

# Connexions Personal Advisers Could You Make A Difference?

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*“I love my job as a Personal Adviser because this is the first job that I have had that makes me feel that I am doing something worthwhile - giving something back to my community. I look forward to coming to work and feel motivated by others around me”*

Suzanne Collings-Smith  
Personal Adviser  
Connexions: Cornwall and Devon

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## What is the Connexions Service?

The Connexions Service was set up to provide information, advice, guidance and personal development opportunities to all young people aged 13-19 in England – in a new and more effective way.

It's different from what existed before, with the views of young people very much at the heart of the new service. And there's special emphasis on young people who feel excluded and find it difficult to use the usual sources of advice.

The Connexions Service helps young people to keep on track or get back on track. It raises their aspirations and encourages them to gain the qualifications they will need for further education and employment. That can mean stretching the most gifted, or providing help and support for those who are struggling, whether they are at school, in further or higher education, in or out of work.

You'll find Connexions in all kinds of locations including schools, colleges, one-stop shops, Connexions centres, on the streets through outreach workers and through youth and community projects.

## A local service, with local expertise

Each of the 47 Connexions Partnerships runs a service that's designed locally to reflect the needs of the community - but delivered to national standards.

Each Partnership has a Board with representatives from:

- The Partnership.
- Local authorities.
- Health authorities.
- The police.
- The probation service.
- Employers.
- Education.
- Youth services.
- The voluntary sector.
- Young people.

For the first time, all these operate in a co-ordinated way for the benefit of young people, supporting individual progress and achievement so that every young person can make a successful transition from adolescence to adult life.

Details of all 47 Connexions Partnerships are available on the website at [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

Details of the Regular Forces Employment Association (RFEA) and National Association of Retired Police Officers (NARPO) can be found on the websites at [www.rfea.org.uk](http://www.rfea.org.uk) and [www.narpo.org.uk](http://www.narpo.org.uk)

This is a relevant contact point for anyone from the armed forces and the police force who may be interested in becoming a Connexions Personal Adviser.

## What are Connexions Personal Advisers?

Each young person has the offer of support from a **Personal Adviser** to help deal with the variety of issues they face, so they can make choices and realise their full potential for the future.

The sort of support on offer can cover:

- Giving careers advice to a young person unsure of the training and job opportunities open to them.
- Offering access to personal development opportunities.
- Helping young people access the opportunities they want.
- Supporting young people through multiple problems, such as substance misuse, bullying, teenage pregnancy, homelessness or lack of confidence.

Personal Advisers come from a wide variety of backgrounds, including:

- The Careers Service.
- Youth Service.
- Department of Health.
- Youth Justice Board.
- Social Services.
- Voluntary sector organisations.

Connexions brings together all the different services that give young people help. In most cases a young person only has to contact their Personal Adviser, who will act on their behalf to arrange all the services they need, avoiding situations where young people are passed from pillar to post. If the young person has a range of problems and needs to be referred to other specialist advisers, the Personal Adviser will act as a link, co-ordinating the necessary services.

### **Connexions Direct**

The Connexions Service is also piloting **Connexions Direct**:

- A telephone helpline and Internet service for 13-19 year olds.
- Offers personal support so they can take part and progress in learning.
- Open from 8am to 2am, 7 days a week, 365 days a year.
- Staffed by a team of intensively trained and skilled professional advisers – such as social workers, careers specialists, housing advisers, drug counsellors, health and teenage pregnancy experts.
- Advisers respond to webchat and emails from the website and answer telephone and text messages.

To find out more about **Connexions Direct** visit [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)

# What does a Connexions Personal Adviser do?

Personal Advisers are central to the Connexions Service. After all, it's the PA's job to identify the needs of young people and help to meet them so that they can take part in education, training, work and personal development opportunities. They may need to motivate young people to make the most of their opportunities.

The way individual Personal Advisers work depends on a wide range of factors, including:

- Their professional background and experience.
- The number of young people they're working with – and the level of support that's needed.
- The institutional setting they are working in.
- The experience and skills of the colleagues working alongside them, within multi-disciplinary teams.

But Personal Advisers have a common aim and key roles that apply to them all.

## Fully qualified PAs:

- Work with young people – singly or in groups - to explore and assess their needs and challenges and offer information, advice, guidance and support on options for learning and personal development.
- Build the trust and confidence of young people, raising their sights by helping them plan, and challenging low aspirations.
- Work with parents, carers and families to support young people.
- Work with schools, colleges, employers and other organisations to design programmes to benefit young people.
- Work with other organisations as a champion for young people to help them overcome barriers to learning and employment.
- Broker and refer on to other specialists if need be.
- Feed back to line managers and the wider organisation on the needs of young people in their area.

Trainee PAs work towards the full Personal Adviser role, under supervision of a fully qualified PA.

The Personal Adviser role varies - some are employed directly by the Connexions Partnership while others are employed by an organisation that has been sub-contracted to provide services to the Connexions Partnership.

# What sort of issues would I be involved with as a Personal Adviser?

Working with young people is constantly dynamic - individual needs vary enormously and may change over time. Some young people are clear about their goals and may only need information and advice on education and training opportunities to achieve them. Others may need to be challenged to raise or broaden their aspirations. Some may need encouragement to apply to higher education, especially where there's no family tradition of HE. The most able young people may need help to make sure they are fully stretched in their academic, vocational and personal development. Others still may need help to break through racial, gender, disability or other forms of discrimination or stereotyping. A significant minority need sustained one-to-one support to solve a number of problems. Whatever their needs, this isn't a boring 9 to 5 job. It's one that demands dedication and a resolve to help young people succeed.

## Making a difference

A Personal Adviser can make a real difference to a young person's life and help transform their future prospects. Working with young people in schools, colleges and other settings, as a PA you'd be:

- Providing information, or access to information, on the full range of issues affecting young people - such as careers, bullying, health and finance.
- Helping them identify and access broader development activities - like Millennium Volunteers, the Neighbourhood Support Fund, other volunteering and community work, sport and leisure.
- Supporting them through their choices at key points in their school and college careers, ensuring continuity of support during these crucial stages.
- Working with them to identify and build on areas that need to be developed, using Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review – the APIR framework.
- Helping them choose and review options that suit their needs and empowering them to make decisions so they can reach their potential.
- Screening, referring to other specialist support or provision and reviewing procedures for access to more intensive support – and helping young people prepare for referrals.
- Advocating and mediating on their behalf.
- Working with parents/carers and families to encourage and motivate young people.

# Who would I be working alongside?

Personal Advisers work in multi-disciplinary teams that help provide a seamless, integrated and co-ordinated service to meet the needs of each young person. Other team members would be professionals from organisations including:

- Department of Health.
- Youth Justice Board.
- Social Services.
- Youth voluntary sector organisations.

## The APIR Framework

- The Connexions Framework for Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) provides a structure for Personal Advisers working one-to-one with a young person.
- It ensures that a Personal Adviser has an holistic view of a young person's needs, taking into account and including their opinions and perspectives and making sure that they form the basis of further work with other agencies if necessary.
- There's scope for Personal Advisers to use the assessment tools and techniques they find helpful to assess particular areas of need.

# What qualifications do I need to be a Personal Adviser?

The operating level of Personal Advisers depends on the qualifications and experience you have. For further information see the Connexions website; [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

To be a fully qualified Personal Adviser you'd need a professional qualification which is equivalent to at least NVQ Level 4 in a relevant subject; for example advice and guidance, youth work or social work. In addition, you'd need to complete either the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers or the Understanding Connexions Training Programme before becoming fully qualified. These courses can only be accessed by employed PAs via the Partnership. Personal Advisers working with young people who need intensive support normally complete the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers.



## **Trainee Personal Advisers**

Partnerships may recruit trainee Personal Advisers who have experience of working with young people but don't have an equivalent NVQ Level 4 qualification or a Connexions qualification. As one of these trainee or probationary Personal Advisers you'd need to complete the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers, or the Understanding Connexions Training Programme and you'd need a relevant NVQ Level 4 or equivalent qualification before you could become a fully qualified Personal Adviser.

While you were working as a trainee probationary PA you'd be closely supervised and supported by a qualified PA.

# **What are the Connexions training courses?**

Access to these courses is via referral from your local Partnership and is restricted to those who will be delivering the service to young people. The Connexions specific training programmes currently available to Personal Advisers fit within a coherent training framework which includes the following programmes:

## **Introducing Connexions**

A flexible programme (four sessions) for people who are interested in finding out about Connexions and what the service has to offer. It covers the basics of the Connexions Service and how it helps young people. You cover the main principles, structures and functions of Connexions and the role of the Personal Adviser.

## **The APIR Framework for Personal Advisers, supervisors and managers**

A one or one and a half day course for Personal Advisers, their managers and supervisors who are using the Connexions APIR Framework.

## **Understanding Connexions**

A programme delivered by higher education providers for Connexions Personal Advisers from any background, including specialist professionals, outreach workers and voluntary sector participants. It involves both face-to-face and distance learning.

## **The Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers**

A programme, accredited at undergraduate level 2, worth 80 CATS points. This is the qualification for Connexions Personal Advisers and is particularly for those who work with young people who need in-depth support.

## **Supervisory skills for supervisors of Personal Advisers**

This qualification is built from research into existing supervisory training and practice and focusing on the skills and knowledge required to operate as a supervisor of Personal Advisers within the Connexions Service.

## Local training for Connexions Personal Advisers

Most Connexions Partnerships have already developed their own training and development programmes to supplement existing training programmes and enhance the skills and knowledge of Personal Advisers. Examples of training include workshops and modules on a range of areas such as:

- Drug awareness.
- Equal opportunities.
- Health and safety.
- Counselling.
- Child protection.
- Special education needs.

## Longer-term training arrangements

The role of the Personal Adviser will continue to evolve - and training programmes need to keep pace with changes. Longer term, we're exploring alternative entry routes into the profession and training to make sure that Partnerships can recruit and train from the widest possible range of people and backgrounds.

A major long-term development will be National Occupational Standards appropriate for the Connexions Service leading to relevant NVOs for Personal Advisers to provide a vocational route for people becoming Personal Advisers.

## Where would I work?

You could work in a variety of settings including:

### One-Stop Shop/Connexions centres

These centres are often in the high street. They offer quick access to a wide range of advice and guidance for young people – all under one roof.

### Community-based projects and initiatives

Some Personal Advisers provide an outreach service to young people and work in a variety of locations throughout the Partnership. So you could be working within community-based settings alongside dedicated project workers to deliver, for example, job search skills and educational guidance.

### Schools

Head Teachers have day-to-day responsibility for Personal Advisers based in schools, where they work alongside other pastoral support staff. All young people in the Connexions age range have access to a Personal Adviser but the level of support they need varies considerably, from those who simply want information about career options, to those with multiple problems who need intensive one-to-one support.

## Further education colleges

Some Personal Advisers work with young people based in further education colleges, providing a service to work-based students on part-time courses and liaising with college personal tutors and support staff. PAs based in colleges provide careers guidance information and other types of support, helping to improve the participation of young people and reduce the numbers dropping out of college before they've completed their courses. These PAs also support young people to achieve college qualifications. They act in support roles - for example giving pastoral or counselling support to address a range of issues including finance, health, accommodation and other personal problems. And they work with college staff and others such as the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) to improve the vocational relevance of courses.

# What are the general terms and conditions?

Because all Partnerships are structured differently the terms and conditions offered by each Connexions Partnership vary. The examples below show the terms offered by some. However all those applying for positions as Personal Advisers will have their suitability to work with young people checked thoroughly. This will include an Enhanced Criminal Records Bureau Disclosure.

## Pay

The pay scale for Personal Advisers depends on the qualifications and experience you have. The lower end of the salary scale is generally around £14,000 for trainees without qualifications. For fully qualified Personal Advisers with NVQ Level 4 qualifications and extensive experience the upper end of the pay scale is around £25,000.

## Pensions

Each Connexions Partnership decides on pension schemes for staff. Some Partnerships offer contributory pension schemes.

## Competitive car loans

Some Connexions Partnerships offer car loans with competitive rates of interest. The amount varies depending on the Partnership.

## Awards for the successful completion of key exams

Some Partnerships offer awards to staff who have completed examinations. The key exams and the amounts awarded vary according to the Partnership.

## Annual leave days

These differ, depending on the Connexions Partnership and the length of service. The range tends to be between 23 and 28 days for new full-time staff to up to 35 days for full-time staff with a number of years service.

## Flexible working patterns

Flexible arrangements vary.

## Further training

Connexions Partnerships should provide access to opportunities for further support and training.

# What skills and personal attributes would I need?

You'd need a wide range of skills and qualities to carry out the Personal Adviser role effectively. Connexions Partnerships say that a Personal Adviser should enjoy working with young people and be:

- Credible with young people and able to enthuse them.
- Non-judgmental, empathetic and caring.
- Flexible, adaptable and tenacious.
- Dedicated, objective and fair-minded.
- Firm, confident and resourceful.
- Resilient, hardworking and self-motivated.
- Imaginative and creative.
- A team player and a lateral thinker.
- Independent, reliable and well-organised.
- A good communicator and a problem solver.
- Able to manage information effectively, review and reflect on their professional practice and work under the supervision of a line manager.
- Expert navigator helping young people through the range of choices and options they face.

# What about equal opportunities?

## Commitment to young people

The Connexions Service is committed to mainstreaming equality of opportunity throughout its policies and practices in order to meet its key objective - to raise the aspirations, participation and achievement levels of all young people. Extending opportunity and equality of opportunity are fundamental principles that underpin the Connexions Service.

The key requirements of the Connexions Service are:

- Supporting young people to make informed choices by promoting equal opportunities and by challenging all forms of discrimination.
- Ensuring young people have access to services wherever they live and that these services are effective whatever their background, gender, race, religion, ability or disability, or sexuality.

## Commitment to Connexions Personal Advisers

Connexions Partnerships will be seen as champions of equal opportunities and diversity. Partnerships can demonstrate this by:

- Taking positive action to ensure that the workforce mirrors the community.
- Ensuring that equal opportunities principles are embedded in personnel policies and practices.
- Training and developing all staff to understand, challenge and constructively tackle discrimination in all forms.

The Connexions Service welcomes applications from all sectors of the community so that we can build a workforce that reflects the communities it serves.

# Connexions Service Partnerships

## **NORTH WEST**

1. CUMBRIA
2. LANCASHIRE
3. GREATER MANCHESTER
4. GREATER MERSEYSIDE
5. CHESHIRE AND WARRINGTON

## **WEST MIDLANDS**

6. SHROPSHIRE, TELFORD AND WREKIN
7. STAFFORDSHIRE
8. THE BLACK COUNTRY
9. BIRMINGHAM AND SOLIHULL
10. COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE
11. HEREFORD AND WORCESTER

## **SOUTH WEST**

12. GLOUCESTERSHIRE
13. WILTSHIRE AND SWINDON
14. WEST OF ENGLAND
15. SOMERSET
16. BOURNEMOUTH, DORSET AND POOLE
17. CORNWALL, IOS, DEVON, PLYMOUTH AND TORBAY

## **NORTH EAST**

18. NORTHUMBERLAND
19. TYNE AND WEAR
20. COUNTY DURHAM
21. TEES VALLEY

## **YORKSHIRE AND THE HUMBER**

22. YORK AND NORTH YORKSHIRE
23. WEST YORKSHIRE
24. HUMBER
25. SOUTH YORKSHIRE

## **EAST MIDLANDS**

26. DERBYSHIRE
27. NOTTINGHAMSHIRE
28. LINCOLNSHIRE AND RUTLAND
29. LEICESTERSHIRE
30. NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

## **EAST OF ENGLAND**

31. NORFOLK
32. CAMBRIDGESHIRE AND PETERBOROUGH
33. SUFFOLK
34. BEDFORDSHIRE AND LUTON
35. HERTFORDSHIRE
36. ESSEX, SOUTHEND AND THURROCK

## **LONDON**

37. WEST LONDON
38. CENTRAL LONDON
39. NORTH LONDON
40. SOUTH LONDON
41. EAST LONDON

## **SOUTH EAST**

42. MILTON KEYNES, OXFORDSHIRE AND BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
43. BERKSHIRE
44. SURREY
45. KENT AND MEDWAY
46. SUSSEX
47. SOUTH CENTRAL

# Map of Connexions Service Partnerships

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