Connexions practice is unsatisfactory:

- staff are unclear about the main principles and processes underpinning their work, which subsequently lacks structure and focus
- planning is of low quality, and programmes and activities are not matched to young people's needs and interests
- opportunities to involve young people in aspects of the work are very limited and young people are rarely inspired or challenged
- staff have few strategies to develop interesting programmes with, and for, young people, and are unable to show any correlation between assessment of need and individual learning plans and targets
- monitoring of young people's progress is inadequate
- relationships between staff and young people are superficial
- support and guidance for young people are weak, young people are unaware of protocols, and signposting to specialist services is minimal and unhelpful
- information about services is not regularly updated or kept in good order and staff work largely in isolation
- there are no systems to monitor or assess effective work by those agencies or adults who are involved with individual young people
- young people generally lack confidence, have low aspirations, do not participate fully in the programmes and activities, and gain little from their involvement with the Connexions service.

Guidance on using and interpreting the criteria

Young people's learning

- Young people engage effectively in learning in informal and formal settings and in employment.
- Young people have high aspirations and are involved in constructing and implementing their learning plans.
- Young people become self-confident and acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding.
- Young people understand what they are doing, how well they are progressing and what further steps they need to take.

This guidance puts learning first to emphasise the importance of evaluating Connexions practice through its impact on outcomes for young people. The criteria for learning are encapsulated by the question: what are the gains made by young people as a direct result of their involvement with Connexions staff?

In their observation of Connexions practice, inspectors will make judgements about the acquisition of knowledge, skills and understanding in relation to the prior achievement of the young people. Learning may be consolidated or may cover new ground. Judgements, where possible, will refer to what has gone before. Discussion with Connexions staff and young people, and scrutiny of records should enable the inspector to establish the level of prior knowledge, skills, understanding and self-confidence. Inspectors will judge to what extent the work with young people builds on their current knowledge, understanding and skills in order that they become more confident and can make progress.

Inspectors will also judge the extent to which young people engage and participate effectively in the opportunities for learning and development offered to them. Inspectors should look for evidence of young people's active contribution to the development of their individual plans rather than passive acceptance of the information and guidance provided by Connexions staff. Young people should be able to explain what they have done and what they have learnt. They should understand how that session and the progress they have made have helped them move further towards their targets and goals, and should know what they need to do next. Inspectors will judge the response of young people to the work of Connexions staff.

Knowledge and understanding of Connexions staff

- Connexions staff have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and key processes underpinning their work, including how the principles of equality and equity are applied in practice.
- Connexions staff provide impartial information, advice and guidance appropriate to young people's needs.
- Connexions staff use a range of methods to enable all young people to learn effectively.

Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which staff deployed by the partnership to work with young people have the requisite range of knowledge and skills to fulfil the expectations of their role. This will include the ability to give initial information and advice on a wide range of topics and to provide more comprehensive advice and guidance in a specialist area. Their knowledge and understanding of the needs of young people and of the available range of

support, learning and employment opportunities should be up to date, relevant and sufficiently detailed to enable young people to take positive steps towards achieving their targets. Young people, parents and carers, and providers of education, training and employment should be confident about the impartiality of Connexions staff. Information, advice and guidance given should not favour any particular provider, but will seek to meet the particular needs of young people, and act in their best interests at all times.

In all aspects of Connexions practice, inspectors should judge the extent to which Connexions staff:

- understand the goals of the Connexions service and their part within it
- know how to conduct one-to-one sessions and group work with young people effectively
- understand the types of support required by young people and the scope for referral to specialist help
- know how to enable young people to participate fully in the planning, implementation and evaluation of their learning and development
- recognise the importance of providing impartial advice and guidance to young people
- know how to help young people make effective use of the information and guidance available
- understand the processes of assessment, planning, monitoring, evaluation, brokerage, referral and, where appropriate, advocacy
- understand the principles of equality and equity, and know their obligations and responsibilities in ensuring that these are applied in their work.

Inspectors will observe practice in a range of settings that may have different purposes and intended outcomes for young people. Depending on the context within which Connexions practice takes place, inspectors will judge the extent to which staff have the required specialist knowledge and understanding to meet the needs of the young people with whom they are working. This may include knowledge and understanding of:

- the social, emotional, physical and academic development needs of young people
- teaching methodology, including whole-class teaching and group work
- advice and counselling techniques
- how to support young people with acute problems associated with their academic underachievement, health, ethnicity, social and cultural life, and their personal or domestic circumstances

- the full range of options for education, training and employment, including local, national and international opportunities for study, training and work, and opportunities for personal and social development
- the skills needed to look for, and obtain, places in FE and HE, training and employment
- the main sources of careers information
- trends and patterns in the world of work, the organisation of the workplace, the nature of different types of occupation, and the local and national job market
- the impact of technology and economic change on work and occupational patterns.

In observing the practice of Connexions staff, the level of their knowledge and understanding will be evident in:

- how they clarify and explain ideas
- their capacity to engage with, and relate to, young people
- the questions they ask and answer, which should increasingly probe young people's understanding and challenge their thinking, expectations and interpretation beyond the routine and superficial
- their planning, delivery and recording that match young people's learning and development needs
- their capacity to understand and respond to cues provided by young people.

Assessment

- Connexions staff assess young people's needs accurately, and negotiate with them individual learning and support plans that they understand.
- Connexions staff assess young people's progress and work thoroughly and constructively, and use assessments to inform subsequent teaching and learning support.

Relevant and accurate assessment of young people's needs is crucial to the success of Connexions practice in promoting progress and achievement. Practice will include initial and continuing assessment. It will involve formal and informal processes and cover: a wide range of knowledge, skills and understanding; personal, cultural, social and health factors; and prior academic performance and educational experience.

Inspectors will not be prescriptive about particular approaches to assessment. They will judge the extent to which assessment enables Connexions staff to understand the learning and development needs of young people sufficiently well, and to target and plan their work effectively in order to support young people to progress and raise their achievement. In making their judgements, inspectors will scrutinise records of assessment, both written and computerised, and talk with young people, Connexions staff and other adults who contribute to the assessment process. They will consider how effectively staff use the assessment, planning, implementation and review framework.

Young people's contribution to assessment and to the plans drawn up to support them is essential. Inspectors will judge how effectively Connexions staff help young people to assess and understand their needs and options, to plan for their learning and development, and to evaluate the progress they make.

Relationships with young people

- Connexions staff respect and are receptive to young people's views.
- Connexions staff establish and sustain positive working relationships with young people that help them to identify and achieve their academic or personal goals.

The relationship between Connexions staff and young people is critical to the success of the Connexions service. In different contexts, such relationships need to be established quickly and carefully, should respect differences and are required to be sustained, often under difficult circumstances.

The nature of the relationship is complex. Connexions staff should balance skilfully the need to encourage the young person to discuss barriers to their progress and to provide a level of appropriate support, on the one hand, and make clear their intention to move the young person on from dependence towards greater independence, on the other.

The quality of the relationship will be evident in the ways in which Connexions staff work with young people: their behaviour and manner in addressing young people; the methods they use to engage and empower them; and the way they confront and deal with unhelpful behaviour. Evidence will be apparent in the response from young people. Inspectors will make judgements as to the extent to which Connexions staff:

- are courteous and welcoming
- respect differences and disability

- establish a positive relationship with young people that enables them to think for themselves and take responsibility for their behaviour and actions
- carry out the commitments they make to young people.

Planning and recording

- Connexions staff plan effectively, setting clear objectives for their work.
- Connexions staff support young people in their progress through the learning and support plan and, in consultation with them, evaluate and record their progress.

Inspectors will not prescribe particular planning methods. They will assess the effectiveness of planning in terms of outcomes for young people. In ensuring the best quality of guidance and support for young people, Connexions staff should prepare their work, taking account of the different types of interactions they will encounter. They should also take account of objectives set by partners, such as schools and colleges. Planning for groups and individuals should ensure appropriate levels of coherence and continuity. What is planned should have a clear focus and learning outcomes that are shared with, and understood by, young people. Planning will demonstrate how the needs of young people have been identified and how these will be met, for example, providing aids for those with hearing impairment.

Connexions staff should check with young people what has been learnt during and at the end of interactions. Progress should be identified and recorded in ways that are appropriate to young people and to the nature of the session. Activities should take account of and complement those provided by other organisations and agencies to reduce the risk of duplication and overlap. Individual sessions and activities should be reviewed and evaluated by Connexions staff and young people, and used to inform future practice. Connexions staff should be able to provide evidence of how they track the progress of young people and how they use that evidence. Effective learning and support plans reflect contributions from young people who are able to articulate what they have learnt and the progress they are making. Inspectors will make judgements as to the extent to which Connexions staff:

- provide well-planned and relevant interactions and activities that reflect the needs of young people
- review, evaluate and develop their work, taking into account the views of young people
- maintain informative records of their work to support effective tracking of the progress young people make
- support and engage young people in understanding and recording their progress and achievement.

Working with young people

- Connexions staff challenge and inspire young people and encourage them to make the most of themselves.
- Connexions staff prepare young people for transition to the next stage of education, training or employment.
- Connexions staff observe appropriate guidelines on confidentiality.

An important aspect of the work of Connexions staff is setting expectations that encourage young people to believe in the possibility of high levels of success for themselves. Not all young people will achieve at the same level – but it is important that all develop high and realistic aspirations. Particular attention should be given to the extent to which practice is matched to forthcoming transitions, and the needs and expectations of particular young people, including those with specific learning difficulties or disabilities. In many cases, Connexions staff will be role models for young people. Connexions staff should expect young people to develop a critical understanding of pathways in education, training and work, and to reject stereotypes. Personal and educational progress and a climate of high expectations and achievement should be created and carefully monitored. Inspectors will make judgements as to the extent to which Connexions staff:

- support young people to develop their self-awareness and an understanding of the world of work and their place in it
- assist young people to improve their confidence, motivation, self-reliance and career management skills
- provide appropriate degrees of challenge to overcome barriers and raise their expectations
- enable young people to manage transitions and support them in doing so with equanimity and confidence.

By the nature of the relationship, Connexions staff will be presented with personal and confidential information by young people. In all work, Connexions staff must ensure that the privacy of young people is respected in accordance with agreed guidelines on confidentiality, including the arrangements for managing young people's records. Inspectors will check that the guidelines are being observed, and that young people understand the implications and limitations of confidentiality agreements.

Referral and working with others

- Connexions staff have up-to-date information about, and links with, a wide range of support structures, specialist services and other opportunities for learning to which they can refer young people when necessary.
- Connexions staff work effectively with parents, carers, and all those with a legitimate interest in the progress made by the individual young people.

To be effective, Connexions staff require timely access to comprehensive and accurate information about services and opportunities to which they can refer young people. All staff should establish referral and signposting arrangements with a broad spectrum of organisations that can provide help and support to young people. Inspectors will make judgements as to the extent to which Connexions staff assess needs and appropriately manage referrals as well as broker access to statutory agencies, voluntary bodies and other relevant organisations and, as necessary, act as advocates for young people. Inspectors will judge with what success Connexions staff tackle potentially difficult racial, cultural and other tensions.

Parents and carers play a significant part in the decision-making process of many young people. Connexions staff should help parents, carers and others with a genuine and legitimate interest to understand the decisions and plans of young people and should ensure that they are able to support and assist them with their implementation. This will include providing clear, up-to-date, appropriate and accessible information about education, training and employment. Connexions staff should make time available to contact parents and carers to discuss and explain individual plans, decisions and agreed actions of young people. Inspectors will judge to what extent Connexions staff provide clear, up-to-date information on the purpose of Connexions and, in particular, what parents/carers and young people are entitled to and their respective roles in the process – as well as the mechanisms to enable them to comment on the service received.

Question 5: How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of young people and satisfy national requirements?

To answer this question, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the breadth and relevance of the available programmes and activities
- the involvement of young people in the planning of provision
- whether or not programmes fulfil the relevant statutory requirements.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which programmes and activities:

- support young people to continue in, or return to, education and training, gain appropriate qualifications and obtain employment
- contribute effectively to personal and social education (including behaviour support programmes, health education, sex education and issues concerning substance misuse), and to careers and citizenship education to meet local and national priorities
- offer opportunities for work experience and work-based learning
- enable young people to obtain impartial information, support and guidance – particularly at key points of transition
- are developed in consultation with young people, on the basis of diagnostic assessment and in response to their interests and aptitudes
- include effective referral systems to specialist information and advice services, as required
- are socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunity for young people.

Inspection focus

The focus is on how programmes, courses and activities reflect the needs and interests of young people, and how far they enable them to make successful transitions to adulthood. These programmes, courses and activities will be diverse and it will be necessary to piece together evidence on substantial numbers of disparate but complementary aspects of provision.

Inspectors will have to assess whether programmes fulfil the relevant statutory requirements. Connexions partnerships have a statutory responsibility to provide careers guidance and placing services for young people attending schools and colleges, and for those ceasing to undergo such education (Trades Union Reform and Employment Rights Act 1993). In addition, partnerships

are empowered to provide services to encourage, enable or assist effective participation by young people in education or training (The Learning and Skills Act 2000).

In schools and colleges, inspectors will assess the contribution of Connexions to complementing and strengthening PSHE as well as careers and citizenship education. Assessments should determine whether this provision is likely to raise young people's life expectations, prevent them from being on the margins of their community, extend their opportunities and effect equality of opportunity, so that they can make a successful transition to adulthood.

An additional feature is the inclusion of activities that may include work experience and work-based learning, study support and mentoring, community service, behaviour support programmes and life skills. Inspectors will consider how these experiences extend young people's thinking about personal, social, educational and occupational issues.

Inspectors will assess the extent to which the partnership's arrangements are adequate to enable young people to obtain impartial personal information, support, advice and guidance, particularly at key points of transition, such as 14+, 16+ and 18+. In particular, inspectors will assess how these arrangements help those most at risk of disengaging, and offer intensive, sustained support for those with complex and multiple problems. Inspectors will judge the adequacy of the partnership's arrangements for providing help on request by young people at any time.

In the case of some young people, inspectors will evaluate the statutory arrangements for aspects of their transition to adult and working life – for example: the transition at 16+ of young people with SEN in the light of the new codes of practice for SENDA (2001); the time when looked-after children leave care, in the terms of the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000; and the transition into and out of secure establishments for young offenders.

The report should include an evaluation of: how well programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of the young people with whom the partnership works; whether the opportunities are accessible and inclusive; and how effectively they contribute to fostering learning, levels of participation and raising achievement.

Making judgements

Inspectors will make judgements on how well the planning and organisation of courses and activities give young people opportunities for progression and prepare them for transition to adult working life.

The composition of programmes will be examined and, through observation and discussion with young people and staff, inspectors will assess how well the provision has been able to respond to identified needs and aspirations.

Sources of evidence include:

- direct observation of group sessions and individual interactions with Connexions staff
- discussions with young people
- progress files and individual action plans
- portfolios and other work
- discussions with Connexions staff, parents/carers, and staff from partner organisations
- individual records, including assessment information
- session plans.

The following characteristics illustrate judgements about the effectiveness of programmes and activities:

Very good

The range of programmes and activities meet the expressed needs of most young people and are well integrated into curriculum and tutorial provision. All programmes and activities are sensitive to, and ensure, equality of access. Connexions staff play a key role in school and college programmes of CEG, citizenship and PSHE, which meet statutory requirements. These activities are carefully planned to ensure that they are complementary and provide a coherent overall programme, avoiding duplication. Opportunities for work experience and work-based learning are individually negotiated and appropriate. Young people are involved through consultation in planning provision. Feedback on their experience is gathered systematically, and providers and young people are informed of the outcome of this feedback. Most young people have access to, and make effective use of, up-to-date and comprehensive information, and benefit from high-quality guidance and support when they need it. There are timely referrals to relevant staff at a range of specialist agencies.

Satisfactory

The partnership offers a variety of programmes and activities that reflect and meet the needs of most young people. The range and quality of information to assist young people in making decisions are sufficient. Confidentiality is maintained. Connexions staff make a useful contribution to school and college programmes of CEG, citizenship and PSHE – but their role could be developed

further by all partners. Young people have some opportunities for work experience and work-based learning – but these are not always followed up appropriately and used on return to the classroom. The majority of young people are aware of the range of courses and activities available to them locally, but opportunities for them to influence provision and provide feedback may be rather underdeveloped. Arrangements provide differentiated guidance and support at key points of transition for all young people, including those for whom transition planning is a statutory requirement.

Unsatisfactory

One or more of the following may indicate that programmes and activities are unsatisfactory:

- the range of programmes and activities on offer is too narrow to meet the needs of young people
- Connexions staff have been largely unsuccessful in influencing and becoming involved in school and college programmes of CEG, citizenship and PSHE
- support and guidance are inadequately differentiated and targeted, and insufficient to meet all identified needs
- the majority of young people do not have access to adequate up-to-date information to assist in making decisions and informing their choices
- programmes do not contribute sufficiently to the personal and social development of young people
- there are few attempts to involve young people in the planning of provision, and their views on their experience of provision are not passed on to providers
- young people have few opportunities to undertake work experience and other work-related activities
- referral and signposting to specialist services are often inadequate to meet individual needs.

Guidance on using and interpreting the criteria

Suitability of programmes and activities

- Programmes and activities support young people in returning to, or continuing in, education and training, gaining appropriate qualifications and obtaining employment.

The programmes and activities available should enable all young people to remain involved in learning. Inspectors will assess the extent to which the partnership's range of provision enables this to happen. Inspectors will also

judge the effectiveness of the service which the partnership provides to assist young people in obtaining employment.

Connexions staff should ensure that programmes and activities comply with the requirements of the codes of practice for SENDA (or the Disability Discrimination Act (1995) for post-16). These require Connexions partnerships and their partner organisations to promote non-discriminatory practice in their work with young people. They must also anticipate the individual needs of young people, with reasonable adjustments to provide appropriate and accessible facilities, aids and services, along with appropriate accommodation and access. Suitable provision will include:

- opportunities to develop self-review and to help young people to make choices
- the use of information and communications technology (ICT) and other approaches to improve young people's communication skills
- arrangements to help young people make successful transitions, including the use of visits and the provision of link courses
- the provision of necessary aids, adaptations and support in further learning and at home
- any necessary arrangements, for example, for those in a residential school or young offender institution, to link with the Connexions service in their home area
- arrangements for suitable assessment and accreditation
- arrangements for securing effective inter-agency co-operation between those who have a contribution to make to the young person's transition plan. This may include reference to special health or welfare needs.

Connexions staff should also ensure that programmes and activities comply with the general duty under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000, to eliminate unlawful racial discrimination, promote equal opportunities, and promote good relations between people from different racial groups. Suitable provision will include:

- links with community, cultural or religious organisations to encourage access to Connexions services for particular groups
- activities designed to challenge racial stereotyping and encourage young people to work together
- activities designed to support young people in considering educational and career paths not normally taken by people from their particular background.

Coherence of programmes

- Programmes and activities contribute effectively to personal and social education (including behaviour support programmes, health education, gender and relationships education, and issues concerning substance misuse), and to careers and citizenship education to meet local and national priorities.
- Programmes and activities offer opportunities for work experience and work-based learning.

Careers education and guidance, PSHE, citizenship and Connexions share many aims and features. Inspectors will judge the impact of Connexions in developing a coherent approach that avoids duplication and overlap, and creates significant and effective opportunities to meet the wide range of needs of young people. The Connexions service should work collaboratively with all providers to:

- provide first-class careers education, in association with PSHE and citizenship education
- develop links with the wider community
- promote youth work, summer activities, study support, work experience and peer support.

Schools have a statutory duty to provide planned programmes of careers education and citizenship in Years 9, 10 and 11 and, although there are no similar statutory requirements for young people aged 16 to 19, schools and colleges are encouraged to continue their programmes of careers education post-16.³

Opportunities for work experience and work-based learning form an important part of Connexions provision. In many localities, this development is led and supported by an education–business partnership. Inspectors will assess the influence of the partnership on the scope and provision of work experience and work-based learning – for example, the impact of this provision in engaging young people at risk of disaffection, and in helping young people to experience the world of work and understand what they need to do to achieve their aspirations.

Impartiality

- Programmes and activities enable young people to obtain impartial information, support and guidance, particularly at key points of transition.

³ Further advice is provided in *Inspecting Careers Education and Guidance*, Ofsted, 2001

Inspectors will judge the access young people have to the full range of information they might need. The Connexions service should work with all providers to ensure that they have access to impartial information, support and guidance. Young people should have information about routes to education, training and employment. It should cover local, regional and national opportunities in commerce, industry, the public service and self-employment. It should enable students to consider the implications of choices made at ages 13, 16 and 18 for education, training and employment.

However, the information required extends beyond education, training and work to other opportunities which encourage participation and progress in learning and life – for example: the availability of financial support or information about community activities; Millennium Volunteers; the Duke of Edinburgh's Award Scheme; Youth Achievement Awards; and sports and arts organisations. This may be available in schools or colleges, through the youth service, or in a library or resource centre maintained by Connexions.

Involvement of young people

- Programmes and activities are developed in consultation with young people, on the basis of diagnostic assessment and in response to their interests and aptitudes.

Inspectors will judge how effectively the partnership involves young people at all levels in the continuing development, planning and evaluation of programmes and activities. Young people may be involved in consultation as part of a focus group or as individuals. In addition, inspectors will consider how well the findings of assessment of need at regional and individual levels are taken into account in the development of new programmes and activities. Inspectors will look for a consistent long-term strategy that will tie in with wider approaches to continuing improvement.

Referral

- Programmes and activities include effective referral systems to specialist information and advice services, as required.

A key aspect of Connexions practice is the referral of young people to specialist services which complement the direct services of the partnership and ensure a comprehensive range of services capable of meeting every identified need. Inspectors will judge the extent to which:

- referral works smoothly and the process is understood by young people
- the process is underpinned by effective protocols and partnership agreements

- the whole range of identified needs is covered by the totality of Connexions provision.

Inspectors will assess how effectively the partnership:

- ensures that staff have access to comprehensive and accurate information about services and opportunities to which they can refer young people
- establishes referral and signposting arrangements with the necessary range of organisations.

Inclusion

- Programmes and activities are socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunity for young people.

The partnership should have effective management structures, policies and implementation plans to ensure that programmes and activities meet the needs of individual young people. Inspectors will assess how far legislation such as the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 and the codes of practice for SENDA (2001) are realised across the range of programmes and activities and the organisations that provide them. This will include arrangements for regular monitoring, evaluation and review.

Question 6: How do resources affect achievement and learning?

To answer this question, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- the adequacy and suitability of designated staff associated with the work of the partnership
- the adequacy, suitability and use of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation
- how efficiently and effectively resources are deployed to achieve the partnership's objectives.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- there are sufficient numbers of Connexions staff with the appropriate qualifications, experience and ethnic origin to match the requirements of the programmes and activities, and the needs of young people and communities
- all staff are deployed to ensure effective use of their expertise in meeting the priorities of the partnership

- accommodation is fit for its purpose, particularly where the work is of a confidential nature, and that it is accessible to all young people
- young people have access to up-to-date and relevant resources that support their individual learning plans, contribute to their achievements and encourage them to accept increasing responsibility for their personal and social development
- learning and other resources, including accommodation, allow young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to participate
- priorities and agreed outcomes are supported by responsible financial management and the equitable distribution of resources across the partnership.

Inspection focus

The focus of this question is on the extent to which the deployment of resources contributes to young people's achievement of their goals and their access to the services available to them. Resources, in this context, encompass staff, accommodation and aids to learning.

Inspectors will look at the quality of resources in the following areas:

- the experience and expertise of Connexions staff
- the range and quality of equipment and materials
- the range, quality and accessibility of centrally-provided resources, such as Connexions centres, information libraries and ICT facilities and systems
- the suitability and condition of accommodation, including that for one-to-one sessions and in outreach locations
- the effective provision and deployment of resources to support all young people, including those who have learning difficulties or disabilities.

The report should include an evaluation of the numbers, qualifications and experience of staff, and whether they are efficiently and effectively deployed. It should also cover how the accommodation and other resources are managed, how they reflect local needs and interests, and the contribution of these resources to the quality of Connexions work.

Making judgements

All inspectors will contribute to judgements on the effective use of resources to enhance young people's achievements. They will visit many aspects of the partnership's work, including group work and individual guidance sessions.

Inspectors will make judgements on the deployment of human resources in the broader context within which Connexions staff work. Qualifications, experience and expertise should match the roles of staff.

Inspectors will judge how well the accommodation within the partnership is fit for different purposes, including group work and confidential sessions. The location and quality of the accommodation must be accessible and appropriate for young people with special needs, including those who have learning difficulties or disabilities. Judgements on accommodation will also take into account the resources available to support the full range of activities, such as the availability of refreshments for young people and the general cleanliness and maintenance of premises. Given that the partnership will operate in diverse locations, inspectors will judge the consistency of the accommodation in the light of equality of opportunity for users.

Inspectors will make judgements about whether learning resources within the partnership are consistent and sufficient in quality and accessibility for all young people, including those who have learning difficulties or disabilities.

Sources of evidence include:

- an analysis of the profile of the staff in terms of prior experience, pre-service and in-service training, job and role descriptions
- an analysis of the deployment of full-time, part-time, administrative and volunteer staff, and of gender, ethnicity and disability across the partnership and within local management areas
- business and delivery plans including budget papers, with information about the allocation of funds to cost centres and partners
- observation of the condition, appearance, accessibility and use of all the accommodation, dedicated or otherwise
- observation of individual and group sessions
- discussions with young people, PAs, teachers, youth workers, administrative staff, parents/carers and volunteers.

The following characteristics illustrate judgements about the effectiveness of the deployment of resources:

Very good

There are sufficient well-qualified and experienced Connexions staff, a high proportion of whom are professionally qualified. They have up-to-date specialist knowledge and provide good role models, reflecting the nature of the communities they are working in. Specialist expertise is used successfully to

promote learning and guidance for young people, according to the priorities of the partnership. Accommodation, learning resources and specialist equipment are attractive, accessible, fit for purpose and consistent across the partnership. Young people value them and are extensively consulted on their development. Rooms suitable for confidential discussions are readily accessible and well used by Connexions staff and young people. Libraries, learning resources, information and drop-in centres are designed, used and equipped well. There is a variety of learning resources appropriate to the ethnicity, diversity, culture and language of the young people the partnership is serving. They provide opportunities for independent users and make effective use of modern information and communications technology. All resources, including accommodation, are accessible to students with learning difficulties or disabilities. The priorities of the partnership are supported by clear and equitable financial allocations.

Satisfactory

Staff are generally well qualified for the work they undertake, although some have yet to complete their professional training. The deployment of staff mostly matches the communities they serve. Most provision has well-maintained accommodation that provides a comfortable and attractive environment for young people. There are dedicated areas where young people have easy access to a wide range of information and guidance materials. Accommodation typically includes smaller rooms for confidential work with individuals. Young people and staff generally have good access to modern technology which offers a wide range of software and good access to the Internet, but, in some less well-used venues, ICT may not be regularly available. The quality of accommodation and resources at outreach centres varies, and some resources in community venues are less appropriate. Most accommodation provides an accessible and comfortable environment for young people with restricted mobility, but a few problem areas remain. There is an appropriate range of learning resources that reflects the ethnicity, diversity, culture and languages of the young people the partnership is serving. There is a range of materials and equipment to help most of the young people with learning difficulties or disabilities. Resources are generally deployed effectively to meet current needs. Financial allocations meet the current requirements of the partnership, but are less clearly linked to future priorities.

Unsatisfactory

One or more of the following may indicate that the deployment of resources is unsatisfactory:

- significant numbers of staff are poorly qualified or have little experience of working with young people
- staff deployment does not match sufficiently the needs and composition of the community it serves

- accommodation at many locations is of a low standard and inadequately maintained; it restricts the range of work that can be undertaken because of a lack of space, and confidentiality is compromised
- learning resources such as videos, books and software-based materials are limited
- there are very few resources available for young people with learning difficulties or disabilities
- important areas at many centres are inaccessible or unsuitable for those with restricted mobility
- allocations of resources are not systematically planned to meet current or future needs – for example, caseloads are unbalanced
- learning resources do not sufficiently reflect the ethnicity, diversity, culture and language of the young people the partnership is serving.

Guidance on using and interpreting the criteria

Staffing and deployment

- There are sufficient numbers of Connexions staff with the appropriate qualifications, experience and ethnic origin to match the requirements of the programmes and activities, and the needs of young people and communities.
- All staff are deployed to ensure effective use of their expertise in meeting the priorities of the partnership.

Partnerships will normally engage a wide variety of staff to provide the broad mix of skills they need to meet the requirements of all young people in their area. PAs will have diverse experience and may have qualifications in careers guidance, youth and community work, teaching, social work and other employment settings. Partnerships provide training programmes for PAs, who will normally have acquired, or be working towards, the Diploma for Personal Advisers (Connexions). Deployment should take account of the experience of PAs and the training undertaken for their new roles, and match areas of priority identified by the partnership. Inspectors will assess to what extent the partnership has a well-trained workforce, including PAs and front-line staff, which is held in high regard by young people, parents/carers and partner organisations, and is truly representative of the communities it serves. They will judge the effectiveness of the staffing complement in delivering the targets and objectives of the partnership, how well staff are equipped for the roles they perform, and the extent of any mismatch between skills and individual responsibilities. Inspectors will also judge how well staff are deployed across the partnership and within local areas to meet the needs of different communities.

Accommodation

- Accommodation is fit for its purpose, particularly where the work is of a confidential nature, and it is accessible to all young people.

Inspectors will judge the quality and accessibility of accommodation for all the services offered by Connexions. The confidentiality of discussions should be guaranteed by the nature of available accommodation. Accommodation should also be suitable for removing barriers to participation, encouraging those with serious disadvantages to participate, and for developing and maintaining positive relationships.

The accessibility of accommodation will be a major factor for young people living in rural areas, for those without access to public transport, and for those with disabilities. Accessibility may be enhanced by the use of existing accommodation such as one-stop shops, community centres, mobile provision and by special transport arrangements.

The accommodation for administration should be fit for its purpose, and all premises should meet health and safety requirements.

Material resources

- Young people have access to up-to-date and relevant resources that support their individual learning plans, contribute to their achievements and encourage them to accept increasing responsibility for their personal and social development.
- Learning and other resources, including accommodation, allow young people with learning difficulties or disabilities to participate.

Inspectors will judge the sufficiency and suitability of resources and equipment. They should be available at times and in places which best suit the young people concerned, including at outreach locations and other community venues.

Information should be presented so that it can be used by young people of different ages and abilities. The range should include computer software, printed materials and video recordings. Learning resources should also include any hardware and other equipment necessary to give young people access to information, to record their decisions and to contribute to recording their achievement. Some young people with learning difficulties or disabilities may need to use software adapted with signs and symbols, and tape or video recorders. Materials should be available in a range of languages.

Financial issues

- Priorities and agreed outcomes are supported by responsible financial management and the equitable distribution of resources across the partnership.

The allocation of human and material resources will be based on a comprehensive analysis of young people's needs in any given locality, and should reflect the partnership's declared priorities. Effective financial management will underpin the allocation. Inspectors will assess the extent to which the partnership allocates resources between different geographical areas and activities, in line with its overall aims and objectives.

Section E: Leadership and management

Question 7: How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting young people in their personal and social development?

To answer this question, inspectors must evaluate and report on:

- how well the partnership sets a clear direction for the work, in response to the needs of young people, providers and local communities
- how successfully the management of the partnership ensures coherent and effective support for young people in all aspects of the provision
- how actively young people are engaged in developing the Connexions service in their area
- how effectively the partnership monitors and evaluates its success in raising achievement and supporting young people, and whether steps are taken to secure improvement
- how well the partnership measures its cost effectiveness.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider, where applicable, the extent to which:

- the partnership sets a clear direction for the work through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood and implemented by staff and sub-contractors
- there are explicit aims, values and strategies promoting equality and inclusion
- management responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined and accepted

- young people are involved in the governance and management of the partnership, in decisions about its development and in the provision of programmes and activities
- inter-agency co-operation is effective and secured by comprehensive and clearly-formulated contracts and service-level agreements
- performance management, appraisal and supervision are successful in improving the quality of provision
- the professional development needs of all staff are identified and met, and their effectiveness enhanced as a result
- quality assurance arrangements, informed by performance indicators and quality standards, are carried out in conjunction with young people, and include direct observation of work
- the partnership collects accurate participation and tracking information, and uses it to ascertain which young people are being reached
- the partnership measures its cost effectiveness within both the local and the national contexts, taking full account of the principles of Best Value.

Inspection focus

Inspectors will focus on the extent to which leadership and management create an effective and improving partnership, through which all young people can, and do, achieve. There is no particular model for how to manage a partnership. The crucial test is how well leadership and management create the conditions across the partnership area for young people to realise their full potential and make a successful transition to adulthood.

In making judgements, inspectors will consider the extent to which the eight principles of the Connexions service are adhered to. The policies and practices of leadership and management will be judged to be successful when they are instrumental in realising them.

Inspectors will evaluate impact rather than intention, ensuring that judgements on the effectiveness of leadership and management make sense when set against judgements about achievement, practice and provision.

The report should include:

- an evaluation of the quality of leadership of the partnership, including an assessment of the appropriateness of its policy priorities and of its quality assurance strategies
- how well staff are managed to raise achievement and support young people in their personal and social development

- how effectively and efficiently resources are deployed
- how well cost effectiveness is measured.

Making judgements

Inspectors will make judgements about the quality of leadership and management at all levels of the partnership, not solely at the level of senior managers. Before and during the inspection, inspectors will examine a range of documentation and evaluate the extent to which this drives strategic development and meets the needs of young people, in order to determine the quality and impact of the management structure and processes. Sources of evidence include:

- the direct observation of practice during the inspection week, which will make the key contribution to the overarching judgement about the quality of leadership and management. The effects of good leadership and management will also be demonstrated by the arrangements for, and effectiveness of, young people's involvement in identifying needs and making decisions about provision, resources and strategy
- the breadth and range of provision of programmes and activities to meet differing needs
- the quality of approaches to self-evaluation and improvement among Connexions staff and their partners
- the staffing, accommodation and learning resources available to all young people.

The partnership's work with other agencies and partner organisations is an integral element of provision. Where appropriate, inspectors will sample this work in the same way as that which is directly delivered. Inspectors who visit partner agencies will evaluate the effects of the partnership's strategic leadership on other agencies and partner organisations.

Inspectors will examine the way the partnership manages and uses its funding for the benefit of young people, as well as how it measures its cost effectiveness and ensures that it obtains Best Value. Whether resources are used efficiently and effectively is an important judgement in this section, as is the judgement on the partnership's overall value for money in key question 1.

Sources of evidence include:

- business and delivery plans
- local assessments of need, and formulas for allocating human resources
- training needs analyses and the partnership's training programme

- the partnership's completed self-assessment schedule
- data on the partnership's performance in all aspects of its work
- arrangements for communicating with staff
- job descriptions and person specifications
- organisation and management structures, including that of the board and the local management committees
- work programmes of individual staff
- observation of board and committee meetings
- arrangements for informing the board of contractual and quality issues
- minutes of board, local management committee and management meetings
- quality assurance policies and procedures, and information relating to their implementation
- surveys of young people's views and those of other recipients of partnership services
- equal opportunities policies and procedures, and evidence of their implementation.

The following characteristics illustrate judgements about leadership and management:

Very good

Leadership and management have enabled the partnership to raise achievement and to make good progress towards achieving challenging targets. Leadership successfully encourages inter-agency co-operation. Lines of accountability and management responsibility are clear. Young people are involved in governance and management at all levels, and influence the development and evaluation of provision. There are systematic procedures for planning, and all managers regularly review performance against targets and partnership agreements. Information on young people's progress and achievements is accurate, accessible by Connexions staff, and used effectively to improve performance. Staff are well informed and committed to the partnership's objectives. There is a wide range of Connexions practice which is consistently good and demonstrably meets the needs of young people, including those with exceptional needs. The active promotion of equality of opportunity is integral to policy and practice. The partnership has comprehensive and effective systems to appraise the performance of staff, identify their training needs and ensure that these are met. Financial and other resources are effectively deployed to support national and local priorities. Best-value principles are understood and applied well, and the partnership has effective strategies to measure its cost effectiveness.

Satisfactory

Local targets for participation and achievement are met, although trends fluctuate. Managers are clear about the partnership's strengths and weaknesses. They have established ways of securing improvements in service provision and in young people's achievements. The partnership works closely with providers and local community groups. While young people are consulted, their involvement in the planning, implementation and evaluation of the partnership's activity is not fully consistent. Data regarding young people's progress and achievements are accurate, and most staff use them to inform their practice. The board regularly monitors progress against targets and strategic objectives. The quality of practice and its impact on young people's progress are monitored. The roles of senior managers are clear. The supervisory arrangements for PAs are effective. Staff are appraised regularly and receive training to meet their identified needs. Financial and other resources adequately support most national and local priorities.

Unsatisfactory

The following may indicate that leadership and management are unsatisfactory:

- the partnership consistently falls short of its performance targets, and the board does not sufficiently monitor progress against its objectives
- a majority of board members and managers are unaware of the strengths and weaknesses of the partnership
- young people's achievements are significantly lower than they should be
- the local needs analysis is incomplete and not effectively used as a basis for business planning
- the aims of the partnership are unclear and not shared by most staff
- communication between senior managers and other staff is poor
- management roles and responsibilities are unclear
- relationships with other agencies and organisations do not enhance the quality of support for young people
- partnership agreements only cover a minority of partners and do not contain measurable targets
- young people's involvement in the planning, implementation, review and development of the service is superficial and inconsistent. They have little influence on board or local management committee decisions
- a significant amount of unsatisfactory practice is observed, or there are unacceptably wide variations in the quality of support and guidance across the partnership
- provision fails to promote equality of opportunity and inclusion

- there is no clear rationale for the deployment of financial and other resources, so that some young people are significantly disadvantaged as a result
- the arrangements for measuring cost effectiveness are inadequate.

Guidance on using and interpreting the criteria

Strategy, equality and inclusion

- The partnership sets a clear direction for the work through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood and implemented by staff and sub-contractors.
- There are explicit aims, values and strategies promoting equality and inclusion.

The work of the partnership should reflect the Connexions principles. The strategic vision, as reflected in the partnership's priorities and operational plans, should give a clear, unequivocal message that partners and stakeholders understand and adhere to. Inspectors will judge to what extent the operational plans are based on meeting the needs and aspirations of all young people, and are effectively disseminated and understood.

There should be a discrete equal opportunities policy that sets out relevant aims and objectives, how they are to be achieved and how success will be measured. The policy should set out young people's rights and responsibilities relating to equal opportunities. Monitoring and evaluation processes should be implemented, and effectiveness in promoting equal opportunities reported. Inspectors will assess how far the policy is established, how well it is understood internally, across the range of partners and among young people, its impact on business and delivery plans, and how well it is monitored and reviewed. The partnership should also publish a race equality scheme, either separately or as part of the equal opportunities policy. This should set out how the partnership intends to meet its responsibilities under the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000 with regard to its client groups, and also staff recruitment and career progress. The policy should include a strategy, timetable and action plan, and details of how ethnic monitoring information is to be published.

Inspectors will evaluate the extent to which the partnership:

- has complete information about young people's ethnic backgrounds
- has detailed analysis of the nature and range of young people with specific needs

- knows the number of young people for whom English is an additional language
- monitors outcomes and involvement according to gender and ethnicity
- makes relevant provision based on specific, identified needs.

Involvement of young people

- Young people are involved in the governance and management of the partnership, in decisions about its development and in the provision of programmes and activities.

Young people, individually and through their representative bodies, should have formal roles in the management and governance of the service. In some cases, they will sit on the board or local management committees – but models of involvement are not prescribed. The important issue is the extent of their influence and impact on the strategic direction of the service. Inspectors will judge the extent of young people’s involvement and influence, and whether those involved are representative of the 13 to 19 population.

Inter-agency co-operation

- Inter-agency co-operation is effective and secured by comprehensive and clearly-formulated contracts and service-level agreements.

The partnership should work effectively with learning providers and education–business links consortia, statutory bodies, other agencies, and voluntary and community organisations to ensure that young people receive effective Connexions services. Service-level agreements should be appropriately detailed, clearly specified and have measurable outcomes. Partnership agreements – for example, with schools and colleges – should set out how the Connexions service will guide and support young people and how Connexions staff will work alongside school and college staff.

The partnership should contribute effectively to the planning decisions of strategic bodies which affect young people. It will make effective arrangements to ensure that clear, accurate, relevant and timely information is provided about the aspirations, learning and support needs of young people. It will be active and effective in representing the interests of all young people in strategic decisions about the provision of opportunities for learning and support services. The partnership should be effective in contributing to area-wide work by partners in promoting the principles and practice of equal opportunities, ensuring that planning decisions contribute to this work and in helping them to fulfil their legal duties under SENDA and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Similarly, the partnership will work with a range of providers, including secondary and special schools, pupil referral units (PRUs) and colleges, specialist residential colleges, education welfare, youth services and, where appropriate, young offender institutions to ensure effective provision for young people. All reasonable steps should be taken to assist each institution in strengthening their provision. The referral of young people and follow-up procedures should ensure that they receive the necessary support, consistent with statutory and agreed protocols.

Inspectors will assess how effectively the partnership works with organisations to ensure that the necessary range and quality of provision are available to all young people.

Management responsibilities

- Management responsibilities and accountability are clearly defined and accepted.
- Performance management, appraisal and supervision are successful in improving the quality of provision.
- The professional development needs of all staff are identified and met, and their effectiveness enhanced as a result.

Management responsibilities and accountability must be clearly defined, understood by staff and operated effectively. Appropriate management arrangements should be made for the support and supervision of PAs and other staff. Inspectors will judge the extent to which:

- the partnership has appropriate structures for management and governance
- responsibilities and accountability are clear and understood by board and local management committee members and staff
- members of all committees have been chosen on the basis of good equal opportunities practice.

The partnership will ensure that all staff are supervised to professional standards, and receive the training and support necessary to perform competently. This should also apply to all those undertaking work under contract to the service. All should be given the opportunity to reflect on their performance. Connexions service managers should apply fair and transparent procedures for dealing with poor performance.

The professional development of staff is crucial to the success of the service. Staff should be encouraged and supported to contribute to the sharing

of professional expertise and evidence-based good practice within the Connexions service and its partner organisations. The partnership should regularly identify the training needs of staff and develop an annual training plan to meet them. This should include appropriate training in equal opportunities and the specific requirements of the Race Relations (Amendment) Act 2000.

Inspectors will judge the impact of arrangements for performance management on the work of the partnership and the quality of services. They will assess the effectiveness of the partnership's approach to identifying and meeting staff development needs, whether staff are properly trained and what impact training and qualification levels have on the service.

Quality assurance

- Quality assurance arrangements, informed by performance indicators and quality standards, are carried out in conjunction with young people and include direct observation of work.

Partnerships should ensure that a quality assurance strategy is in place and that all service providers conform to its requirements. Quality assurance arrangements should be well designed, rigorous, accessible and well understood by all staff. The partnership should carry out an annual self-assessment of its performance. This will identify areas for improvement. No particular quality system is prescribed for partnerships, although all should include some element of direct observation of practice.

Inspectors will judge the extent to which arrangements established by the partnership: ensure high-quality assurance across all the partnership's provision, including that which is sub-contracted; involve young people in an evaluation of the work; and include systematic observation and assessment of practice.

Data management

- The partnership collects accurate participation and tracking data, and uses the information gathered to ascertain which young people are being reached.

High-quality management will have set up arrangements to collect up-to-date and accurate information about levels of young people's participation in all aspects of the service, and track their participation while they fall within the parameters of the service. There are a number of proprietary systems that are employed by partnerships.

This information should be used to determine which individuals and categories of young people are being catered for, the current situation of all young people, and where there are discernible gaps. Service delivery plans should demonstrate how the partnership and local management committees use this information to monitor the effectiveness of the service and identify areas of improvement. They should also show how information is shared between partners so that all those involved can get access to relevant information. Staff should have easy access to data to ensure that they can provide appropriate help to young people.

Inspectors will judge how well the tracking system meets the management information needs of the partnership and its staff, and how accessible the data are to partners, as well as the extent to which partner systems provide a suitable interface which allows effective sharing of data.

Cost effectiveness

- The partnership measures its cost effectiveness within the local and the national contexts, taking full account of the principles of Best Value.

Connexions partnerships have no statutory duty to operate Best Value reviews. However, within their self-assessment activity and as part of their grant arrangement with the CSNU, they are encouraged to take account of the Best Value principles of competition, challenge, comparison and consultation in order to secure continuous improvement.

Inspection judgements will take into account: business planning and the effectiveness of a range of providers; consultation with young people, their parents and carers; and the local community. High-quality self-assessment that takes account of Best Value principles will: look across the three-year planning cycle to predict prospective changes in demand and delivery; involve other organisations in the review process; take account of the views of staff delivering services; and take account of the views of service users. Effective review will incorporate a high degree of reflection and challenge; use appropriate comparisons, extensive consultation and participation at all levels – particularly with young people; and demonstrate that activities are being carried out competitively.

Surveys will help partnerships to establish cost effectiveness measures. Inspectors will make a judgement on whether the partnership as a whole provides value for money, taking into account the achievement of young people and the quality of Connexions practice.

Annex A: Records of inspection evidence

Sources of pre-inspection evidence

Before inspection, the RI and other members of the inspection team will consider information about the partnership and the performance of its young people. Time will be given to the partnership to gather together any necessary documents and provide additional data on the performance of its young people. Pre-inspection evidence is drawn from:

- where available, the previous inspection report and action plan
- the Connexions performance report provided by Ofsted
- the partnership self-assessment report
- additional data provided by the partnership on performance
- briefing documents for the inspection team provided by the partnership
- discussion with senior staff, members of the board, local management committees and representatives from other key partners on the pre-inspection visit
- briefing documents provided by the CSNU, the local LSC and the regional government office.

Evidence obtained prior to, and during, the inspection will be recorded on the forms detailed below. The Connexions performance report and the PIN are available to the partnership. Evidence forms, notebooks, young people's views and the record of main findings are confidential to Ofsted and the ALI.

Connexions performance report

This is a summary of the partnership's achievement and performance data relating to national and local targets. The data are derived from national benchmarking information gleaned from the partnership's returns to the CSNU. It is produced by Ofsted before the inspection.

Pre-inspection notebook

The RI will use the pre-inspection evidence listed above and the Connexions performance report to prepare a PIN. This will form the basis of the initial team briefing and will be used by members of the team, together with the pre-inspection evidence, to prepare for the inspection. It ensures that inspectors are fully conversant with the partnership's performance and other aspects of its work. The PIN may highlight key issues that team members may be required to focus on and report to the team. It includes:

- comments on the partnership's main characteristics

- an evaluation of the pre-inspection evidence
- preliminary hypotheses about the partnership, to be tested during the inspection.

Evidence forms

These are used to record all first-hand evidence, including observation of Connexions staff working directly with young people, records of discussions with staff and young people, and other evidence that arises from an inspector's observation of the work of the partnership, its staff and young people. They inform inspectors' entries in their inspection notebooks.

Inspection notebooks

These are kept by each inspector. They summarise interim and final judgements. Notebooks are working documents. Inspectors use them to:

- record judgements on all aspects of the framework
- note emerging issues to be pursued
- write feedback notes and draft text for the report
- formulate contributions to team meetings.

The complete notebook provides a record of each inspector's judgements. It forms a basis for writing the report and a record for the RI. Entries will normally be in note form and indicate where the evidence for the judgement can be found. Copies of individual pages are shared with other members of the team to support collective judgements.

Young people's views

This is part of the inspection notebook. It is used to record directly what young people say about the partnership.

Record of main findings

This provides a record of the collective judgements of the team as they apply to the partnership as a whole. It provides the basis for both the feedback and the report on the partnership. A summary of the evidence will be incorporated. It also includes a judgement recording form for the whole partnership.

Annex B: Grades denoting summary judgements

The following table shows the grades that will be used to denote the summary judgements made by inspectors:

Grade 1	Excellent
Grade 2	Very good
Grade 3	Good
Grade 4	Satisfactory
Grade 5	Unsatisfactory
Grade 6	Poor
Grade 7	Very poor

Annex C: Structure of inspection reports

The report will be in three parts:

Part A: Summary

- information about the partnership and the area served.

Main findings

- quality and effectiveness of the partnership, including judgements on what the partnership does well and what could be improved, and whether it provides value for money
- achievement
- access and participation
- the quality of assessment, support, guidance and programmes of learning
- leadership and management
- young people's views of the partnership, including what young people like about the Connexions service and what they feel could be improved.

Part B: Commentary

This will provide more information on inspectors' judgements about each of the seven key questions detailed in the framework:

- how successful is the partnership in implementing the aims of the Connexions service?
- how well do young people within the partnership achieve their goals?
- how responsive is the partnership to the range and diversity of young people in the area?
- how effective is Connexions practice – assessment, support, guidance, teaching and learning?
- how well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of young people and satisfy national requirements?
- how do resources affect achievement and learning?
- how effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting young people in their personal and social development?

Part C: Appendix

- schools, colleges and projects visited.

Annex D: Further reading

Youth Support Services for 13–19 year olds: A Vision for 2006, Connexions, DfES, 2002

Inspecting Careers Education and Guidance (HMI 731), Ofsted, 2001

Transforming Youth Work, DfEE, 2001

Inspecting Subjects 11–16 – Personal, Social and Health Education with Guidance on Self-evaluation (HMI 259), Ofsted, 2001

Citizenship: the National Curriculum for England – Key Stages 3 to 4, QCA/DfEE, 1999

Personal, social and health education at key stages 3 and 4: initial guidance for schools, QCA, 2000

Learning outcomes from careers education and guidance, QCA, 1999

Careers Education and Guidance in England – a national framework 11–19, DfES, 2003

Handbook for Inspecting Secondary Schools (HMI 1360), Ofsted, 2003

The National Curriculum Handbook for secondary teachers in England, QCA, 1999

Skills for Life Strategy, DfES, 2001