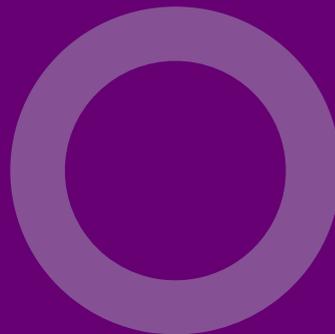
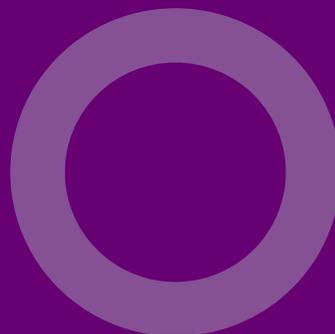
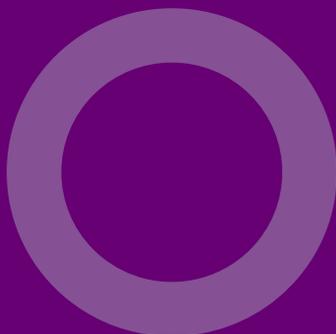


The Connexions Youth Charter:  
Guidance for Connexions Partnerships

# 2





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## Introduction

It is a Business Planning requirement that Connexions Partnerships create a Young People's Charter, ensuring they involve young people in its development. The Charter must demonstrate clearly how young people across the age range will be fully involved in developing the Service. The development, promotion and evaluation of the Youth Charter represent an obvious and attractive early opportunity for the active involvement of young people in Connexions as a whole.

The Charter should indicate how the Partnership will ensure young people are involved, both formally and informally, in influencing key decisions about the planning and implementation of the Service. It should also address rights and responsibilities and set out what each young person can expect from Connexions.

Partnerships will need to demonstrate how young people are involved in the development of the Youth Charter, how they are made aware of the Charter and its purpose and, perhaps more importantly, how they 'own' it.

The Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) commissioned the National Youth Agency (NYA) to produce guidance on the development of a Connexions Youth Charter and on the active involvement of young people in the process. This guidance builds on the lessons learnt from the feedback given by young people to the draft Youth Charter.

## What the young people say

Our chief conclusion from talking with young people and Connexions Partnerships is that there should be at least two versions of the Connexions Youth Charter.

- the basic Youth Charter is the "label on the tin" for Connexions. It tells young people what their rights and entitlements are and also what to do if they feel they want to comment on or change something in Connexions
- a more in-depth, advanced version of the Youth Charter which will include all the same points as the basic Charter, but will feature more details on each point as well as containing additional information.

This part of the guidance goes into more detail about the elements of the Youth Charter and is aimed at Connexions Service managers and practitioners who might be less familiar with active involvement work with young people.

The other document in this pack is called 'Connexions Youth Charter - Guidance for Practitioners & Young People' and is for use by young people with practitioners. It looks at the main issues surrounding the development of a basic Connexions Youth Charter, according to young people's views.

This document looks in detail at the essential elements of the Youth Charter. The guidance focuses on process rather than product because each Partnership's Charter will be different and will reflect the local agenda. We acknowledge the work already done by Connexions Partnerships and the important steps they have taken to involve local young people in different ways.

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER L

The Youth Charter represents a mutual set of rules - a shared agreement or understanding. Together with young people, the Connexions Partnership should consider the key questions about purpose, format and evaluation. These questions have been studied with several representative groups of young people and this document incorporates their views. The quotations are directly from young people and illustrations are from scenarios written and performed by young people.

In all cases we recommend that local young people make local choices about their Youth Charter and illustrate it with local examples and definitions.

## Case Example

West Yorkshire and Bradford youth participation workers have supported wide consultation with many young people through schools and youth centres etc. using computerised and paper-based surveys. The panel of two young people from each of the five areas then came together at a residential event to write a draft Youth Charter for the Partnership.

## The rights of the child

Connexions Partnerships will be aware that young people have the usual global anti-discriminatory rights, as well as the specific rights afforded to them under the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Article 12 states that young people have the right to have their views heard on issues that affect them and to have these views taken seriously. The UNCRC was adopted by the UK Government and incorporated into the Human Rights Act.

The Connexions Youth Charter gives young people rights and entitlements above and beyond the statutory rights. The CSNU requirement for active involvement of young people in the processes of the Connexions Service acknowledges these rights, but also stems from a conviction that young people's active involvement will actually enhance the Service.

## Fostering diversity

It is essential to involve as great a range of young people as possible in the development of the Youth Charter. Connexions Partnerships will value working with voluntary and community organisations, independent youth forums and local youth services as key partners in engaging those young people who are not always at the front of the queue.

## Active involvement

A key Connexions principle is that the views of young people will be taken into account and acted upon in the design and delivery of the Connexions Service. The active involvement of young people in Connexions is underpinned by a number of key principles as outlined in 'The Active Involvement of Young People in the Connexions Service: Managers' Guide & Practitioners' Guide.'

These principles are:

- active involvement is seen as a key element of accountability of Connexions
- the diversity of young people is recognised
- young people are valued
- involvement is underpinned by adequate resources of expertise, time, money and organisational systems and processes
- there are systems and processes for evaluating and continuously improving young people's involvement.



When you see this box, it recommends an action to involve young people in developing the Connexions Youth Charter.

A CD Rom version of this guidance is provided so that additional copies can be printed and distributed by Partnerships. The CD Rom also provides graphics, pictures and the process of involving young people in developing this guidance, as well as case studies and examples of how Partnerships are involving young people in developing Youth Charters.

## How will the Youth Charter be used?

The purpose of the Connexions Youth Charter is to act as a gateway to the Service for young people. It should explain what young people can expect from the Service and what to do if those expectations are not met. It should engage young people and offer them a chance to give positive and negative feedback. It will also set minimum standards for the performance of Connexions Partnerships.

There should be at least two versions of the Connexions Youth Charter, one more detailed than the other. For example, the basic Youth Charter may say that young people will be treated with respect, but the full Youth Charter will have details of policies about equality of opportunity and specific examples of how it will work (and ideally has already worked) in practice.

Youth Charters have been around for a long time. The Connexions Youth Charter must be more than something written for Connexions business plans, as analysis has shown that these charters do not stand up to scrutiny and young people think they have been written by adults. The Charter must be reviewed, changed and allowed to evolve over a period of time in order to continue to meet the needs of new young people using the Service.

### Timing is crucial

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER LEGAL REASONS

Young people should be involved in the development of their Youth Charter at the beginning of Service development and when the Connexions Partnership goes live. The Youth Charter should be about asking young people what they want from the Service and how it should be developed. They may well want to include most or all of the key elements below, but their ownership of the Charter will also be critical in their participation in future milestones for the Connexions Service. The young people's own Charter can be predominant at the launch of the Service and at annual conferences and young people's events promoting the Youth Charter to other young people etc.

The Charter should not be something that is put away once completed by the Partnership and young people. Instead, it should evolve with the Partnership. It should be used at every opportunity to promote Connexions to young people and to encourage their full involvement.

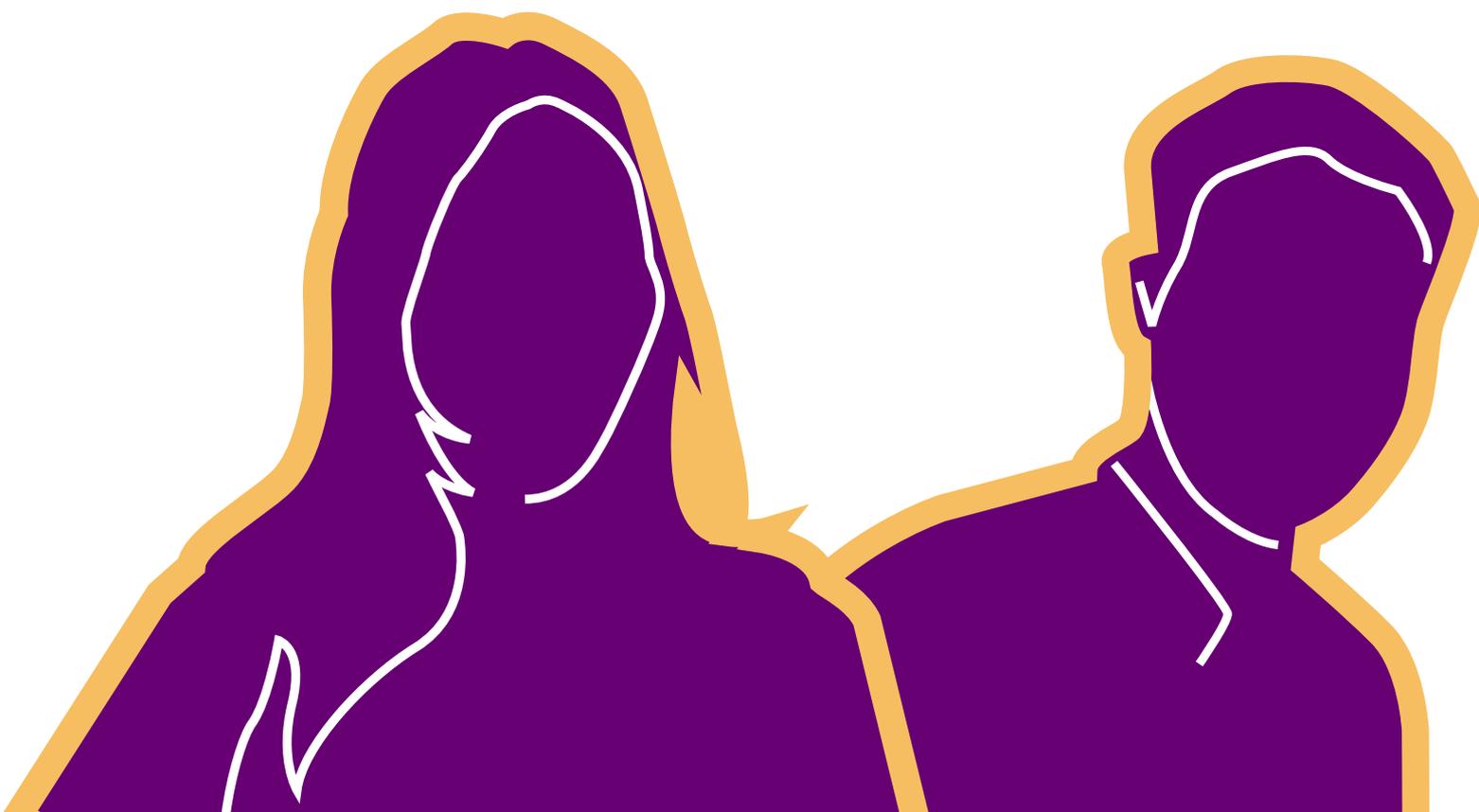
Connexions Partnerships should aim to use the Youth Charter for:

- **Marketing and promoting the Service**
  - Youth Charter is the "label on the tin"
  - the Youth Charter can be posted on the Connexions website to promote feedback from young people.
- **Recruitment of staff**
  - Youth Charter shows the principles and values staff must sign up to. Some Connexions Partnerships have used the Charter as part of the staff recruitment process, where young people have questioned candidates against its criteria.

- Compliments and complaints
  - Youth Charter helps young people to give feedback on how well the Service has been delivered from their point of view.
- Systematic evaluation
  - the Youth Charter can be the basis of inspections by Ofsted, checks by Government Offices or by young people as “mystery shoppers” in a formal evaluation process. The performance of the Connexions Partnership can be evaluated against the delivery standards specified in the Charter.
  - the draft Self Assessment Schedule from CSNU to Partnerships makes clear links about Partnerships using their Youth Charter to judge and demonstrate whether young people identify with it - and whether the Connexions Service is meeting the entitlements specified in the Charter.
- Connexions Partnerships
  - the Youth Charter could become the single set of values and practices to which all other local Services for young people (e.g. youth service and the LSC) have signed up. This sort of joined-up work is part of the advanced picture envisaged for the over-arching Connexions Service.

### Case Example

Lincolnshire and Rutland Connexions Partnership is using its Charter as a calling card – Short and to the point – giving basic information on what young people can expect from the Service.



## Key elements of a Charter

We consulted young people about what they wanted from a Youth Charter. Their list of essential elements includes:

1. Respect (also equal opportunities and not being judged)
2. Having a voice and being listened to
3. Having a choice - encouragement but no pressure
4. Confidentiality - what will or won't be passed on?
5. Good advice, information and support
6. Getting help in convenient places at convenient times
7. Personal adviser (PA) is friendly, honest, well-trained and can be trusted
8. The Connexions centre is friendly and attractive for young people with interesting things to do
9. Young people can get involved in the Service if we want to
10. Easy to give positive and negative feedback.

The CSNU believes that the following values are important for young people in Connexions:

<b>We are passionate:</b>	We have as our focus supporting the needs of young people. We actively encourage and welcome their participation, perspectives and views into the development of the Services and products we deliver.
<b>We are fair:</b>	We believe every young person deserves the best possible chance to realise their potential, irrespective of who they are, or their circumstances.
<b>We are accessible:</b>	We are committed to being available to young people when, where and how they need us. We are open and clear in all our dealings and receptive to new ideas and differing views.
<b>We value partnership:</b>	We are active in developing relationships, creating the right links and working together with others to ensure we deliver the best possible outcome for each young person.
<b>We live high standards:</b>	We are committed to high levels of efficiency, reliability and continuous improvement in all we do.
<b>We make things happen:</b>	We are active and dynamic, a positive agent for change, confronting barriers that constrain and limit with a 'can do, will do' attitude to get results.

### Case Example

Cornwall and Devon Connexions Partnership. The Youth Charter was developed by young people for young people and the key elements were agreed by representatives of youth forums from across the partnership.

## Young people's entitlements

The Connexions Youth Charter must reflect the entitlements of the users of the Connexions Service and also its principles and values. However, the level of detail in this document is more suitable for the in-depth Charter. The basic version must therefore summarise these principles and make a direct connection to the detailed Youth Charter and where it can be accessed.

Appendix 2 contains an analysis by the National Youth Agency of the policies and practices underpinning young people's entitlements from Connexions.

The next section explores young people's views on the key elements and how they relate to these entitlements. It includes their definitions and explanations of the terms and some examples they have given as illustration.

### Case Example

Central London Connexions Partnership launched a peer research initiative which has provided the opportunity for up to 1,000 young people to find out more about the Connexions Service. They supported the idea of a Charter and of young people's ongoing involvement in the development and delivery of the Service. Peer research has a proven track record in assuring young people are given an opportunity to speak openly and honestly about what they would want from services and adult's respect young people's views.

## Young people's essential elements

### 1. Respect (also equal opportunities and not being judged)

#### Respect

#### ACTION

Instead of an "expectations" section of the Youth Charter, young people can agree a set of ground rules for "respect" that applies to adult staff and young people.

“Respect each other, not being judged, and equal opportunities - These should all be grouped together because they are based on the same principles. They are important so that young people don't feel left out and will feel at ease”; “Mutual respect - young people - Connexions and vice versa”; “If you get respect you are more likely to respect them”

## Equal opportunities

### ACTION

The young people we worked with took equality of opportunity as understood. They agreed some statement of this principle was necessary, but the nuts and bolts of how an Equal Opportunities policy would work at each point of delivery, within the policy framework, will need to be negotiated locally with young people. This should be done on a one-to-one basis between the PA and the young individual. It will be vital therefore that the wording on the Youth Charter points to the fact that further discussion is necessary.



You should still get the same Service regardless of age, gender, sexuality, colour of skin or religion"; "No discrimination so you can work with each other and don't feel isolated"; "There shouldn't be a list of things to avoid discriminating about because you always leave things out and it makes some issues look more important than others.



## Not being judged

### ACTION

While this is clearly linked to equal opportunities and respecting each other, some young people suggested mentioning this separately because they felt it could come later in the process of using the Connexions Service. Having expressed their views to a PA, they must not be judged on what they say or any previous record or reputation. This is an important promise for the Connexions Service to make. Young people can define what this means to them in the Youth Charter and give local real-life examples.



Seeing us as we are - warts and all"; "All about not being judged because of reputation or what you have done"; "Someone sees me, not what I wear.

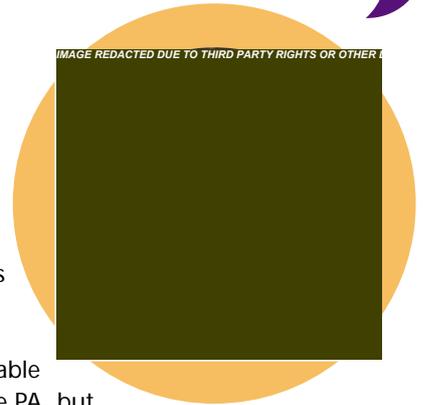


## 2. Having a voice and being listened to

### ACTION

This was one of the most important elements. All the young people felt that there was no point going to Connexions if they didn't have a voice. In what practical ways will young people be able to "have a voice" in your local Connexions Service? Engagement in the development of the Connexions Youth Charter may be the first involvement for young people, but this must extend to how the Service actually runs. The young person should be able to offer compliments and complaints directly to the PA, but there should also be a range of clear and attractive ways for young people "to be listened to and taken seriously". The young people's suggestions included user groups facilitated in the youth work style and suggestion boxes that are more confidential.

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER



You have the right to be listened to and express your own opinions"; "Important as it makes you feel like someone's listening and people don't go behind your back"; "Total involvement of young people every step of the way"; "Being able to speak our minds if we don't agree with anything"; "To be listened to and taken seriously"; "Before, no-one listened to us, now they do.



### 3. Having a choice - encouragement but no pressure

I'm interested in being a hairdresser

Let me see those grades...  
You should be a scientist not a hairdresser

But I don't want to be a scientist

Listen, I'm your PA,  
I know best

#### ACTION

This comic sketch by young people shows a real-life dilemma to be resolved at a local level. How much choice will young people really have?

On the draft Staffordshire Connexions Youth Charter, the young people said that they did not want "to be told what to do", but the Youth Offending Team, part of the Connexions Partnership, could not sign up to this, because sometimes they must give instructions to young people. It needs local negotiation with young people to reach clarity and understanding.

“What may be the best thing for someone else may not be for me”; “Give the right amount of time and don't just try to take the easiest option”; “Right to be ambitious - to dream or not”; “The right to make informed choices.”

### 4. Confidentiality - what will or won't be passed on?

#### ACTION

This was seen by some young people as the most important of the essential elements. Here again, the Youth Charter must connect clearly to the specific way a confidentiality policy will work within the local Connexions Partnership.

The quotation below from a young person about obtaining consent may be unworkable for some professionals under their terms and conditions and Child Protection laws. It is important that this issue is discussed with the young person at the outset and that the ground rules are understood. Young people could produce the flyers and posters promoting the levels of confidentiality agreed, but urging young people to find out more from the PA.

The West of England Connexions Partnership provides the following statement to young people on trust and confidentiality:

“If you have asked that information you give remains confidential, we will respect your request unless we have told you that we are not able to do so.”

It is crucial that Partnerships are honest with young people about confidentiality. The Youth Charter might wish to tell young people that the Partnership will hold information on them but that the young person will have the right to access the information and how they would go about doing that. CSNU is planning to produce 'Guidance on Professional Practice' later in the year. This will cover issues of confidentiality and include feedback from young people.

I need to talk to you about dru...

Ah! Don't say "drugs" to me or I'll have to tell the manager!

But I thought the Service was confidential

It is apart from drugs, sex, violence, crime...



You need to know exactly what will/won't be passed on - the thing you want to talk about may be what they have to pass on"; "Should be extreme levels of confidentiality"; "There should be flyers and posters telling young people what the policies are and when they first come into contact with a PA he/she should explain what the confidentiality policies are"; "PA has to have your consent before they tell anyone anything.



## 5. Good advice, information and support

### ACTION

What do local young people need or want to know about? Some first need advice on what the Connexions Service does and what the Youth Charter can do for them. Some expect Connexions to offer them help beyond traditional careers advice in a supportive way that takes account of the different things that affect their lives. In what form do they want to have this information? Young people can be involved in researching information, designing leaflets or guides on popular topics and making suggestions for areas not covered. Phone texting and email were popular suggestions for ways to receive advice.



Basically this is what the Service is - no point going in if you don't get this"; "To be given an objective opinion"; "Act as info source on a wide range of things including nightclubs, bowling as well as life choices"; "Being allowed to realise our full potential"; "Work towards qualifications.



## 6. Getting help in convenient places at convenient times

### ACTION

The young people were clear that they expected the Connexions Service to reach out to them and to meet them half way. The scope for delivering the Service in outreach settings can only be determined locally, but young people have a part to play in promoting the Service in the places they know to be the most relevant. Where do their friends hang out? Young people could write and perform a presentation about the Connexions Service as peer educators. What can Connexions offer young people in return for their work promoting the Service and the Youth Charter?

Partnerships need to be sure that they don't make false promises to young people in the Youth Charter. It is important that Partnerships are able to answer young people's queries about how much PA time they will have access to. Clearly this is a difficult question to answer as PAs will need to prioritise their time, giving more to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable young people.

The Charter should also be clear about the arrangements for contacting PAs outside the main institutions where they will be based (schools and colleges) and outside normal office hours. This might include references to Connexions Direct (although only available to young people in the North East and Cheshire & Warrington at present).

“Go to young people - don't just wait for them to come to you”; “For some young people it is a real slog to get into town and the buses cost a lot of money”; “Must be a Centre as well as outreach”; “Should be in the centre of town and easy to access, but don't want stigma when people see you go in”; “Should be able to chat to your PA online - email them and have an online chat”; “Outreach is good because it is important that you don't feel left out. This can be done through schools - talk to individual students. But you might feel pressurised and might not want to talk”; “Use the post - without the mark of Connexions on it”; “Internet - should be able to log on and find out what's happening, have a personal log-on number like when you log onto hotmail.”

## 7. PA is friendly, honest, well-trained and can be trusted

### ACTION

Young people were concerned about the type of person that would be their PA. They wanted someone they could trust and respect rather than a teacher figure who might be trying to reach targets. They wanted someone who would be a friend, someone who would be interested in them - rather than questioning them with a pen and paper in hand. The young people were keen to see anything that is written down about them.

The Youth Charter can be used in the recruitment of PAs. Young people should be involved in the evaluation of their PA's performance and free to choose another one. Ease of access to a PA is also essential, although local limits may apply here. The Youth Charter should state local arrangements in this area.

The young people had clear views on what they wanted from a PA.

“Having a named contact person you can speak to about anything”; “Having a trusted person to talk to”; “Advice must be given in a friendly way”; “Knowledgeable - know what they're talking about or know someone else who does”; “You should be able to access a PA on demand, at a time that is convenient to you and not to the PA”; “Right to have a choice of PA.”

IMAGE REDACTED DUE TO THIRD PARTY RIGHTS OR OTHER

## 8. A Connexions centre that is friendly and attractive for young people with interesting things to do

### ACTION

Young people can design the areas where the Service is delivered and choose the colour schemes and furniture. Do local young people find your Connexions centre fun?



“Young people friendly”; “Young people centred”; “An approachable, caring environment”; “People who work there not to be enthusiastic and professional”; “Graffiti wall, colours, posters, free juke box”; “Info: stand-out colours, places to send free e-mails, Internet access”; “Notice boards with leisure/gigs/selling things”; “Warm, bright, pool table, friendly, TV, refreshments, talk to your friends, open at night not just in the day while you are at school”; “These are elements that make the Service better, not what makes it possible. To a certain extent if Connexions succeeds in delivering all the other elements you won’t worry as much about these.”



## 9. Young people can get involved in the Service - if we want to

### ACTION

The Youth Charter is a vital early opportunity for many young people to get involved with the Connexions Service. There are many other ways to involve young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of Connexions as highlighted in ‘The Active Involvement of Young People in the Connexions Service: Managers’ Guide & Practitioners’ Guide.’

## 10. Easy to give positive and negative feedback

### ACTION

The Youth Charter must enable young people to register complaints and give positive feedback. Nearly all the young people focused on complaining, whereas it is important that young people are also encouraged to praise staff.

The young people were very keen that the Youth Charter should specify:

- who to contact on what number. This must be a free call.
- who is responsible for the feedback/complaint being considered
- written confirmation that a complaint has been dealt with
- who has been assigned to follow up and to liaise with the young people.



“Having complaints followed up each step of the way effectively”; “They should be efficient and not take ages to get back to you, but take time to do it properly”; “If you are treated badly then you will tell all your friends and there will be bad stigma for Connexions - so you need to see things happen if you make a complaint”; “Definitely need information on how the complaint will be/has been dealt with”; “Using the Service would be ongoing, so compliments and complaints should be something that you can do at anytime, not just fill out an evaluation form at the end”; “There should be an (anonymous) comment box that sits outside, that you can fill in anytime”; “Anonymous note in school library”; “Box for employee of the month”; “Want someone (adult) on your side - a third party to soften them up!”; “National body for dealing with compliments and complaints”; “Write a letter to the PA.’s boss”; “Should be called “feedback” procedure.”

The young people were clear that they needed information about the results of their feedback, regardless of whether the response was positive or negative. They also supported the idea of an independent advocate to ensure protection of their rights. Ideally, this should be a group of young people given special training for this, but a PA or other sympathetic adult could also adopt this support role.

### Case Example

Cheshire and Warrington Connexions Partnership abandoned its initial suggestions and complaints leaflet form in favour of postcards and a prominent box to post them in. It achieved an immediate and significant increase in comments from young people. The Youth Charter also spells out the maximum number of days to deal with a complaint and specifies the right of appeal.

It is a main plank of the Connexions Youth Charter that the feedback and complaints process should be seen to work and to change things for young people using the Service. CSNU issued guidance to all Connexions Partnerships and Government Offices (February 2002) on developing a complaints procedure for young people accessing their local Connexions Service.



## The best format

Connexions Partnerships should produce two linked Youth Charter documents. One fulfils the essential table of rights and entitlements for young people. The other allows a broader expansion on the values and aspirations of the local Connexions Service.

The first must be short and in plain language. The format must make it accessible to young people. Young people thought of many innovative ways of presenting the Charter including key-rings, wallets, baseball caps, postcards and wall charts. Young people should choose what is most appropriate to them on a local basis, although it is likely that a range of media will be needed to embrace the diverse needs of the 13-19 years age group.



Involving young people in the development and writing of the Youth Charter will guarantee that they understand the language used. Involving young people in the design means it is much more likely to appeal.

The expanded version may need to be displayed at the point of delivery. Some Connexions Partnerships have opted for a fold-out version with the credit card sized list expanding to show the small print. (See the examples of a pilot Connexions Youth Charter).



## Promoting the Charter to young people

### Case Example

Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire Connexions Partnership supported consultation with young people with an art competition for the design for their Youth Charter. They offered a significant prize of £250 to attract entries.

**The promotion of the Charter, along with the Service itself, should be proactive. Young people were very clear that the Connexions Service must reach out to them and not just wait for them to come to Connexions.**

Some clear suggestions from young people included:

- delivery/peer group that tours schools, colleges, youth centres/projects, outreach/detached work telling other young people about the Youth Charter and how they can get involved
- organise sessions to discuss what a Youth Charter is
- a residential, followed up by text messages to keep them informed
- let young people come up with a draft Charter using language that they understand
- television or radio ads, advertisements in job centres; post cards, perhaps with “magic eye dots”; competitions for Connexions logos and ‘shocking’ posters to grab attention.

It is essential that Connexions staff are engaged in the Youth Charter too. They will be delivering the Service and must have shared ownership of the values and practices featured in the Charter. Some promotional work with staff may well be needed here too.

### Case Example

Peterborough and Cambridgeshire youth participation workers are encouraging young people to take on co-ordinating roles in the development of their Youth Charter by seeking and representing the views of their peers. The young people were involved in networking and focus groups have been used to ‘reality check’ models of potential Youth Charters.

### Case Example

Staffordshire Connexions Partnership used drama to engage young people with their Youth Charter. The Charter was also used as a tool to gain their active involvement with the Connexions Service as a whole.

## Critical success factors

The Youth Charter is the “label on the tin” for the Connexions Service. The Service must deliver what the Youth Charter says it will, if young people’s confidence is to be won and kept. The Charter should be values-based, with the values jointly agreed, held and evidenced by young people and Connexions Partnerships.

### What will make the Youth Charter work?

- the content of the Charter will be real and honest
- everyone will believe in their hearts that it will work
- the Youth Charter is owned by young people and adults
- everyone concerned will be proud to be accountable
- all concerned will need to know about the Charter and understand its implications
- the involvement of young people - not just adults - will be ongoing, real and active
- young people will support other young people to be accountable
- it will appeal to its audience
- it will be eye-catching and memorable (eg use a strap line such as “Connexions keeps you connected”)
- there will be a clear feedback mechanism
- it is important for the Youth Charter to be a moving and evolving process.

### How will we know it has worked?

The evaluation of the Youth Charter needs to sit within the broader context of Service evaluation as a whole. As the Youth Charter is a gateway document into and about Connexions, Partnerships can measure their success in promoting themselves by gauging young people’s awareness and ownership of the Charter. There is a range of quantitative data that can help to measure the effectiveness of a Charter. Young people should be involved in the development, design, delivery and analysis of any surveys. Measurable success factors include:

- number of any random sample of young people who
  - know about the Connexions Youth Charter
  - know what it means to them
- number of those involved in Connexions who
  - know about the Connexions Youth Charter
  - know what it means to them
- number of young people involved in
  - developing the Connexions Youth Charter
  - developing the Connexions Service in general
  - giving feedback

- number of young people using the complaints and feedback procedure
- number of responses by Connexions Partnerships to young people's issues.
- long-term and short-term evaluation strategy in place, linked to customer satisfaction
  - young people feel empowered.
- ongoing communication strategy in place
  - list of communication targets for news/ recruitment for future involvement
- quality strategy in place
  - young people's experience is part of quality strategy
- national quality strategy to involve young people at a national level
- young people benefit from and value the Connexions Service.

## Advanced and aspirational: beyond the basic Connexions Service

As Partnerships develop they will build on essential standards. Advanced elements would include:

- proof of how a diverse range of young people is involved and how the Service is planned to meet diverse needs
- a system, which systematically seeks out feedback and uses it, relaying outcomes and results back to young people (eg via newsletters, websites, etc)
- everyone linked to or employed by Connexions agreeing with and working from the values
- staff training/expectations on their work with young people
- a joined-up vision that links the values of the Connexions Youth Charter to other local Services for young people. There should be nothing in the values that cannot be signed up to by all partners, even if local practice may need to be clarified.

These advanced elements may well feature in the larger, expanded Youth Charter. They will not necessarily appear in the headline document offered to young people when they first find Connexions.

## How to keep it alive?

The Connexions Youth Charter must be a living and evolving document as CSNU or young people's expectations change over time.

There is an immediate role for young people who can get involved in revising the Youth Charter - in keeping it interesting and attractive for their peers. The young people we worked with favoured regular open group meetings of current users of the Service to review progress. They also listed newsletters to colleges and schools, websites, texting and information at the Connexions centre as a means of notifying any planned changes. They suggested: regular posters, leaflets, newsletters, conferences, email, business cards, presentations at schools/colleges/youth clubs etc, and features in newspapers and magazines.

They also suggested a prominent list of names of the young people who were involved in the development of the original Youth Charter to serve as a permanent reminder that young people can influence and change things.

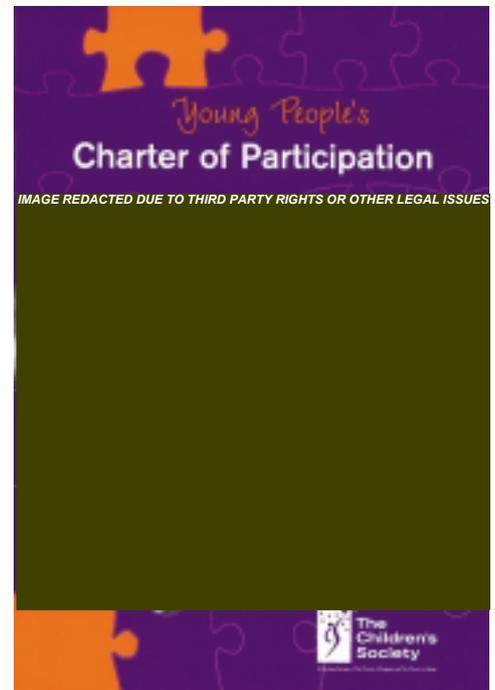
## Additional information and support

There is more information on this subject in the related section of the Connexions website and on the CD Rom version of this guidance. There are also practical examples of working with young people and involving them in the development of the Youth Charter.

### 'Young People's Charter of Participation' - a tool to promote the systematic inclusion of young people in the decisions that affect them

'The Young People's Charter of Participation' is a publication designed by young people and staff from The Children's Society's Rotherham Participation Project and based on Article 12 of the UN Convention of the Rights of the Child. It helps provide a simple but effective tool to translate this vision into reality. The easy to follow action planning approach is designed to help promote a culture of participation and build it into the fabric of organisations.

The Charter has been piloted extensively and to good effect across voluntary organisations, local authorities and regeneration partnerships. In Yorkshire and the Humber, where this document originated, the Regional Government Office has promoted it actively with, for example, the embryonic Local Strategic Partnerships. The Regional Development Agency is seeing its usefulness as a means of signposting children and young people alongside their auditing tool, 'Active Partners - benchmarking community participation in regeneration'. Since its launch the Charter has been used for a cross-Rotherham SRB programme and has been picked up by the Children and Young People's Unit. Organisations across the country using the Charter include health authorities, youth services, local authority education and social services departments, Connexions and careers guidance organisations. It is used within The Children's Society across all its projects and by its trustees as a means of tracking and promoting children's and young people's participation in decision making.



Barriers such as access, attitude, information, resources and skills feature in all themed areas, which prevented young people's participation. This formed the basis for the development of the Charter of Participation.

The Charter has been designed to help you to involve young people in the work you do both now and in the future and to address the barriers identified by young people and agencies.

The Children's Society is committed to enabling children and young people to be active citizens. They believe this brings benefits, not only to themselves, but to the wider community, to Services and to organisations. The Children's Society is active across England, engaging with children and young people on the issues of concern where they live. In considering the implications of the Charter, you may wish to contact Bill Badham, Programme Manager Children in Communities, The Children's Society, East Midlands Regional Office, Mayfair Court, North Gate, New Basford, Nottingham, NG7 7GR. Copies of the Charter are available from the above address for a small charge to cover the cost of printing and packaging.

## Appendix 1: Principles of active involvement of young people

This section covers:

- principles (why involve young people)
- benefits
- what constitutes active involvement (as opposed to passive)
- tasks young people might expect to be involved in
- methods for involvement (Partnership must be clear on boundaries, rights and entitlements).

### CSNU key principles

As outlined in 'The Active Involvement of Young People in the Connexions Service: Managers' Guide & Practitioners' Guide.'

The active involvement of young people in the Connexions Service will work best when:

**Active involvement is seen as a key element of accountability** and especially when:

- the Connexions Service embraces the notion that it must be accountable to young people
- the Connexions Service and young people recognise that their active involvement is key to the Service achieving accountability to its young people.

### Diversity

The diversity of young people is recognised:

- active involvement reflects the needs, hopes, ambitions and interests of all young people, and takes account of diverse community interests and needs
- young people have equality of access to opportunities for involvement
- active involvement is designed to allow young people to become involved in ways, at levels and at a pace appropriate to their capacities and interests and to the Connexions Service/ partner organisations
- involvement is underpinned by formal and informal capacity building and training.

### Respect

Young people are valued:

- they are listened to and actively involved in the development of the Service
- they receive swift and clear feedback about the impact and value of their contribution

- the partnership between professionals and Service users:
  - recognises young people's competence and potential
  - helps young people to become a resource to their own development and to that of their peers, the Connexions Service and the community
- communication with young people is honest and does not raise false expectations for active involvement or Service delivery
- those responsible for providing the Service are directly informed by the dialogue with young people.

## Resources

Involvement is underpinned by adequate resources of expertise, time, money and organisational systems and processes.

This includes:

- clear, widely communicated policy statements
- a Charter of Services and values - highlighting what is on offer
- staff recruitment and development policies aimed at building a team with the qualities, attitudes and skills required to involve young people
- clear boundaries around what is possible in the areas of involvement and Service delivery
- transparent and accessible procedures for suggestions, compliments, complaints and appeals
- clear policies on confidentiality and data collection / storage / dissemination.
- structures to secure the representation of young people's interests and concerns.

There are systems and processes for evaluating and continuously improving young people's involvement so that:

- monitoring and evaluation is undertaken by Connexions staff and independently (in both cases involving young people in the process) and the lessons used to shape future planning.

## What is 'active involvement'?

The term 'active' is used to indicate a feeling, on the part of the young people, that they have a real stake in the Service. There should be no room for the attitude "nobody ever takes any notice of what I say, so why bother?"

This should apply to those who are involved as Service users as well as to those who are involved as Service 'shapers' (actively involved in the planning, delivery, monitoring and evaluation of the Service).

There are three key dimensions to active involvement:

1. Involvement at different levels of the organisation - for example, young people can take part in:
  - a group defining quality standards (strategic level)
  - designing a newsletter (operational level)
  - planning their personal development (Service user level).

2. The power dimension - whatever level of the organisation they are working at, there are opportunities to be involved at a variety of levels of power and responsibility. For example, in designing a newsletter, young people could (in order of decreasing power and responsibility):
  - be personally responsible for particular aspects of newsletter design and production
  - be part of a working group deciding on a new look for the newsletter
  - 'shadow' an adult on a particular aspect of newsletter design or development
  - take part in a survey about the appearance of the newsletter.
3. The active-passive dimension - some methods of involvement, for example focus groups, are more active and intrinsically engaging than others, such as completing questionnaires.

Not all young people will want to be involved at the highest level, but it is important that those who want to do so can get involved in ways that match their skills, interests and time commitments. This means that the Service needs to provide a wide variety of opportunities for active involvement and to manage them effectively. It also requires strategies to reduce obstacles to active involvement. These might include some young people's perceptions of the Service as a place where they are not given full respect and where certain policies and practices discriminate against marginalised groups.

## Context and rationale

Many different rationales encourage active involvement of young people:

- 'the Government tells us to'
- 'it is a young person's right to be listened to and involved'
- 'young people will benefit from being involved in decision making'
- 'the health of democratic society depends on active involvement of young people'
- 'it will be a better Service if we do.'

Clarify and agree a primary focus, because there are implications:

- for the tasks and methods
- for criteria used to measure 'success.'

However, the most compelling rationale for active involvement of young people is the balance of benefits for all concerned. A Connexions Youth Charter designed by young people for young people will be a more successful document than one created by adults.

## Benefits of actively involving young people

For young people.

For Services.

For the community.



## Benefits for young people

- engagement in the Service
- learning
- development of a range of new skills - and support in applying them
- increased confidence and self-esteem
- increased ability to influence organisations
- an attractive responsive Service
- an empowering environment.

## Benefits for Services

- achievement of goals
- obtaining information from young people about:
  - changing attitudes and needs
  - young people's views of what constitutes 'quality'
  - key barriers to access
  - Services young people use
  - the key success factors for attracting young people
- a Service based on identified - rather than presumed needs
- innovation - young people offering fresh perspectives
- access to young people's networks
- credibility for the Service with young people.

## Benefits for the community

- more young people better prepared to engage in :
  - learning
  - employment
  - the community.
- breaking down 'What's the point of taking part - nothing ever happens as a result' - leading to:
  - more active involvement in the local community
  - improved democratic processes.

## Involvement in what tasks?

- the process of developing, designing, evaluating and revising the Youth Charter
- identification of needs of local young people
- investigation of current provision
- development of strategy, activities, objectives, plans
- development of organisation
- definition of indicators of 'success'
- design of specific involvement activity
- staff recruitment
- assessment of suppliers.

## The nature of active involvement

- 'where there's a will, there's a way'
- active involvement is a fundamental goal to be attained as soon as practicable
- active involvement in all aspects is a long-term ambition rather than just at the start
- young people and staff have different understanding and comfort about starting points
- both need to be comfortable about the way ahead
- learning resources and support available both to help comfort zone build up
- failure can feed unhelpful prejudices.

## Using which methods?

- informal suggestion schemes
- surveys to canvass opinions
- consultation - focus groups
- consultation - creative approaches
- managing activities (e.g. in Service delivery)
- membership of young people's decision making bodies
- membership of main decision making bodies.

## Agreeing a contract and/or ground rules for involvement

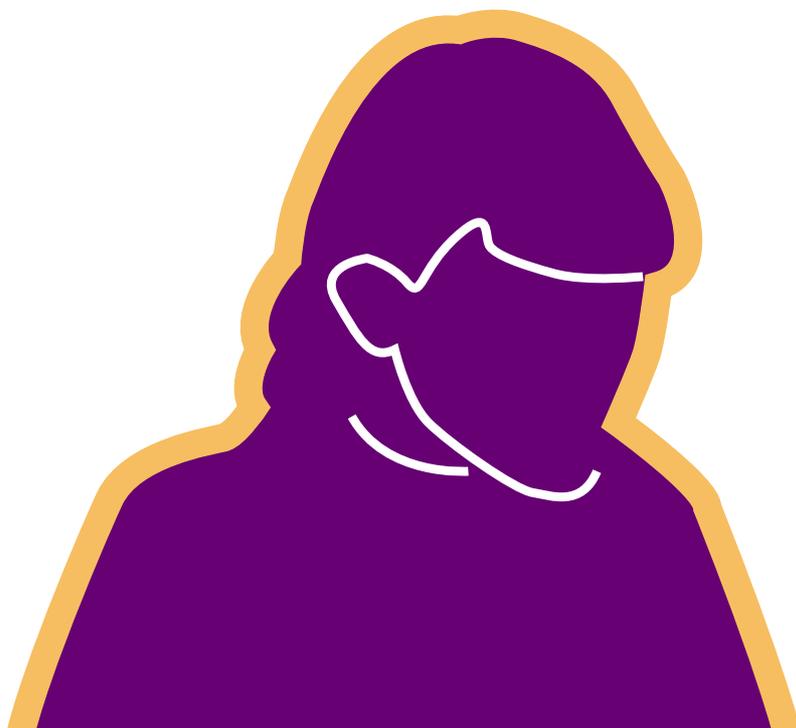
This applies to all aspects of active involvement work, including working relationships between PAs and individual young people and group sessions with those young people who are involved in consultations, Service delivery or decision making bodies.

Publicity material should be specific about what active involvement might entail - including:

- what you expect to get out of it and what they might expect to get out of it
- what you expect to put into it and what they might expect to put into it
- early meetings with any individual or group should be used to clarify mutual expectations, hopes and fears
- agree objectives and methods of working
- explain boundaries - issues that are outside the control of individual staff, such as the limits of the group's decision making powers and its relationship to other groups
- agree issues that are open to negotiation - which might include:
  - time boundaries
  - voting rules
  - the criteria on which decisions are made
  - ground rules of behaviour towards each other
  - the use of language (jargon, swearing etc),
  - oppressive behaviour
  - confidentiality
  - equal opportunities etc.

Some issues, eg. confidentiality and equal opportunities, will be included in the basic Youth Charter as essential parts of how the Connexions Service is delivered. However we expect their detailed definition and how they work in practice will be part of the process of engagement between PA and young person.

For a good overview of this subject please see: ['The Active Involvement of Young People in the Connexions Service: Managers' Guide & Practitioners' Guide.'](#)





# The National Youth Agency

## Appendix 2 - Young people's entitlements from Connexions

This is an extract from a paper by The National Youth Agency: "Young people's entitlements within Connexions". Connexions Partnerships must ensure that the more detailed Youth Charter reflects the policies and practices listed below, while staying true to the values and principles of the basic, summary Youth Charter.

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### Privacy/ Confidentiality

- policy about information storage, information recording, access to records, availability of records to other people, including data sharing protocols, and the degree of security with which records are kept
- policy on any limitations to the privacy and confidentiality within the relationship between Connexions staff and the young person
- access to any personal data recorded.

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### Contracting

- contract for engagement which communicates the terms on which the Service is being offered, including named PA, availability, confidentiality, rights, complaints procedure, personal/professional boundaries, the spirit of collaborative partnership and mutuality etc. and what is expected of those using the Service, including attendance, notification of withdrawal etc.
- opportunity for orientation to the Connexions Service, to the work in the relationship between a young person and Connexions staff and to activities available through the Connexions Service
- opportunity for orientation to young people's rights and entitlements within all aspects of the Connexions Service.

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### Personal Contact

- availability of a named PA.
-

Information language	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• help to find information and to develop skills of information retrieval and interpretation</li> <li>• information that is accurate, up to date, impartial, easy to read, understandable and readily available</li> <li>• information that is predominantly free of charge</li> <li>• information that covers education, training and career options</li> <li>• information on accreditation, on how it may be earned and advice on sources of funding to enable young people to participate in accreditation schemes</li> <li>• explanation and clarification of information and decisions at an appropriate level of language with the absence of jargon or in a format suitable to the young person's language needs.</li> </ul>
Choice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• freedom from compulsory engagement with the Connexions Service</li> <li>• clarity about options available, should a young person decide not to use the Connexions Service</li> <li>• freedom to utilise alternative avenues of guidance in relation to education, training and careers options</li> <li>• clarity about the level of choice over a PA</li> <li>• freedom to request a change of PA.</li> </ul>
Autonomy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a professional relationship which promotes the young person's control over their own life and respects their ability to decide, act and change in the light of their own beliefs and values</li> <li>• a professional relationship which enables them to explore and critically evaluate their experiences</li> <li>• respect and encouragement to make their own decisions and choices, unless the welfare or legitimate interests of themselves or others are seriously threatened.</li> </ul>
Facilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a professional relationship that facilitates young people's learning and encourages their personal and social development, including their voice and influence in matters that affect them</li> <li>• engagement in the spirit of collaborative partnership and mutuality.</li> </ul>
Advocacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the interventions of a PA as advocate acting on their behalf when the form of such action has been agreed by the young person.</li> </ul>

Treated With Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a targeted Service that will, nevertheless, be non-stigmatising</li> <li>• a Service which treats young people with respect, valuing each individual and avoiding negative discrimination</li> <li>• a professional relationship in which young people will be listened to and their feelings acknowledged</li> <li>• a professional relationship in which young people are respected for being young</li> <li>• a professional relationship which embodies honest communication and recognises differentials of power within and beyond the relationship</li> <li>• explanation for any rules and regulations governing participation in the Connexions Service</li> <li>• explanation when ideas presented by young people cannot be put into practice.</li> </ul>
Respect for difference and diversity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Service in which young people will be treated equally regardless of race, religion, culture, class, gender, sexuality or ability</li> <li>• a Service in which young people will be treated as individuals and their abilities, talents, skills and needs acknowledged as unique to them</li> <li>• a Service which believes in social justice for young people and in society generally, through encouraging respect for difference and diversity and challenging discrimination.</li> </ul>
Association	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Service that takes into account the benefits of group learning and experience</li> <li>• opportunities to associate with other young people within a Connexions Partnership area in a variety of informal and social educational settings.</li> </ul>
Boundaries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• recognition by Connexions staff of the boundaries between personal and professional life</li> <li>• awareness of the need to balance a caring and supportive relationship with young people with appropriate professional distance</li> <li>• responsibility by Connexions staff for setting, monitoring and making explicit necessary boundaries to the young person</li> <li>• notification by Connexions staff of any conflicts of interest which could impact on the professional work with the young person</li> <li>• a professional relationship in which Connexions staff seek to gain the permission of young people before conferring with other professional workers</li> <li>• commitment by Connexions staff to ensure that communication with others is purposeful and of relevance to the young person's passage through the Connexions Service.</li> </ul>

Leadership and management	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>managers set a clear sense of direction, through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood by all staff. (Best Value: Challenge)</li> </ul>
Safety and protection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a Service which has in place proper procedures for Health &amp; Safety and Child Protection</li> <li>a commitment by Connexions staff to promote and ensure the welfare and safety of young people, while enabling them to learn through undertaking educational activities which challenge them</li> <li>a Service in which Connexions staff are adequately trained to respond appropriately to distress in a young person</li> <li>a Service in which young people can expect to be safe from harm, exploitation and abuse when working with staff</li> <li>a Service in which young people can expect that deliberately hurtful behaviour (bullying, name calling, ridiculing) by them and by others is challenged</li> <li>a Service in which young people can expect to have the right to privacy for their personal care needs</li> <li>premises which are in good repair and regularly checked for safety and available to those with disability. Any street-based work to reflect agreed principles of health and safety</li> <li>an environment which is safe and free from abusive, racist, offensive or violent behaviour or language which is unacceptable</li> <li>Connexions staff who have all been police ('disclosures') checked and carry ID which young people can request to see.</li> </ul>
Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Connexions staff who recognise the need to be accountable to young people, their parents or carers, colleagues, funders, wider society and others with a relevant interest in the work, and that these accountabilities may be in conflict.</li> </ul>
Competence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>staff in core Connexions roles and in related support Services who have been trained and are knowledgeable about the aims of the Connexions Service</li> <li>Connexions staff with a commitment to develop and maintain the required skills and competence to do the job in a new and evolving professional context</li> <li>Connexions staff with the ability to work within and not beyond their professional competence and to make appropriate referrals, particularly at times when their own professional resources are depleted.</li> </ul>
Consistency of Service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A Service which ensures that young people receive a consistent and coherent message and level of Service across all Connexions partnership areas.</li> </ul>

Quality of Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Connexions staff who demonstrate a sustained commitment to provide a high quality</li> <li>• A Service that works in partnership with young people to assess and meet their needs, enhance their knowledge and skills and develop their potential.</li> </ul>
Publicity/orientation to the Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• publicity material and oral information which reflects accurately and honestly the nature of the Service on offer</li> <li>• Service promotion which takes account of young people's preferred language and communication systems - for example, those whose first language is not English; those who need signing, Braille etc; those using text messaging.</li> </ul>
Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the opportunity to make the best of their abilities and to achieve a qualification at least up to NVQ level 2.</li> </ul>
Equity of treatment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• equality of access to and equity of provision within the Connexions Service.</li> </ul>
Ownership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Service whose design young people can influence and which they value as relevant and responsive to the needs, aspirations and thinking of young people engaged in transitions surrounding education, training and career options</li> <li>• a Service which is understood and supported by the wider community.</li> </ul>
Quality assurance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a professional Service with robust systems of quality assurance, including young people in the quality process, and all relevant stakeholders, including complaints and compliments procedures</li> <li>• a Service committed to improving the quality of provision through effective professional training, updating, appraisal and supervision of staff.</li> </ul>
Responsive to need and relevant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a dynamic Service which remains open to developments in education, training and employment practices and responsive to the emerging needs of young people in differing contexts</li> <li>• a Service which provides access to a broad and relevant range of opportunities aimed at raising self esteem, confidence and aspirations to be successful</li> <li>• a Service which consistently involves young people in defining its relevance and direction</li> <li>• a Service in which young people can expect to have their individual needs assessed, feedback on how they have progressed and information on how they can access further opportunities</li> <li>• a Service which ensures appropriate provision for young people from point of entry through to an exit strategy at age 19</li> <li>• a Service which is creative and innovative in providing emotional, psychological, academic and career guidance and help to access financial support appropriate to young people's needs.</li> </ul>

Evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Service which involves a comprehensive evaluation strategy in which Service users are significantly engaged and which is committed to evidence-based reporting of its performance</li> <li>• a Service which is committed to the discussion, evaluation and articulation of its professional principles and practice to young people, their parents or carers, colleagues, funders, wider society and others with a relevant interest in the work</li> <li>• a Service in which performance at all levels is regularly monitored and evaluated against agreed performance indicators and quality standards, in conjunction with young people (Best Value: Compare) and including direct observation of work</li> <li>• a Service in which the findings of evaluation are used to adapt the Service, if required, plan for future work and secure improvement.</li> </ul>
Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Service which has sufficient numbers of qualified staff</li> </ul>
Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• sufficient resource to provide a universal, comprehensive and targeted Service</li> </ul>
Entitlement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Service which will be provided for every young person within the age range as a universal entitlement.</li> </ul>
Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a Service open and available to any young person (13-19 or up to 24 years in the case of disability) who wants it, through offering open-access as well as specified referral routes</li> <li>• a Service which is accessible at times and in locations which allow for flexibility without compromising agreed quality standards of provision.</li> <li>• a Service free of charge at the point of use.</li> </ul>
Involvement in design/governance/policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• the opportunity to be consulted on and to influence the development and delivery of the Connexions Service on a regular basis</li> <li>• an active role in the planning, designing, management, monitoring and inspection of the Connexions Service</li> <li>• representation on local Connexions advisory groups</li> <li>• feed back of the outcomes arising from suggestions young people have made</li> <li>• involvement in the recruitment and selection of PAs</li> <li>• have a say in the PA appointed to work with them.</li> </ul>
Redress and appeal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• a clear procedure for bringing a complaint about the Connexions Service or treatment received and how the outcomes will be notified</li> <li>• complaints procedure to be publicised</li> <li>• opportunity to provide positive feedback about the Service or treatment received.</li> </ul>

# The National Youth Agency

## Appendix 3 - Running a consultation event with young people

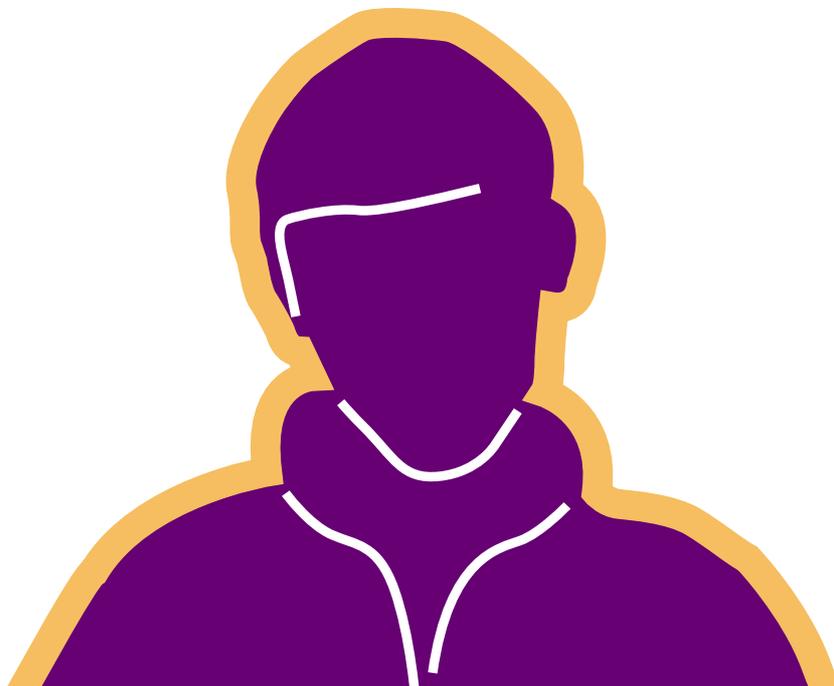
### Dialogue with young people: model of engagement

This model of engagement with young people has been used successfully by the National Youth Agency to work with young people on a variety of Government initiatives. These include Transforming Youth Work/Connexions, the Connexions Youth Charter and Y-Vote 'Engaging young people in democracy'.

This paper aims to allow a similar event to be staged locally.

### Contents

1. Quality rather than quantity
2. The youth work approach
3. Establishing a theme
4. Recruiting the groups of young people
5. Engaging young people and youth workers to draw up the programme
6. "Prep" work for the groups before the event
7. Residential event
8. Recording the event - use of web pages?
9. Follow-up



## 1. Quality rather than quantity

- 1.1. This is a model that focuses on quality dialogue, rather than quantity. We recommend that the number of young people at each event should not exceed 30.
- 1.2. This model is not cheap but does represent good value. A typical budget is included as Appendix 1.

## 2. The youth work approach

- 2.1. We have always worked with young people in groups with their youth workers. The youth workers represent a remarkable resource of professional specialists who are generally widely experienced in encouraging young people to formulate and express their own opinions.
- 2.2. The presence of their familiar youth worker often helps the young people to relax and focus on the day's agenda and increases their confidence.
- 2.3. We have always mixed up the groups of young people once introductions and icebreakers have finished. We brief the youth workers to attach themselves to a new group and help this new mixed group with the tasks in hand.

## 3. Establishing a theme

- 3.1. It is true for any consultant that the more experience they have of a subject the more informed the views they can offer. Some young people's groups, with sufficient notice, can prepare in advance to deliver views on any subject, but some meet so infrequently that it may be that they are coming fresh to the subject. Therefore the nearer the subject is to the young people's direct experience, the more universal their realistic input will be.
- 3.2. We recommend establishing with the groups of young people, very clearly beforehand, the scope of the themes and issues to be discussed by them.

## 4. Recruiting the groups of young people

- 4.1. The National Youth Agency has a network of young people's groups from a variety of sources. For example, some are linked to local statutory youth services; some are voluntary sector; and some are part of the Neighbourhood Support Fund community with which the National Youth Agency works in partnership.
- 4.2. A representative sample of young people is usually recommended in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, etc.
- 4.3. To recruit groups of young people for this sort of event, one can contact the local authority youth service. Alternatively the National Youth Agency or National Council of Voluntary Youth services would be happy to offer contacts for a particular area or region.

## 5. Engaging young people and youth workers to draw up the programme

- 5.1. The National Youth Agency can provide examples of programmes used in this type of event. The key to success has been the active involvement of young people and youth workers in devising the programme for the event.
- 5.2. Young people's groups have taken on responsibility for specific sections of the programme. They use their experience to choose methods and exercises that appeal to young people and engage them.
- 5.3. This ownership of the programme greatly enhances the young people's engagement and participation in these events.
- 5.4. Icebreakers are particularly important for young people to get to know each other and relax. Young people are also very good at leading these. They also keep up the energy levels after meals and breaks.
- 5.5. Some consultation with the young people on the evening's entertainment would be preferable (if there is a possibility of choice). One youth group we work with has a "DJ project" that ran a disco for us in the evening.

## 6. "Prep" work for the groups before the event

- 6.1. Some groups involved in the planning will have taken away exercises to develop into part of the programme and will be well informed.
- 6.2. The provision of background materials to the other groups beforehand will enhance their input. The materials can often be introduced to the young people by the youth workers, so does not necessarily have to be particularly young people-friendly.
- 6.3. However some groups do not meet very frequently and there is no guarantee that all young people attending the event will have been at a previous meeting where the prep material was introduced.

## 7. Residential event

- 7.1. All the consultation events of this type have featured a weekend residential for the main body of work.

### Arrangements

- 7.2. It must be a weekend to fit in with the young people's study or work. A local consultation event could be held on one day only, but it should still be at a weekend.
- 7.3. We have chosen to accommodate the young people in a good hotel, rather than hostel-type facilities, because we are treating them foremost as consultants. The young people have responded well to this distinction.
- 7.4. We recommend 20-25, and a maximum of 30 young people for the residential for optimum group dynamics.
- 7.5. Youth workers will add to the number requiring accommodation. We try to book the youth workers onto the same corridor as the young people from their group for security reasons.
- 7.6. Youth workers arrange parental permission for the young people to participate and act "in loco parentis".

- 7.7. The hotel needs to be briefed to serve young people-friendly food. This means more than burgers, but usually includes pasta, pizza and chips. Also the drinks at breaks should be cola and orange juice, rather than just coffee.
- 7.8. We ask the hotel to block videos and external telephone calls.
- 7.9. We arrange an evening entertainment for the party together. This could be bowling or other activity. Book a coach if the venue is far away, unless the youth groups have arrived by minibus. Consultation with young people on choice of entertainment is preferable (see 5.5).
- 7.10. An out of town hotel not only gives better value accommodation but also gives fewer options for all-night revelry. It is impracticable to forbid young people to leave the hotel.
- 7.11. Some young people prefer to share rooms, particularly young women. We would normally offer the young people a choice. There is an issue about adult males sharing with minors of either gender.
- 7.12. Provide resources that can enhance young people's creative ideas - e.g. publisher/music packages on laptops and large coloured paper.
- 7.13. The most serious, concentrated work is best done early on the Saturday afternoon. The Sunday morning needs more active, participative sessions. All the sessions should be creative, dynamic and fun.
- 7.14. We make the working rooms in the hotel as informal as possible. This includes the set up of round tables and background music chosen by the young people. We stick flipcharts on walls with the hotel's consent.
- 7.15. We have successfully used the session after lunch on Sunday as a concluding focus for the weekend. We invite the Government officials to attend to hear the young people's views on the agreed topics. It is usually preferable to avoid adults hanging around during the earlier sessions without a role.
- 7.16. We always collect evaluation sheets to gauge the young people's views on the event.

## 8. Recording the event - use of web pages?

- 8.1. We have had great success in recording the events using web pages.
- 8.2. This flexible format allows for cartoons and digital photos to enhance interesting fonts, etc. There is also scope for inserting sound and video files.
- 8.3. Young people are very enthusiastic about this medium. They are happy to write up their own materials and have a finished product that looks exciting.
- 8.4. We agreed with young people that we would make cosmetic changes to their pages, such as run a spell-check (except where specific spelling is deliberate, e.g. text language) but we would not alter the integrity of their creation.
- 8.5. This therefore represents a very direct message from young people in their chosen format. It also serves as a report to be put on the web for all to see.