

# **Connexions Direct Mystery Shopping Survey 2006/7**

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Shopping Survey 2006/7*

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The views expressed in this report are the authors' and do not necessarily reflect those of the Department for Children, Schools and Families.

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# 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Connexions Direct (CXD) provides high quality, impartial information, advice and support to young people aged 13-19 via telephone, text message, adviser online (webchat) and email, from a centralised contact centre. The service complements the face-to-face delivery of local Connexions partnerships.

The aim of the CXD Mystery Shopping Survey 2006/7 is to mimic real-life situations to assess the quality and consistency of the service being offered. The survey, designed to assess the service at three separate points, allows for progress to be tracked. The 2006/7 survey follows mystery shopping exercises in 2004 and 2005, but is the first to use this multi-wave format.

## Methodology

Young people aged 13-19 were involved in designing fifteen 'scenarios' for each phase of the survey, and in validating the evaluation factors.

Scenario topics covered: Enquiries about local Connexions Services; Careers, Learning and Jobs; General, Sexual and Mental Health Issues; Family and Personal Relationships; Money; Housing; Bullying; and Legal Issues/Rights. For more details of the scenarios used, please see Appendix 2.

1459 mystery shops were conducted. Each phase delivered approximately 475 mystery shops: 150 telephone, 150 webchat (adviser online), 100 email, and 75 SMS text message. Phase 1 took place in Autumn 2006; Phase 2 in Winter 2006/7; and Phase 3 in Spring 2007. Mystery shops took place across the whole of CXD's opening hours (8am to 2am, 7 days a week). Mystery shops were mainly conducted by young people aged 13-25. A small number of mystery shoppers were Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) professionals, experienced in mystery shopping, and professional researchers.

Mystery shop evaluations were validated further after each phase of fieldwork, through a series of focus group sessions with young people and Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs).

## Greeting

The average satisfaction score out of ten for the greetings from CXD advisers was 7.6: webchat – 7.4; telephone – 7.7; and email – 7.7. Overall, CXD advisers confirmed that the young person had reached Connexions Direct in 97.2% of mystery shops. Advisers revealed their own name clearly in 85.7% of telephone interactions and in 72.3% of emails, but in only 4.5% of webchats and 2.7% of SMS text messages. Confidentiality was mentioned by advisers in 22.8% of telephone interactions, but just 2.2% of webchats and 2.0% of emails. In more than nine out of ten mystery shops by each communication channel, advisers were felt to have made the enquirer feel at ease.

## Listening and Probing

The average satisfaction score out of ten for advisers' listening and probing skills was 7.8: webchat – 7.4; telephone – 7.9; and email – 8.2. In the vast majority (97.0%) of telephone interactions, advisers were recorded as showing an understanding of the question or problem. Advisers asked additional probing questions in 79.1% of telephone interactions, and 64.7% of webchats, and posed rhetorical questions in 15.0% of email responses. Nine out of ten email responses (91.0%) included a

summary of the adviser's understanding of the issue, as did 57.6% of telephone interactions, and 37.3% of webchats.

### **Provision of Information and Advice**

Mystery shoppers recorded all types of information and/or advice given by advisers for each interaction. In a third (32.9%) of cases, mystery shoppers reported that the adviser had directly provided them with relevant information. In a similar proportion (32.3%) of cases it was reported that advisers had recommended websites which would provide useful or relevant information; 21.4% resulted in a recommendation to look at the CXD website; and 6.2% in a recommendation to visit a local Connexions partnership website. Three in ten mystery shops (29.2%) resulted in a recommendation to contact the local Connexions centre or a PA in school. In the majority of cases, the information and/or advice was felt to be relevant to the scenario, and have been understood by the recipient. Overall satisfaction with the quality of information or advice provided was 7.9 out of 10: webchat - 7.7; telephone - 7.9; and email - 8.3.

### **Closure of Interaction**

The average satisfaction score out of ten for the way advisers close interactions was 7.7: webchat – 7.7; telephone – 7.9; and email – 8.3. In four out of five (82.1%) telephone interactions, three in five (62.5%) webchats and two in five (40.7%) email responses, advisers checked whether they had answered all the young person's queries. Furthermore, in around two thirds of webchats and telephone interactions, advisers asked whether there was anything else they could help with. Advisers also often ended interactions or responses with a reminder that the CXD service can be re-contacted, but not all re-iterated the various methods of contact nor gave the contact details.

### **Overall Assessments**

In the majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that advisers' tone of voice/writing kept them at ease throughout the entire interaction: 97.7% by email; 96.8% by telephone and 90.3% by webchat. Again, in most cases (97.4%), advisers were assessed to have remained objective and impartial throughout the interaction. In a minority of cases (2.4%) the adviser was felt to have used language that was unclear or inappropriate to young people.

Three quarters (74.5%) of interactions were felt to have been at the right sort of pace; very few were felt to have been too fast, but around one in six (17.9%) were felt to be slightly too slow. Similarly, most interactions were felt to have provided about the right amount of information; very few felt that they had been given too much information, but three in ten (29.9%) felt that they would have liked more information.

When asked to reflect upon, and give a score out of ten for the service as a whole, the average score given was 7.7: webchats - 7.5; telephone interactions – 7.9; email responses – 8.3; and SMS text messages – 6.8.

### **Differences by Scenario**

Although assessments of greetings, listening and probing, and closure of interactions varied very little according to the detail of the scenario, the type of information and/or advice did vary according to the scenario used for the mystery shop. Appendix 4 contains scenario analysis. Overall quality of service ratings out of ten ranged from 7.3 (for mystery shops related to housing problems) to 8.1 (graduate career options). Satisfaction scores for information and advice given by advisers ranged from 7.6 (for

mystery shops seeking contact details for the nearest Connexions centre) up to 8.3 out of 10 (sexual health issues).

### **Involvement of Young People**

It is a key principle of Connexions and VT Research to involve young people in shaping the service and report. Feedback from young mystery shoppers and their parents revealed that their involvement had many benefits, including: exposure to human resource practices for taking up formal employment; taking responsibility for time keeping; clear documentation and communication with supervisors; and verbal communication skills; as well as the more obvious learning about the research process.

### **Conclusions**

This extensive mystery shopping programme, conducted largely by young people, has resulted in an average quality of service score of 7.7 out of 10. The top mark of 10 out of 10 was scored in 12% of mystery shop interactions, and a further 23% scored 9 out of 10. One in five (19.1%) mystery shops scored 6 out of 10 or less.

It is important to young people that they receive reassurance from advisers that the service is confidential and anonymous. Young people prefer individually tailored advice, rather than standard or pre-prepared answers.

Advisers must be able to put themselves into the position of the young person seeking their assistance. Many CXD users are using the service for the first time, may be nervous and possibly embarrassed. Periods of silence on telephone calls or lack of outwards text in webchats (however brief) can feel longer, and cause concern, to the young person.

Satisfaction is lower than average where advisers have not addressed all questions or areas of concern revealed (or hinted at) by young people. The provision of links to useful websites or specific webpages was generally viewed positively. However, sending the webpage to a computer as a 'pop-up' can cause webchats to 'freeze' if 'pop-up blocker' software is running, a problem that should be explained by advisers.

The more interactive communication channels (telephone and webchat) were sometimes felt to last longer than necessary as advisers sometimes seemed to find it difficult to close the session clearly and positively. The questions asked for statistical purposes in the session can also seem to prolong the interaction.

Each communication channel has its own strengths and drawbacks. With a high level of awareness of the experience of requesting/receiving information and advice via each method, CXD advisers can adapt their approach to suit each of the channels.

Overall satisfaction scores are positive. If learning points from the CXD Mystery Shopping Survey 2006/7 are taken up by CXD, the service should maintain high user satisfaction and continue to develop to meet the needs of young people.

## 2 INTRODUCTION

This section introduces both the Connexions Direct (CXD) service, and the Connexions Direct Mystery Shopping Survey 2006/7.

### 2.1 Connexions Direct

CXD provides high quality, impartial information, advice and support to young people aged 13-19 via telephone (or mini-com), text message, adviser online (webchat) and email, from a centralised contact centre. The service complements the face-to-face delivery of services provided through existing local Connexions Partnerships, local authorities or their sub-contractors. Local Partnerships promote CXD as part of their service.

The aims of CXD are to:

- Widen access to advice and information for all young people when they need it.
- Develop a national, cost-effective service with consistent quality standards.
- Develop an integrated service, which complements the work of existing Connexions Partnerships, local authorities or their sub contractors.

From a user's point of view, its advantages are:

- **Anonymity:** both young people and concerned others can access the service without providing any personal information.
- **Availability:** the service is operational from 8am to 2am, seven days a week, 365 days a year, enabling immediacy of contact.
- **Accessibility:** the service can be accessed via mobile telephone, both through calls (charged at lo-call rate) or SMS text messages, webchat, email or mini-com.
- **Accuracy of information:** advisers have access to a comprehensive and up-to-date database of multi-issue information, at both local and national levels.
- **Adaptability:** the service is well suited to adapt to changing requirements.

The contact centre operates between 8am and 2am seven days a week, 365 days a year. It receives around 6,600 approaches from young people each week. Approximately 62% of enquiries are received by webchat, 22% by telephone, 13% by email and 3% by SMS text message. Specific response target times have been set for each communication channel, with the fastest responses expected for the 'live' interaction channels of telephone and webchat.



## 2.2 The Mystery Shopping Survey

The overarching aim of the CXD Mystery Shopping Survey is to provide an independent assessment of the quality and consistency of the advice being offered to service users.

The aim of any mystery shopping exercise is to mimic real-life situations within a controlled research and evaluation framework. Therefore, mystery shop interactions need to be unobtrusive and indistinguishable from genuine public interactions.

Mystery shopping was used as one form of evaluation during the pilot phase of CXD, and was repeated during 2005 (March/April). This CXD mystery shopping survey builds upon the methodology used previously, and introduces more 'qualitative' components to the research. Furthermore, this survey was commissioned to evaluate the service at three points during the year, rather than at a single point.

In order to assess as wide a range of CXD information and advice interactions as possible, a range of scenarios was used to imitate those known to be asked of the service. Furthermore, mystery shop interactions were arranged to be conducted throughout the entire working day/week of the CXD contact centre, using all four main contact methods. Mystery shops were also designed to represent the full demographic range of enquirers.

This mystery shopping exercise was designed to provide an independent, robust and replicable assessment of the quality of service being given to young people, involving young people in the research process wherever practically possible (Appendix 1).

## 2.3 Presentation of Data

Data from the mystery shopping evaluations is presented in tables and graphs, both of which are referred to as 'Fig.' throughout the report. Base sizes and descriptions are provided for all figures. All data is unweighted.

Percentages have been rounded to the nearest decimal place. Due to this rounding, the totals of a column or row of individual cells may deviate slightly from the 100% shown.

Throughout the report, the term 'mystery shoppers' refers not only to the individuals conducting the research, but also to the characters being played by mystery shoppers, following the scenario details provided to them. Assessments made by mystery shoppers were made 'in scenario character' considering the demographic and other background profile used for that individual mystery shop.

Verbatim quotations from mystery shop evaluation sheets completed by mystery shoppers after interactions CXD are included within the report to illuminate themes drawn out from wider analysis. These quotes are clearly referenced, including the communication channel used where relevant to the analysis e.g. (*Mystery shopper – telephone*).

Quotations are also used from focus groups with young people and with PAs working in local Connexions partnerships e.g. (*Young person reviewing a webchat*) or (*Connexions PA reviewing an email response*).

### 3 METHODOLOGY

This section outlines the methodological design process (involving young people throughout), and provides details of the methodology used to conduct the survey.

#### 3.1 Pre-existing Parameters for the Survey

Three equally sized fieldwork phases were scheduled for: early Autumn; mid Winter; and early Spring 2006/7. A total of 475 mystery shops were required in each phase. Fig. 1 outlines the number and proportion of mystery shops conducted through each communication channel at each phase and the proportion of CXD interactions conducted via those channels. The proportions of mystery shops conducted by email and SMS text interactions in the survey sample were boosted to enable analysis from robust data.

**Fig. 1: Sample Target Numbers by Communication Channel**

Method of communication	Number of mystery shops per phase	Percentage of mystery shops	Actual percentage of CXD adviser interactions
Webchat	150	32%	62%
Telephone	150	32%	22%
Email	100	21%	13%
SMS text	75	16%	3%
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Scenarios for mystery shops were required to replicate the main topic areas about which CXD receives enquiries. Fifteen scenarios were used for each phase of mystery shopping, thus each scenario would be used at least 30 times.

Mystery shops were conducted throughout the range of the CXD service's operating hours (8am to 2am, 7 days a week) roughly in proportion to actual demand flows. Each scenario was conducted at least once every day of the week; at different times of day; and by each communication channel. The fieldwork plan ensured that the spread of mystery shops reflected the workflows of the CXD service by day of week and time of day of week. Additionally, all three fieldwork periods included at least one week of school holiday, to reflect the different demand patterns outside of school terms.

#### 3.2 Mystery Shopping Fieldwork

A total of 40 mystery shoppers were involved in the survey, 28 of whom were aged between 13 and 19. Existing mystery shoppers with a background in providing Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) for young people or adults, were joined by young people aged 13-25. Comprehensive mystery shopping training was given, supported by an extensive user-friendly manual, written for the young people on this project. A field supervisor was available for contact from 8am to 10pm daily.

More information about the involvement of young people in the CXD Mystery Shopping Survey 2006/7 can be found in Appendix 1.

Each mystery shop used a unique 'Scenario Guide' sheet which was sent to mystery shoppers (along with the appropriate evaluation form) in advance of the planned date for that mystery shop. Scenario sheets provided:

- Unique mystery shop number.
- Scenario number and description.
- Day and the week to undertake the interaction.
- Contact method (and appropriate contact details, i.e. telephone number, text number, web address).
- Gender and age of the 'enquirer'.
- Location (and partial postcode) of the 'enquirer'.

Completed evaluations were subject to quality checks including comparison with interaction transcripts. Data entry was subject to at least 10% quality control, higher on key variables.

### 3.3 Profile of Mystery Shops Achieved by Phase

1459 mystery shops were conducted and analysed: 485 in Phase 1 (Sept-Oct); 484 in Phase 2 (Nov-Jan); and 490 in Phase 3 (Mar-Apr). Fig. 2 shows how these mystery shops were distributed across the four communication channels.

**Fig. 2: Communication Channel Used**

Base: Phase 1 - 485; Phase 2 - 484; Phase 3 - 490

	Total	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
Phase 1	485	154	156	98	76
Phase 2	484	152	155	102	75
Phase 3	490	158	157	100	75

Fig. 3 shows how the mystery shops were distributed across the days of the week to mirror the pattern of demand of the CXD service: Monday is the busiest day, Friday is quieter than other weekdays, and weekends (particularly Saturdays) have the lowest numbers of advice interactions. Mystery shops starting after midnight were recorded as the previous day of the week, i.e. 1:23am on Tuesday was recorded as Monday night.

**Fig. 3: Day of Week Mystery Shop Took Place / Started**

Base: Phase 1 - 485; Phase 2 - 484; Phase 3 - 490

	Mon	Tues	Wed	Thurs	Fri	Sat	Sun
Phase 1	83	81	84	80	64	37	56
Phase 2	90	78	81	74	71	36	54
Phase 3	92	85	82	71	75	37	48

Fig. 4 illustrates the distribution of mystery shops conducted by the time of day the mystery shop started, or the request was submitted to CXD. The data is presented in the time bands within which mystery shops were allocated to mystery shoppers. In most cases these time bands were two hours long. The number of mystery shops to be conducted by time band matched the volume of requests received by CXD, based on weekly CXD Management Information from the previous year.

**Fig. 4: Time of Day Mystery Shop Interaction Started**

Base: Phase 1 - 485; Phase 2 - 484; Phase 3 - 490

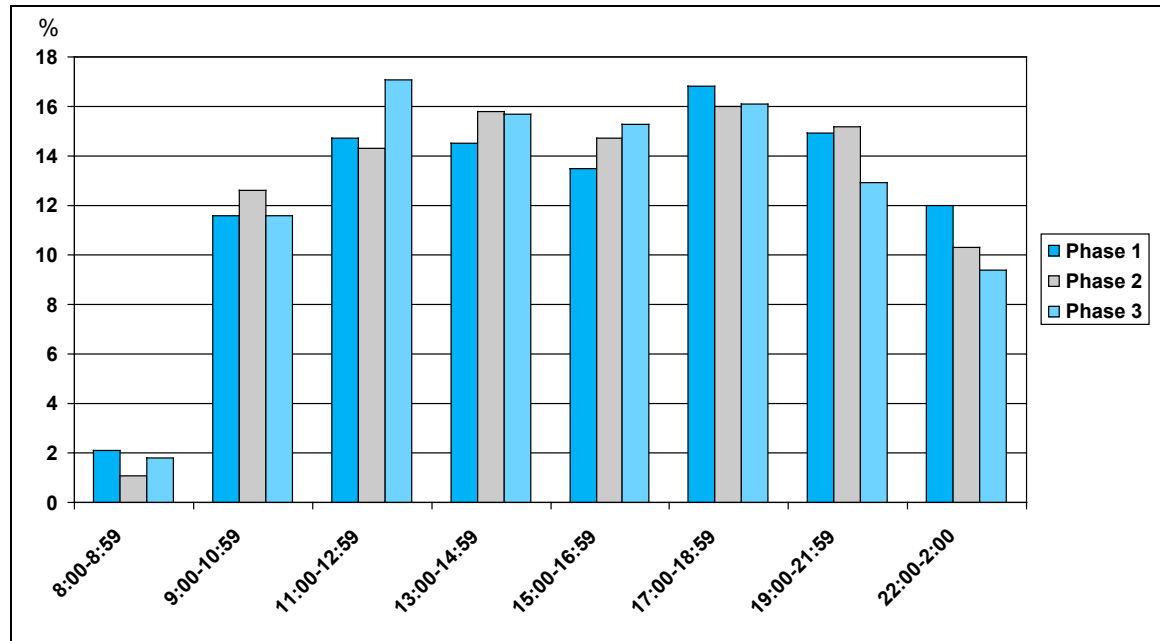


Fig. 5 shows the number of mystery shops conducted at each phase using each of the numbered scenarios from 1 to 15. While the detail of each scenario changed between each wave, the essence of the type of information/advice requested remained. Appendix 2 contains the full text for each scenario for each phase of fieldwork.

Each scenario was repeated between 25 and 37 times in each phase of fieldwork.

**Fig. 5: Scenario Number**

Base: Phase 1 - 485; Phase 2 - 484; Phase 3 - 490

	Scenario Number														
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
<b>Phase 1</b>	34	31	32	32	34	30	35	30	35	30	31	37	34	34	25
<b>Phase 2</b>	33	31	34	30	32	33	33	31	33	32	33	33	34	30	32
<b>Phase 3</b>	33	31	36	30	37	32	35	30	32	36	29	35	33	29	31

Note: One mystery shop in Phase 1 and one in Phase 3 did not have the scenario clearly recorded.

Each scenario was conducted numerous times both as a male and as a female enquirer. Many text messages did not reveal the gender of the enquirer (Fig. 6).

**Fig. 6: Gender of Young Person in Scenario**

Base: Phase 1 - 485; Phase 2 - 484; Phase 3 - 490

	Male	Female	Not revealed in interaction
<b>Phase 1</b>	204 (42%)	228 (47%)	53 (11%)
<b>Phase 2</b>	202 (42%)	234 (48%)	48 (10%)
<b>Phase 3</b>	185 (38%)	249 (51%)	56 (11%)

### **3.4 Qualitative Focus Groups with Young People and Connexions PAs**

Young people in the Connexions age range and Connexions PAs were consulted through focus group sessions during the design phase of the research and again after each phase. A focus group was held at each of the four points through the project lifecycle with 13-16 year olds in West Yorkshire, 16-19 year olds in Buckinghamshire, and with PAs in both locations. Furthermore, a focus group was held with young people (13-19) from across Hertfordshire after each phase.

During the design phase, young people and PAs provided input into the suggested scenarios and into determining the background and demographic profile of the enquirer for each scenario. Participants discussed ideas for scenarios for the pre-defined topics, then reviewed the scenarios drafted by researchers. Finally, they selected three possible scenarios for each topic, with their own recommendations for the age, level of education, family situation (if appropriate) and any other relevant characteristics. The finalised scenario list can be found in Appendix 2.

The young people also discussed which factors should be used to assess CXD interactions. They then reviewed and commented upon the assessment factors included on the draft evaluation form. This process ensured that the evaluation form did not omit any factors that are important to the service user cohort.

After each fieldwork phase, focus group sessions reviewed a selection of mystery shop interactions (tape recordings of phone calls and written transcripts from SMS texts, emails and webchats). Participants gave their reactions to various elements of the interactions, mirroring the assessment factors used by mystery shoppers. In addition to making comments about how well they felt the CXD adviser responded to each scenario, participants made suggestions about how the enquiry could have been dealt with better. The suggestions made often focused on communication skills and minimising scope for misinterpretation.

After phase 1, young people and PAs also looked at the factors used to assess the mystery shops, and created a ranking of the importance of the factors. After phase 3 they made recommendations about how to inform young people of the research and its findings.

More information about the involvement of young people can be found in Appendix 1.

## 4 EVALUATION – BY COMMUNICATION CHANNEL

The following section presents the findings from the Mystery Shopping Survey 2006/7, comparing the evaluations made of interactions conducted by each of the four communication channels.

### 4.1 Making Contact with CXD

Just one in twenty attempts to contact CXD to conduct a mystery shop failed on the first attempt, with webchats and emails having slightly higher contact failure rates than telephone and SMS text messages (see Fig. 7).

**Fig. 7: Number of Contact Attempts**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)

	Overall	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
<b>One</b>	94.5%	92.5%	95.7%	92.7%	98.7%
<b>Two</b>	4.1%	5.6%	3.0%	6.0%	0.9%
<b>Three</b>	1.0%	1.5%	0.9%	1.0%	0%
<b>Four</b>	0.4%	0.4%	0.4%	0.3%	0.4%

85% of telephone-based mystery shops were answered by a CXD adviser within five rings (following the recorded welcome message).

The average (mean) time between submitting an email request and receiving a response from a CXD adviser was 10 hours and 31 minutes. The average (mean) response time for SMS text messages was 1 hour and 41 minutes, however the median response time was just 13 minutes.

*Excellent intro – brief and apologised for the delay of about one minute before I was answered. (Mystery Shopper – webchat)*

7.6% of mystery shops conducted by telephone were put on hold by the CXD adviser at some point during the call. In the vast majority of cases, the adviser gave an adequate explanation of why they were putting the call on hold: just one mystery shop evaluation recorded where this was not the case.

*Said I really wanted to speak to a lady, put me on hold and explained it would go quiet. It took a while and I spoke to the male adviser twice, but he did get a female adviser to actually take the call - he didn't ask what I wanted to talk about, that was good. (Mystery Shopper – telephone)*

#### Lost Webchat Connection

In 89.7% of webchat mystery shops, the whole interaction was completed without any technical difficulties. When webchats were not completed, mystery shoppers recorded what they thought had happened:

- 1.3% - I lost my internet connection.
- 3.2% - The webchat connection broke down (but my internet connection remained open).
- 2.2% - It seems the adviser closed the interaction before I was finished.
- 2.2% - Not sure how the webchat got cut off.

## 4.2 Greeting

The table below shows the factors on which mystery shoppers assessed the greeting and for which communication channels these factors were relevant.

	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
Whether the adviser made it clear that they had reached Connexions Direct	•	•	•	
Whether the adviser revealed their own first name	•	•	•	•
Whether the adviser mentioned that the service was confidential	•	•	•	
Whether the adviser's tone of voice/style of writing made them feel at ease and comfortable to explain their problem/situation	•	•	•	

In most cases, the adviser confirmed that the enquirer had reached CXD. This is most important for telephone approaches, as there is a possibility of misdialling. Fig. 8 shows that even though email responses are sent from the email address [noreplies@cxdirect.com](mailto:noreplies@cxdirect.com), most advisers also include a mention of CXD at the start of their email.

### Fig. 8: Elements of Greetings

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)

	Overall	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
Confirmed had reached CXD	97.2%	99.6%	98.5%	91.7%	-
Adviser revealed own name	44.3%	4.5%	85.7%	72.3%	2.7%
Adviser mentioned confidentiality	10.0%	2.2%	22.8%	2.0%	-
Adviser made them feel at ease	94.2%	93.1%	93.4%	97.0%	-

Fig. 8 shows that in the majority of telephone and email advice sessions, the adviser reveals their own name to the enquirer (85.7% and 72.3% respectively).

Only in a minority of webchats (4.5%) did the adviser introduce themselves by name to the enquirer (see Fig. 9). Advisers are not required to introduce themselves by name, as the adviser's name is shown at the start of each piece of webchat text they write, but the focus group discussions revealed that young people understand that this label is computer generated, and view it as impersonal.

*The system does most of it for the adviser, but he didn't bother to personalise the intro. (Mystery shopper – webchat)*

Due to the character limit of SMS text message services (approximately 160 characters per message), most SMS text messages are signed off 'CXD', however a small number of mystery shops revealed advisers also including their own name.

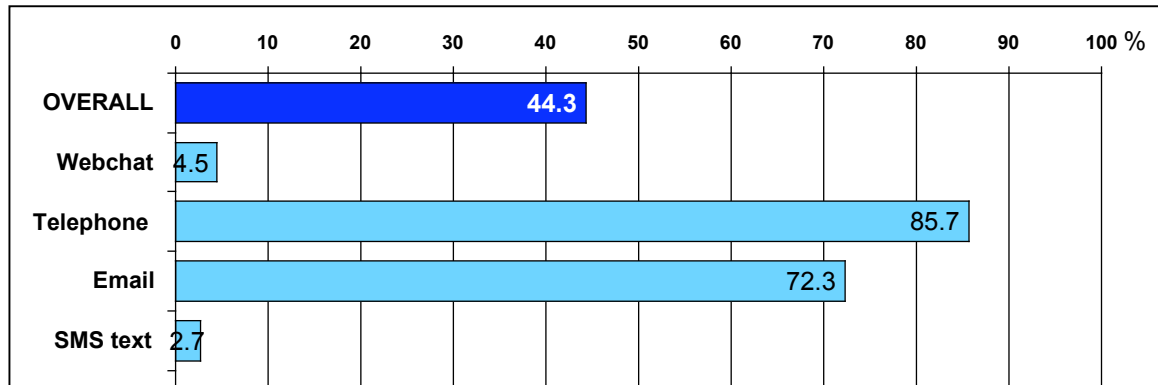
Telephone-based mystery shoppers often commented that it was frequently necessary to check their audio recordings to see if the adviser had revealed their name. This is because adviser names are generally given only once, in the welcoming statement. At this point, callers may be nervous and concentrating on phrasing their question, and not listening carefully. Young people in the focus groups said that they are inexperienced in telephoning call centres, and would be unlikely to

note the adviser’s name even though they might hear it. There were other concerns e.g. that ‘pre-prepared’ phrases sound as if they are scripted.

*The intro ‘hello, I’m...’ is very fast, so the caller may not register the adviser’s name. You’re not listening for names or thinking that way when the call is first answered. It’s like a robotic tone some of them use at the start of calls, it takes a bit of time for you to tune in. (Young person reviewing taped telephone interactions)*

**Fig. 9: Adviser Revealed Own First Name**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)



(NB: adviser first name appears automatically on webchat)

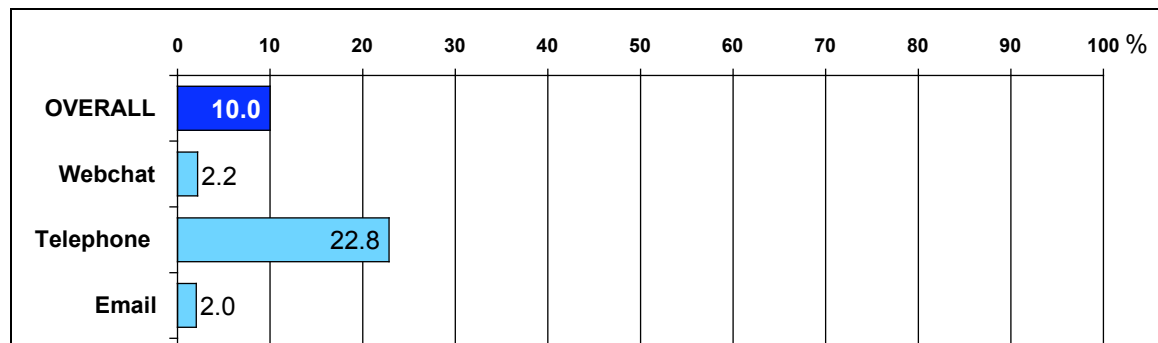
Seven out of ten email responses included the adviser’s name, and in the majority of these cases, the adviser revealed their name only in the closure of the message, not in the introduction.

*Friendly greeting, used my name. Thanked me for using CXD. Didn’t tell me their name till the end. (Mystery shopper – email)*

Although the CXD website has a clearly signposted confidentiality statement, and the pre-recorded message that all callers hear before being transferred to an adviser provides an option to hear a statement, the survey measured the incidence of advisers mentioning confidentiality (see Fig. 10).

**Fig. 10: Adviser Mentioned Confidentiality**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



It is rare for advisers using a written communication channel to mention the confidentiality of the service, relying on the young people themselves to read the confidentiality statement on the website before initiating an interaction. Feedback



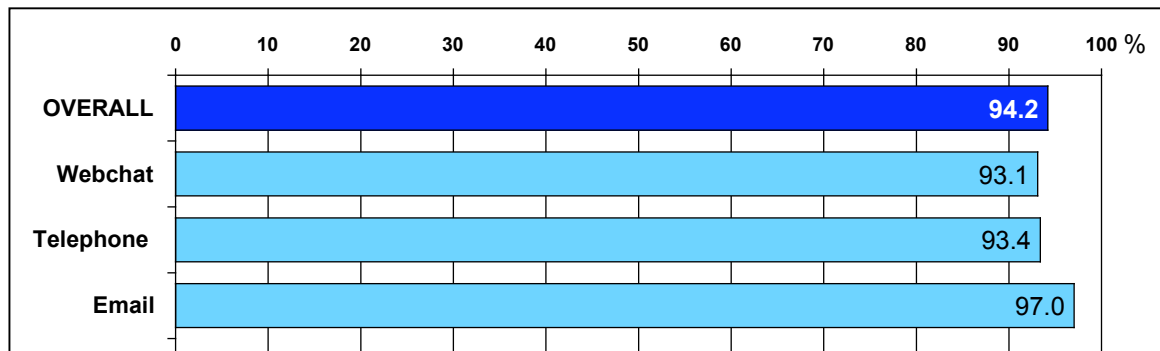
from mystery shoppers and focus groups suggests that few young people will read the confidentiality statement, and would appreciate advisers personally reassuring them about the confidentiality of the service.

Confidentiality is mentioned most frequently by advisers when giving information and advice by telephone as can be seen in Fig. 10. For many scenarios (e.g. simple careers or learning enquiries), confidentiality is less of an issue, unless a young person expresses a concern.

Mystery shoppers indicated that the adviser’s tone of voice or style of writing put them at ease in at least 9 out of 10 cases (see Fig. 11).

**Fig. 11: Adviser’s Tone of Voice/Style of Writing**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



Advisers’ tone or style was viewed more favourably on email than other methods.

All factors appropriate to the channel were taken into account by mystery shoppers to assess their overall satisfaction with the greeting. Greetings were assessed on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicates that the greeting was ‘totally unacceptable’ and 10 indicates that it was ‘excellent’. The average (mean) scores awarded were:

- 7.4 for webchats;
- 7.7 for telephone interactions;
- 7.7 for email responses.

This suggests that young people are broadly happy with the quality of greeting on all CXD communication channels. Generally it would appear that greetings on webchat interactions are perceived slightly less favourably than those via other channels. The slightly highly positive assessment for telephone greetings can perhaps be explained by the natural positive response from receiving a verbal greeting, particularly when a warm tone of voice is used.

*A nice greeting, she had a calm, clear voice and it was gentle as well. (Mystery shopper – telephone)*

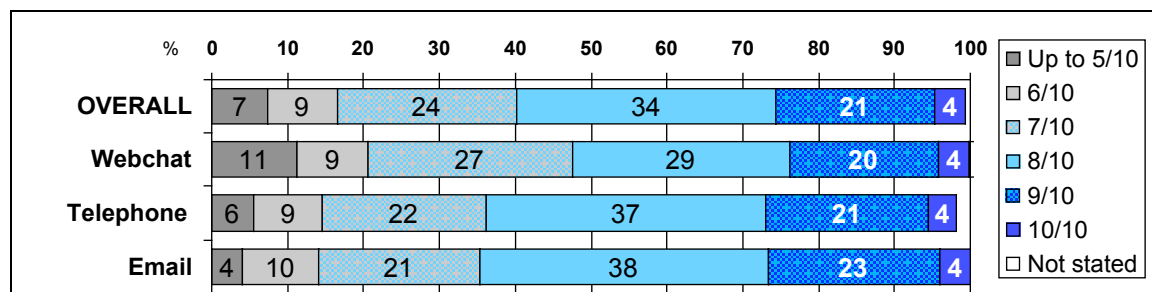
*Easy to talk to and introduced herself well. (Mystery shopper – telephone)*

*Very polite, attentive and made me feel at ease. (Mystery shopper – telephone)*

The most common score for the quality of greeting was 7 out of 10, given to a third of mystery shops. Only 4% of greetings were assessed as 10 out of 10 for quality (Fig. 12).

**Fig. 12: Overall Score Out of Ten – Greeting**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



### 4.3 Listening and Probing

The table below shows the assessment factors used to evaluate CXD advisers' use of listening and probing skills by communication channel.

	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
Whether the adviser remained quiet and listened/showed that they had read and understood the question or problem		•	•	•
Whether the adviser asked any additional or probing questions to assist their understanding of the question or problem	•	•	•	
Whether the adviser summarised their understanding of the question or problem	•	•	•	

In more than nine out of ten mystery shops, the adviser was felt to have read or listened carefully to the explanation of the problem, and showed understanding (see Fig. 13). Asking additional or probing questions, and summarising understanding by advisers was less common, and variable between communication methods.

**Fig. 13: Adviser Remained Quiet and Listened/Showed that they had Read and Understood the Question or Problem**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)

	Overall	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
Adviser read/listened and showed understanding	92.9%	-	97.0%	95.7%	80.5%
Adviser asked additional/probing questions	58.0%	64.7%	79.1%	15.0%	-
Adviser summarised their understanding	58.1%	37.3%	57.6%	91.0%	-

Mystery shoppers felt that advisers had remained quiet/read carefully and gained an understanding of the question or problem in 97.0% of telephone calls, 95.7% of emails and 80.5% of SMS texts. Mystery shoppers commented that in some cases

that advisers appeared not to have read the text carefully as some responses did not fully address the questions posed. The character count limitation on SMS text messages restricts response content. The evaluation seeks only to collect views on the advisers' apparent understanding.

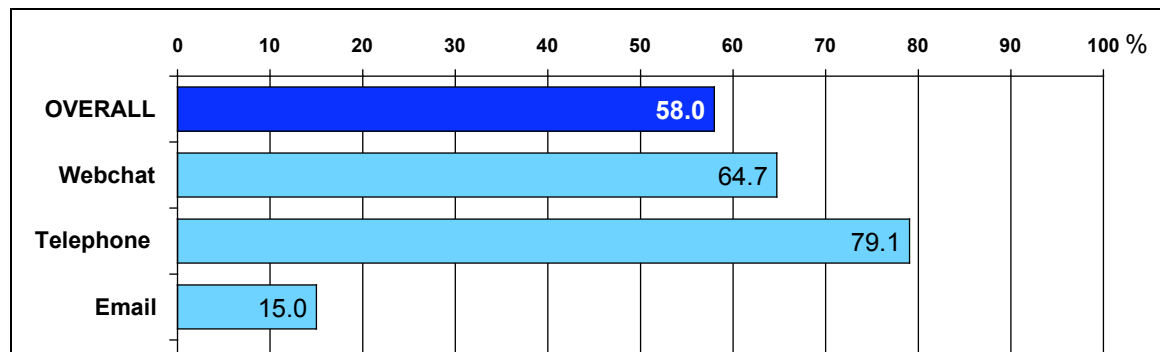
Mystery shoppers' comments and written transcripts reveal that in some webchat interactions, the adviser was a little too eager to receive questions from the enquirer. In some cases, advisers sent several short messages before receiving anything from the enquirer. This may be seen as 'pushy' and may put off a nervous enquirer.

*The adviser was a bit hasty and sent me three messages before I had sent one. (Mystery shopper – webchat)*

*Just 'how may I help you' asked twice, no time for me to actually write a question. (Mystery shopper – webchat)*

**Fig. 14: Adviser Asked Additional or Probing Questions**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



In most webchats, advisers ask additional or probing questions, the proportion of cases in which this happens is lower than in telephone interactions (see Fig. 14). The even lower incidence of advisers asking additional or probing questions via email reflects the fact that only rhetorical questions may be asked via this channel. A second email request is unlikely to be answered by the same adviser.

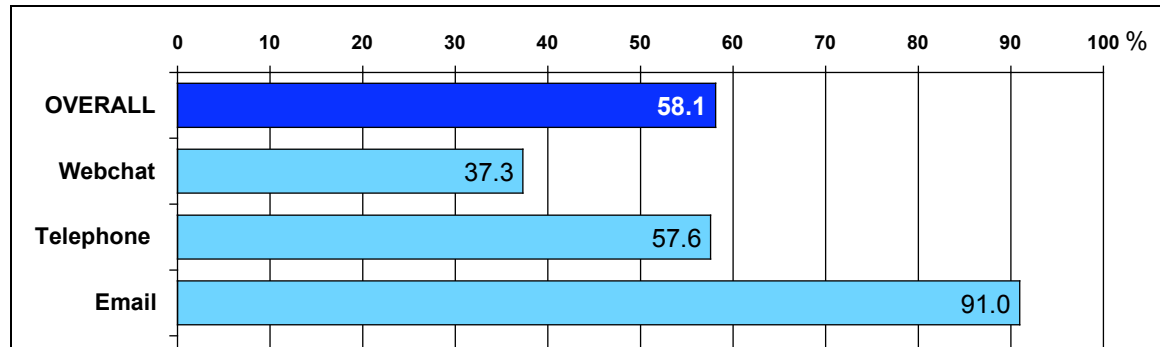
In general (except for SMS text messages), CXD advisers summarised the question, thereby checking their understanding (see Fig. 15). Nine out of ten email responses started with a summary of the situation or question asked, but only 57.6% of telephone interactions and 37.3% of webchat interactions included a summary.

*Summarised my query and gave early positive comments. (Mystery shopper – email)*

*The adviser thanked me for contacting them and then went straight into summarising my question. (Mystery shopper – email)*

**Fig. 15: Adviser Summarised Their Understanding of the Question/ Problem**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)

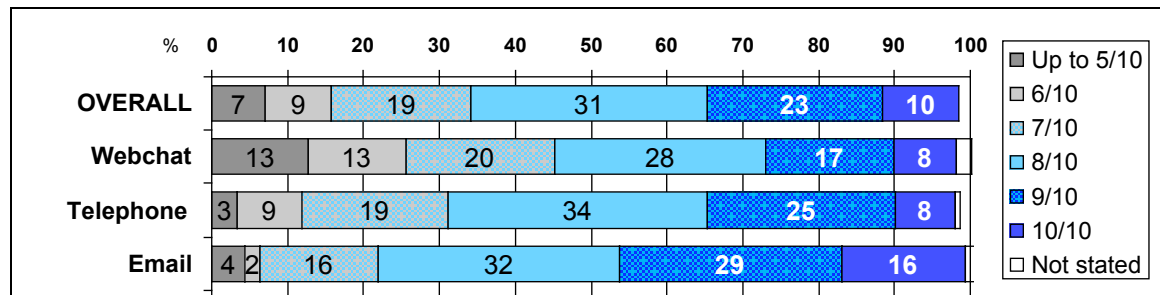


The factors above (where appropriate to the interaction) were taken into account to assess overall satisfaction with the listening and probing demonstrated by advisers. Listening and probing were assessed on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicates that the listening and probing was 'totally unacceptable' and 10 indicates that it was 'excellent' (see Fig. 16). The average (mean) scores awarded were:

- 7.4 for webchats;
- 7.9 for telephone interactions;
- 8.2 for email responses.

**Fig. 16: Overall Score out of Ten – Listening and Probing**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



The additional time available to advisers when responding to email enquiries compared to webchats or telephone calls, may make it easier for them to read the message carefully and to demonstrate their understanding of the situation/ question. With webchats there is potential for misreading or misinterpreting snippets of text and also pressure to type responses at speed. The non-interactive email process enables better structured and worded responses, but is limited by young people's description of the situation or problem, as clarification cannot be sought.

Telephone has the advantage of speed, true interaction, and the potential for personal rapport, but the absence of written exchanges means that both parties are reliant upon short-term memory and instantaneous interpretation. Some telephone interactions scored lower in terms of listening to all aspects of the situation, but scored well in terms of probing for greater understanding.

*The adviser picked up on all my concerns written out in my initial query, looked at each query separately. (Mystery shopper – email)*

*Seemed to pick up on bits of what I said but only in the latest comment and was not building up a whole picture, felt like I'd got onto a railway track that had only one destination and I wasn't sure I'd chosen it. (Mystery shopper – webchat)*

*The adviser 'ummed' and 'aahed' while I explained my problem so I knew she was listening. (Mystery shopper – telephone)*

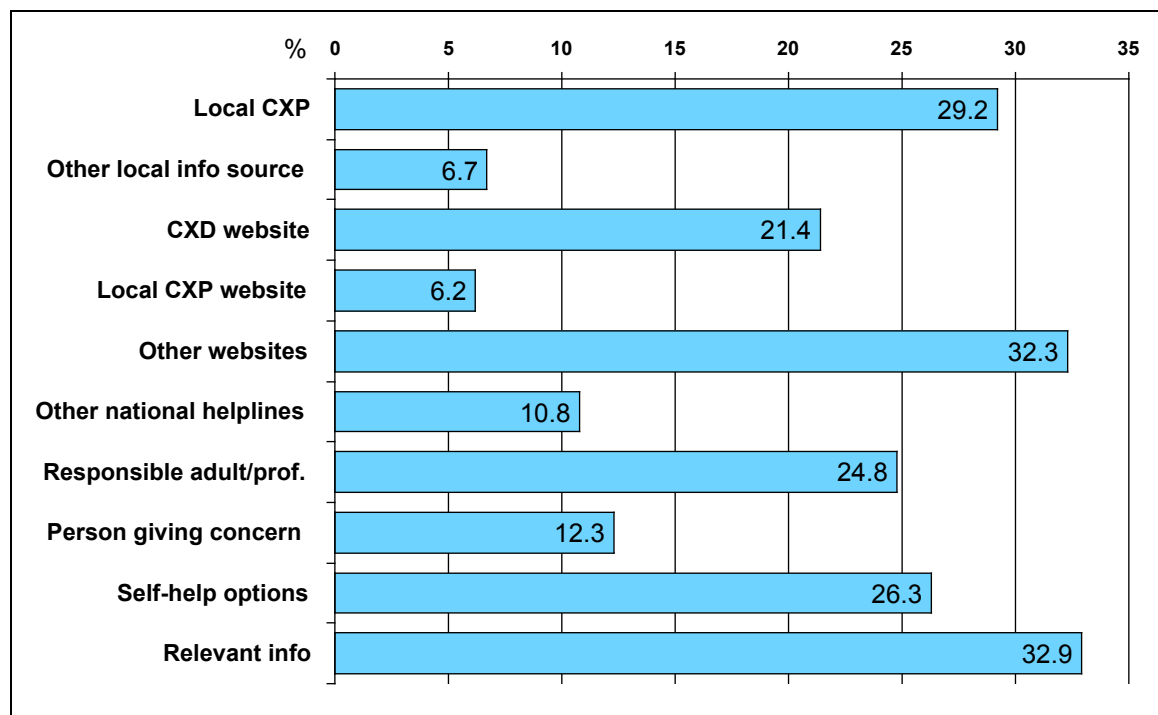
#### 4.4 Provision of Information and Advice

In a third (32.9%) of interactions, across the range of scenarios, CXD advisers provided relevant information, and in a quarter, advisers recommended 'self-help'.

A fifth (21.4%) of mystery shops resulted in a recommendation to explore the Connexions Direct website (including the Jobs4u online database), and around one in twenty (6%) resulted in a recommendation to view a local Connexions partnership website. A third (32.3%) of interactions included a recommendation to access more detailed information through websites provided by organisations other than Connexions. The analysis of the 15 scenarios provides information on websites and helplines recommended (see Appendix 4).

**Fig. 17: Types of Information and/or Advice Given by Adviser**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)



Three out of ten (29.2%) mystery shops resulted in the CXD adviser recommending direct contact with the local Connexions centre or PA for a more detailed discussion.

*What I did think was good was that the adviser said to her 'Do you know where your local Connexions office is?' and 'Your Connexions adviser will know where to go in your area.' (Connexions PA reviewing a telephone recording)*

In a quarter of interactions, CXD advisers recommended talking to another professional or responsible adult: e.g. teacher, doctor, parent or other relative. In 12.3% of cases, the adviser recommended talking directly to the person giving the caller cause for concern: this often included the adviser making suggestions of how best to approach the issue in a non-confrontational manner.

**Fig. 18: Types of Information and/or Advice Given by Adviser**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)

	Webchat	Tele- phone	Email	SMS text
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	19.4%	33.5%	29.0%	40.7%
<b>Other local information sources</b>	5.8%	9.4%	4.7%	5.3%
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	17.7%	16.0%	39.3%	16.4%
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	7.1%	5.3%	8.0%	4.0%
<b>Other websites</b>	36.0%	28.8%	52.0%	5.8%
<b>Other national helplines</b>	8.4%	13.0%	11.3%	10.2%
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	25.6%	27.1%	29.0%	12.8%
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	15.7%	13.4%	11.7%	3.5%
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	29.3%	26.7%	34.0%	9.3%
<b>Given relevant information</b>	36.9%	29.0%	41.0%	22.1%

There is some variation in the type of information given communication channels (Fig. 18). It is not appropriate to compare data for SMS texts directly with other channels, except when broken down by the scenario used, because this channel was used extensively for specific information requests (e.g. asking for the contacts details of a specific Connexions centre).

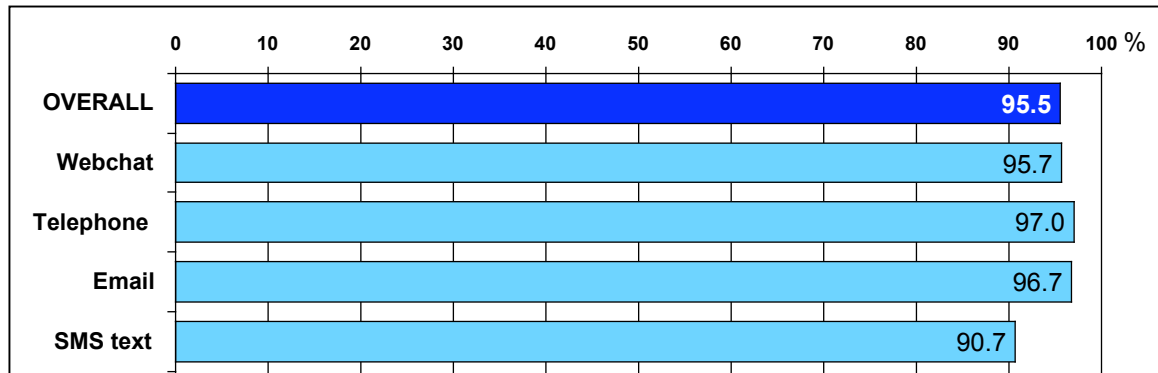
The CXD website is recommended more frequently via email than any other communication channel: often by the use of 'stock phrases' pasted into emails, in addition to the auto-signature providing the full range of contact details for the CXD service. Compared to webchat and telephone, information and advice received via email is also more likely to include recommendations for local Connexions Partnership websites and other (non-Connexions) websites.

The final significant difference between communication channels is the lower level of 'relevant information' provided directly by advisers (rather than signposting) via telephone (29.0%), compared to webchat and email (36.9% and 41.0%).

In at least 95% of cases, the mystery shopper found the information and/or advice understandable (see Fig. 19). SMS text interactions recorded the lowest level of understanding (90.7%), which may be due to a small number of text message responses that were received in an unreadable format and mystery shoppers not understanding why the response just asked them to contact CXD by telephone.

**Fig. 19: Understanding of Information/Advice Given**

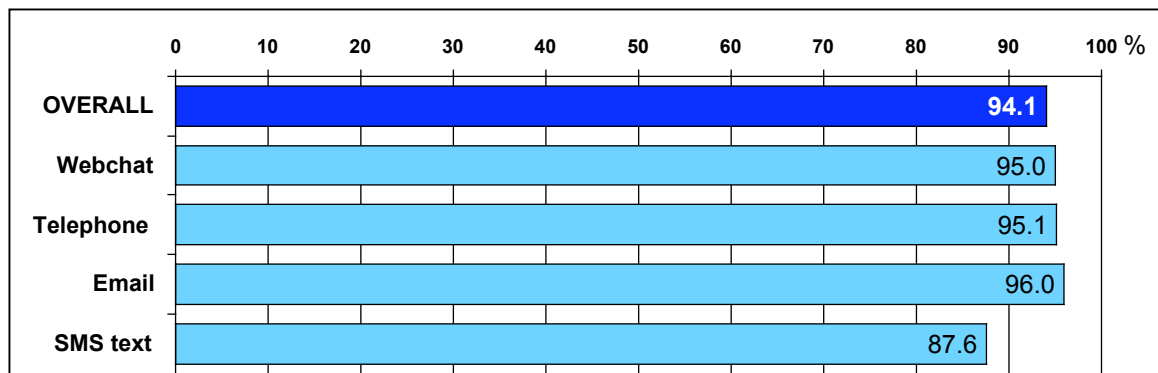
Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)



Overall, 94.1% of mystery shoppers felt that the suggested action or information provided was relevant to the scenario used (see Fig. 20).

**Fig. 20: Perceived Relevance to Scenario of Suggested Action/ Information**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)



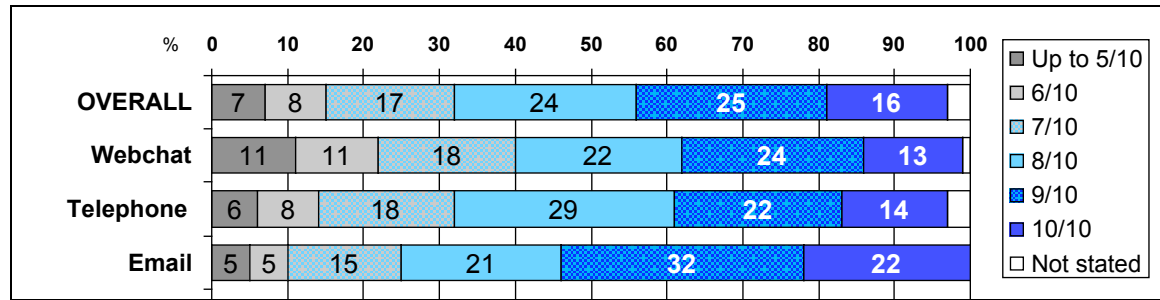
The quality of the information and advice given was assessed by mystery shoppers on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicates that the information and advice given was 'totally unacceptable' and 10 indicates that it was 'excellent' (see Fig. 21). The average (mean) scores awarded were:

- 7.7 for webchats;
- 7.9 for telephone interactions;
- 8.3 for email responses.

*Gave me loads of relevant advice, which you could tell the adviser had spent time thinking about as it was detailed and went over every detail I wrote about. (Mystery Shopper – email)*

**Fig. 21: Overall Score out of Ten – Quality of Advice**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



## 4.5 Closure of Interaction

Mystery shoppers assessed the way the adviser brought the interaction to a close by recording the information shown below:

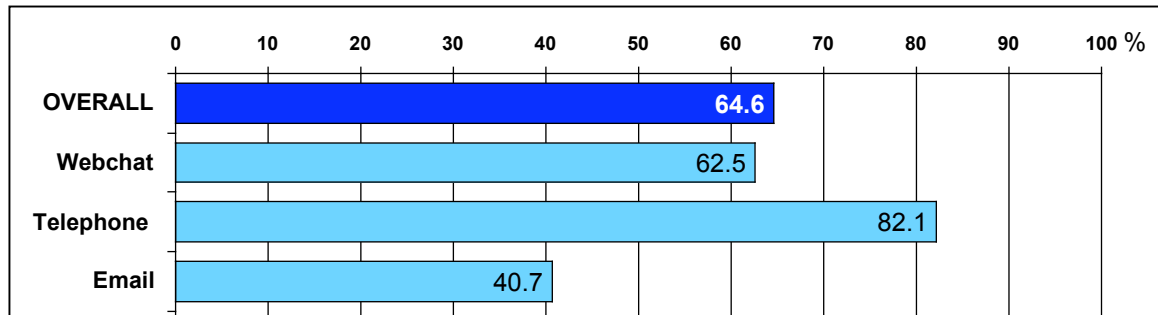
	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
Whether the adviser checked that they had answered the question and had provided the information the enquirer needed	•	•	•	
Whether the adviser checked if there was anything else they could help with	•	•	•	
Whether the adviser reminded the enquirer that they could contact CXD again (and which communication channels were mentioned)	•	•	•	•
Whether the adviser closed the interaction by saying 'thanks', 'take care' or something similar	•	•	•	•

In two out of three cases, CXD advisers checked directly with the enquirer that all their questions had been answered or that all required information and/or advice was received. There was significant variation between communication channels: Four out of five telephone calls but only three out of five webchats and two out of five email responses were felt to include a check of this nature from the adviser (see Fig. 22).



**Fig. 22: Adviser Checked they had Answered Everything**

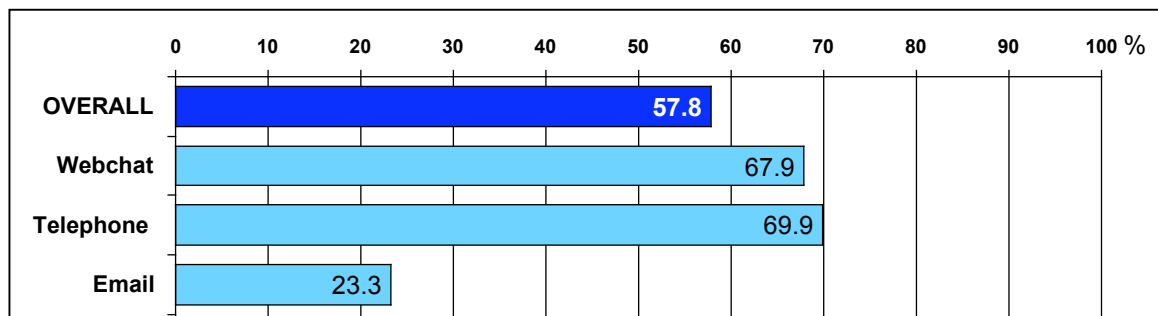
Base: 133 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



In almost seven out of ten cases CXD advisers using telephone or webchat asked whether there was anything else they could help with (Fig. 23). Despite email communication only allowing for a single response, in almost a quarter of cases the adviser wrote to indicate that further questions could be asked if the individual required.

**Fig. 23: Adviser Asked if there was 'Anything Else They Could Help With'**

Base: 1233 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email)



Overall, advisers gave reminders that the CXD service could be re-contacted in two fifths of cases: 34.3% of webchats; 31.8% of telephone calls; 77.7% of emails; and 27.0% of SMS texts (Fig. 24). Generally, enquirers were either reminded they could re-contact by the same channel they had just used, or no channel was mentioned at all (just contact CXD again).

**Fig. 24: Reminders of Re-contact Channels**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)

Re-contact Channel Mentioned	Overall	Webchat	Telephone	Email	SMS text
Telephone	26.2%	14.2%	30.5%	41.0%	22.1%
Webchat	23.2%	30.6%	5.8%	46.7%	13.3%
Email	19.3%	10.8%	2.1%	69.7%	5.8%
SMS text message	9.0%	2.2%	1.1%	34.3%	6.2%
Any channel	40.5%	34.3%	31.8%	77.7%	27.0%

*They've put in the freephone number and that they're open seven days a week. I like that. (Young person reviewing an email response)*

Mystery shoppers assessed the closure of the interaction and farewell on a scale of 1 to 10, where 1 indicates that the closure and farewell was 'totally unacceptable' and ten indicates that it was 'excellent'. The average (mean) scores awarded were:

- 7.7 for webchats;
- 7.9 for telephone interactions;
- 8.3 for email responses.

## 4.6 Overall Assessments

Mystery shoppers made four additional assessments on their whole interaction with CXD for those by webchat, telephone and email (not SMS text).

### Adviser's Tone

Mystery shoppers made a simple assessment of each interaction on whether the adviser's tone had kept them at ease throughout. Overall, 94.6% of mystery shops were felt to have been conducted by the CXD adviser using a tone that kept the enquirer at ease.

- 90.3% for webchats;
- 96.8% for telephone interactions;
- 97.7% for email responses.

### Objectivity and Impartiality

Overall, 97.4% of mystery shop interactions were assessed to have been conducted by an adviser who remained objective and impartial throughout, with only small variation between communication channels.

- 95.7% for webchats;
- 98.1% for telephone interactions;
- 99.0% for email responses.

### Clarity and Appropriateness of Language

Just 2.4% of all mystery shops were judged to include language that was not clear and easy to understand for the young person described in the scenario or included words or slang that were judged to be inappropriate.

### Speed/Pace of Interaction

Mystery shoppers rated their perception of speed or pace of the interaction on a five point scale, from 'too slow' to 'too fast'. This measure relates not to how long it took to make contact or to complete an interaction, but rather to the appropriateness of the time taken to deliver the information/ advice and to ask questions.

Overall, 74.5% of mystery shops were felt to have been conducted at a suitable pace; 17.9% were judged to be too slow; and just 7%, too fast.

More than four out of five interactions by telephone and email were judged by mystery shoppers to have got the pace 'about right', compared with three out of five interactions by webchat. 26.9% of mystery shops conducted via webchat were felt to have been 'a little slow', and a further 5.4% felt the interaction had been 'too slow'. Explanations given by mystery shoppers for these assessments frequently mentioned the time that it took for the webchat screen to refresh and reveal new text from advisers, and the time that advisers took to type in new text. There was some feeling that advisers were impatient while waiting for enquirers to type in their questions and responses, but took a long time to do so themselves.

**ADVISER:** I'm sorry you feel unable to talk right now. It may be that you are experiencing technical difficulties or unable to talk at this time. You may find it easier to email us or telephone us on 080 800 13 2 19. I will stay online for a little while longer and then I will have to close the call.

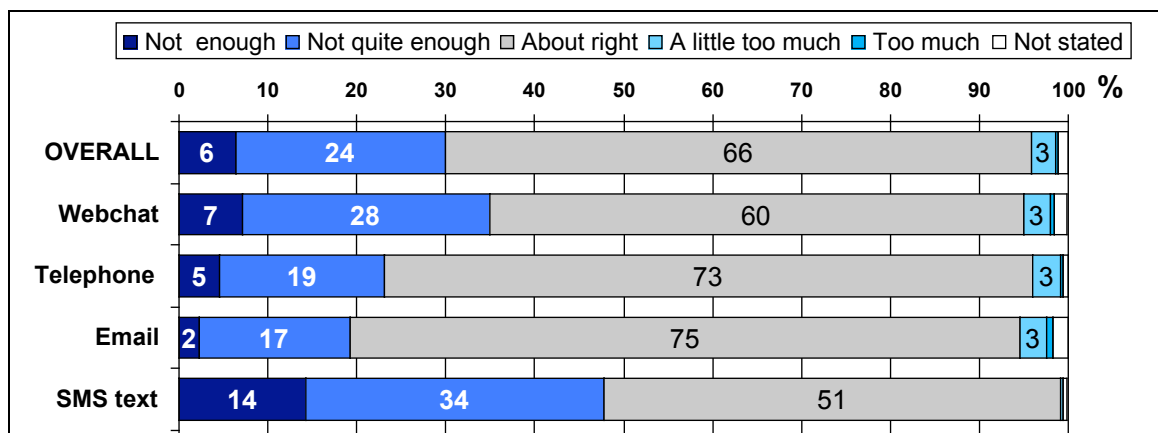
*The adviser sounded like there was another phone call waiting so wanted to get this one over with. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

**Amount of Information Provided**

Mystery shoppers rated their perceptions of the amount of information provided on a five point scale, from 'not enough' to 'too much' (see Fig. 25). 66.0% of mystery shops were felt to have provided 'about the right amount' of information; 23.5% 'not quite enough'; 6.4% 'not enough'; and 3% 'too much information'.

**Fig. 25: Perceived Quantity of Information Received**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)

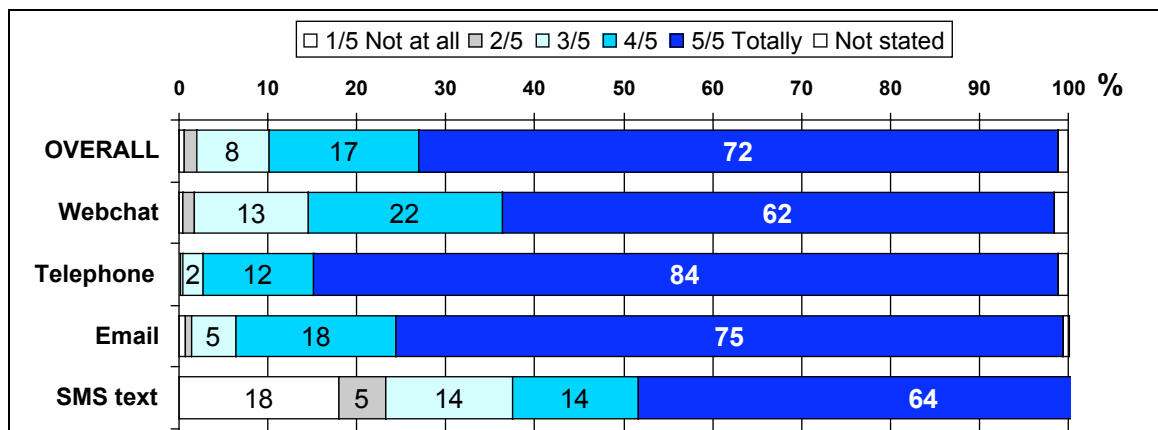


**Understanding of the Information/Advice Provided**

Mystery shoppers rated how well the information / advice provided by the adviser was understood, on a five point scale, from 'not at all' to 'totally' (see Fig. 26). 72.0% of mystery shops overall resulted in an assessment that the information and/or advice provided was fully understood. Email and telephone interactions received the top rating more than webchat and SMS text.

**Fig. 26: Extent of Understanding of Information/Advice Provided**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)



**Overall Quality of Service**

Finally, the overall quality of service provided by CXD in answering the query thoroughly and appropriately was assessed on a scale of 1 to 10 (Fig. 27). A score of 1 indicates that the service was deemed to be 'totally unacceptable' and 10 indicates that it was 'excellent'. The average (mean) scores awarded were:

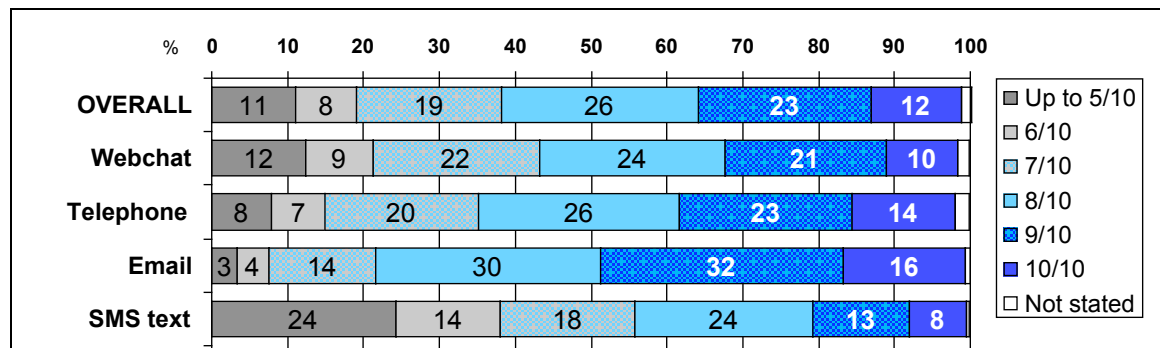
- 7.5 for webchats;
- 7.9 for telephone interactions;
- 8.3 for email responses;
- 6.8 for SMS text messages.

While telephone was felt to be the best method for the warmth of greeting, the careful reading of email requests and well-researched detail/ wording of email responses led to a better overall satisfaction evaluation. Webchats lacked some warmth compared to telephone, and lacked the level of detail and thought of email. Therefore despite their speed and immediacy, webchats have a slightly lower overall satisfaction rating.

SMS text message channel scored lowest (6.8 out of 10). However, when the 68 SMS text messages asking for local Connexions centres' contact details are isolated, the mean satisfaction score rises to 8.5 out of 10. When SMS text is used for requesting straightforward information and a brief response such as addresses and phone numbers, the satisfaction is high. Lower satisfaction scores for SMS text came from scenarios that were more complex (possibly requiring two-way interaction). An analysis of SMS text replies in phase 1 revealed that the average length was just 128 characters (32 short of the optimum). The shortest message was just 62 characters in length.

**Fig. 27: Overall Score out of Ten - Quality of Service**

Base: 1459 (464 - Webchat; 469 - Telephone; 300 - Email; 226 - SMS text)



*The tone was really good, the adviser summarised it, gave the right information and the websites and then after that went 'above all else, believe in yourself.' I dunno, it was really personal and nice. (Young person reviewing an email response)*

*I think that email is probably a more effective method because they can have time to think about what they are replying about and they have more time to research it and compile it. (Young person reviewing an email response)*

## 5 SUMMARY OF EVALUATION BY SCENARIO

This section provides a quantitative summary of the key assessments, comparing assessment scores given to each of the 15 scenarios. For more detailed scenario by scenario analysis with qualitative observations comparing the different versions of scenarios used at each phase, see Appendix 4.

**Fig. 28: Average (mean) Score out of Ten - by Scenario**

Base: All Mystery Shops (Number shown in brackets for each scenario)

Scenario	Greeting	Listening & probing	Information & advice	Closure / farewell	Overall quality of service
<b>1 – Nearest Connexions Centre (89)</b>	7.4	7.5	7.6	7.1	7.4
<b>2 – Post-16 Choices (93)</b>	7.6	7.8	8.0	7.8	7.8
<b>3 – Learning Choices (102)</b>	7.6	7.8	7.9	7.8	7.8
<b>4 – Choosing a Career (92)</b>	7.6	7.5	7.9	7.3	7.7
<b>5 – Apprenticeships (103)</b>	7.5	7.6	8.0	7.5	7.6
<b>6 – Graduate Careers (95)</b>	7.7	7.8	8.2	8.0	8.1
<b>7 – Sexual Health Issues (103)</b>	7.8	8.0	8.3	7.9	7.8
<b>8 – Mental Health Issues (91)</b>	7.5	7.9	7.7	7.6	7.7
<b>9 – General Health Issues (100)</b>	7.4	7.6	7.9	7.4	7.5
<b>10 – Family Relationships (98)</b>	7.7	7.9	7.7	7.6	7.5
<b>11 – Personal Relationships (93)</b>	7.5	8.0	8.0	8.0	7.8
<b>12 – Money (105)</b>	7.6	7.4	7.9	7.6	7.6
<b>13 – Housing (101)</b>	7.5	7.7	7.6	7.5	7.3
<b>14 – Bullying (93)</b>	7.9	8.2	7.9	7.9	7.7
<b>15 – Legal Issues (88)</b>	7.7	8.0	8.1	7.7	7.9

Although assessments of greetings; listening and probing; and closure of interactions varied very little according to the detail of the scenario, the type of information and/or advice did vary. Appendix 4 of this report contains scenario by scenario analysis.

Overall quality of service ratings ranged from 7.3 out of 10 (for mystery shops related to housing problems) to 8.1 out of 10 (for those related to graduate career options).

Satisfaction scores for the information and advice given by advisers ranged from 7.6 out of 10 (for mystery shops seeking contact details for the nearest Connexions centre) up to 8.3 out of 10 (for those related to sexual health issues).

## 6 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The three-phase survey assessed the information and advice service offered by CXD. It assessed performance in responding to pre-agreed, realistic scenarios covering the range of topics handled by CXD, and undertook wider qualitative investigations with 13-19 year olds to explore their expectations from such a service.

### **Awareness of CXD and its Advice Service**

The qualitative (focus group) element of the research highlighted the relatively limited awareness that 13-19 year olds (including those actively engaged with local Connexions Partnerships' activities) have of the CXD service, or the range of issues the service covers.

*I would use the Connexions Direct adviser service. I had a right big family problem ages ago, but I didn't know about Connexions Direct then. (Young person in a focus group)*

*I think they should make young people more aware of it. (Young person in a focus group)*

### **Choice of Communication Method**

Mystery shoppers, young people and Connexions PAs reviewing interactions noticed significant differences in the style and content by communication method. The universal view was that SMS text messaging has severe limitations for CXD advisers because of the limited number of characters possible within a single text message. It was suggested that the explanatory text on the CXD website should state more clearly that this method is not suitable for providing detailed advice or information as only a single message of no more than 160 characters can be sent back.

It was suggested by mystery shoppers and focus groups that the CXD website pages describing each communication channel could show clearly the positives and negatives of each method before providing more detailed information.

*Email does not allow for probing, there is no probing or questioning. There should be a warning that this is for information....otherwise the young person may be expecting more from it. (Connexions PA about email)*

*I think it's good. They start it off well. They clarify what the client is asking by giving a summary of it again. They pick out positives about what the client has said. They directly address what the client is asking about. (Connexions PA reviewing an email response)*

This survey has revealed that the communication channel can have a significant impact on the overall satisfaction with the service. CXD advisers can do little to overcome difficulties arising from the choice of channel once the interaction begins.

### **Confidentiality and Anonymity**

One of the clearest findings is that young people expect services such as CXD to be confidential and anonymous. Focus group sessions revealed the importance of providing clear explanations of why young people are asked to give their name on the CXD online registration or at the start of telephone calls. Some young people questioned what reassurance was available that advisers kept their confidences. When challenged, advisers should be able to give a clear response and reassurance.

*How do you know that the adviser that you're talking to isn't going to go away and tell another adviser? (Young person in a focus group)*

### **Personalisation**

Some mystery shoppers and young people in focus groups expressed irritation at what they saw as the over-repetition of the enquirer's name by the adviser. When the individual's name is used sparingly by the adviser (1-3 times) most young people indicated that the technique made the interaction feel personalised. However, use of a name repeatedly was felt to be unnatural and possibly insincere. As there are contrasting views on the use of names, it may be helpful to strike a balance. Advisers may find an appropriate technique is to note the name, use it once or twice at the start of the call to establish a personal touch, and finally once or twice to close.

*It's a bit weird how the adviser keeps using the caller's name. (Young person reviewing a webchat transcript)*

*Even though it's nice to see the young person's name used, I think it's over used. The adviser uses it at the start of every paragraph and I think I'd get a bit annoyed with that. (Young person reviewing an email response)*

The research revealed how skilled young people are in spotting standardised text and 'stock phrases', and how negatively they feel towards the use of pre-prepared wording. This was raised particularly in regard to webchat and email interactions, and to a small extent for the telephone.

*Is the first line automated? Because there's a repetition there. (Young person reviewing a webchat transcription)*

*They should just type it in, like 'Hello Kirsty, welcome to Connexions Direct, my name is xxx, how can I help you?' That will make it more personal. It's easier to talk to someone when you know their name. (Young person reviewing webchats)*

### **Picking Up Hints and Answering All Points**

Mystery shoppers, young people in focus group review sessions, and Connexions PAs reviewing mystery shops all highlighted examples of responses or interactions where some CXD advisers answered only part of the question, or failed to pick up on hints of underlying concerns.

*I'm afraid it sounds very much like a teacher telling pupils about study skills. I don't think the issues have been brought up here. This is a classic case of a young person at home who does not get time to revise as they might have siblings running around. Might have suggested try and find space...there may be classes after school made just for this purpose. (Connexions PA in response to a webchat regarding stress and lack of sleep in Year 11)*

*The adviser is looking for the safe ground on this. The safe ground would be going on about study skills as we know about them. These are very specific things that you can talk about, when a lot of what is behind this is non specific and needs to be brought out. (Connexions PA in response to a webchat regarding stress and lack of sleep in Year 11)*

*It goes on quite a lot about money, his parents, EMA and all that, but not about finding accommodation – part of what he asked for. (Young person reviewing an email interaction)*

Advisers need to be alert to hints given by young service users, and be able to probe gently to explore issues to enable them to formulate a fuller response. Advisers should also ensure that where more than one issue is raised that all issues are seen to be addressed and avoid bundling responses to several issues together.

### **Avoiding Silences**

CXD advisers should be able to put themselves in service user's position. Many young people are using the service for the first time and may be nervous and possibly embarrassed. Periods of silence on telephone calls or lack of outwards text in webchats may seem brief to the adviser, but can seem much longer, and quite concerning to the young person, who does not have the benefit of knowing how the advisers and the webchat technology work.

*The adviser was making the caller wait, and if she had to make him wait while she found information, she could have kept talking to him. (Young person reviewing a telephone recording)*

*There were long silences on this call while the adviser looked up info. The adviser should reassure the caller that they are still there. The silence could have been filled. (Young person reviewing a telephone recording)*

We recommend that if an adviser needs time to seek information or to structure a response, they inform the young person that there will be a pause and explain why.

### **Provision of Weblinks**

The provision of links to useful websites and to specific pages within websites was generally viewed very positively, except where it was felt that little beyond signposting to websites was provided. The webchat 'pop-up' mechanism, whereby advisers send a 'pop-up' that opens the recommended website in a secondary window on the enquirer's screen, provoked mixed opinions. On the positive side, it required less effort by the enquirer to view the recommended webpages immediately, while keeping the webchat screen open so that interaction could continue. However, where advisers either did not ask whether the enquirer would like to receive the weblink as a pop-up, or check that the enquirer understood what a pop-up was, technical problems could occur. Common 'pop-up blocker' software can cause the webchat interaction screen to freeze when a pop-up is sent. In these situations, the enquirer may be unable to type messages to the CXD adviser, who is unaware of the technical problems and thinking that the enquirer has ended the interaction. One solution may be for advisers to always check before sending pop-ups and to explain potential problems, including termination of the session. The fact that weblinks provided in the webchat text will not work once the webchat ends unless opened during the interaction itself, also needs explanation.

*It was good that they asked them to save it to favourites. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

Mystery shoppers and focus group participants identified that during webchat interactions in particular, there can be a rather awkward time while the young person takes time to look at the weblinks provided by the adviser. Advisers need to be sensitive to the needs of the enquirer, and not to appear to be rushing them.



*They asked 'would you like to end the call now so that you can have a look [at the weblinks provided].' I didn't think that was good. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

*The adviser could have suggested 'when you've looked through, perhaps you'd like to call back Connexions Direct.' (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

In cases such as these, advisers could provide a choice, without pressure one way or the other, to the young person to stay online while viewing the link and then to resume discussion, or to make an arrangement to re-contact later.

### **Framing the Profiling/Statistical Questions**

Asking young service users to provide personal information such as ethnic origin, and disability can be sensitive. CXD advisers employ different approaches to ask these questions, designed to 'capture' data about service users for monitoring. Some advisers are more explicit than others in explaining the optional nature of the questions, about their purpose and the confidentiality with which answers are treated.

*Towards the end, I didn't like how the adviser asked the questions, said you don't have to answer these questions, but went straight into them. (Young person reviewing a telephone recording)*

*It was good because they respected the person's wishes not to provide information. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

*The adviser made the caller feel comfortable even though they said that they didn't want to answer the questions. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

*Why do they need to know where you got their number from? (Young person reviewing a telephone recording)*

*The adviser asked if they could ask some data capture questions, I wouldn't have known what that was. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

*Saying 'just for statistics' doesn't really tell you enough as to why they are asking them. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

Advisers should remember the importance of fully informed consent and enable young people to refuse to answer any or all questions. In addition, care and sensitivity is needed when attempting to ask these questions concurrent with searching for information required by the young person.

*It was like the adviser was bribing the young person, like 'OK I'll get you some information, but would you answer some questions while I search for it?'. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

Of a range of examples shown to young people and Connexions PAs, the following text from a webchat was viewed most positively:

**Adviser:** Just before you go would it be OK to ask you a couple of quick questions? It's just to make sure we are helping everyone in society. You don't have to if you don't want to, but it would help us improve our service.

**Young Person:** Yeah, sure.

**Adviser:** Thank you, that's really helpful. Could you give me the first three digits of your postcode (to make sure we are reaching everyone across the country)? And could you tell me where you heard about Connexions Direct?

It was suggested that once permission to ask the questions has been sought and granted, that in webchats it would be quicker if all the questions were sent together (but numbered to separate them), to allow the young person to read them through and send back one response including or omitting answers to questions, as desired.

### **Closing the Interaction**

The interactive communication channels of telephone and webchat were sometimes felt to go on longer than necessary as advisers sometimes felt it to be difficult to close the session clearly and positively. In contrast, email responses were generally thought to end well, often with a summary of the advice given in the body of the email and a step-by-step summary of the possible actions to be taken or options to explore.

*I think that it was kind of long because the adviser was repeating himself in some way. He could have just said what each of her options were. (Young person reviewing a telephone recording)*

*If it was me, I'd have hung up already. (Young person reviewing a telephone recording)*

*I like the way it said 'keep in touch' at the end, which is quite friendly, and also it gave the opening hours. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

*It was good that one adviser said 'good luck with getting a job' rather than something generic like 'good luck in the future'. This made it clear that it was personalised. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

A personalised touch at the end of the interaction, without appearing to be 'pre-scripted' would be appropriate.

### **Overall Satisfaction**

This mystery shopping exercise of 1459 mystery shops conducted largely by young people has resulted in an average quality of service score of 7.7. The number of interactions scoring the top mark of 10 out of 10 was 12%, and a further 23% scored 9 out of 10. One in five mystery shops scored 6 out of 10 or less.

The greatest overall satisfaction score of 8.3 out of 10 was for email interactions, where advisers have more time to research/respond. Telephone interactions, personalised and interactive, scored 7.9 out of 10. Webchats, interactive yet with technical problems, scored 7.5 out of 10. The confines of a 160 character SMS text message resulted in the lowest score of 6.8 out of 10 for that channel.

Overall satisfaction scores are positive, and if learning points from the CXD Mystery Shopping Exercise 2006/7 are taken up by CXD, the service should maintain high user satisfaction and continue to develop to meet the needs of young people.

## **APPENDICES**

### **APPENDIX 1: INVOLVING YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE RESEARCH DESIGN**

VT Research used their experience in designing and conducting mystery shopping surveys of information and advice services, alongside Management Information from the CXD service, to produce draft scenario descriptions. At least 3 suggestions were made for each of the 15 scenarios (as different scenarios would be used in each phase), each with a suggested demographic profile for enquirer. Suggested scenarios were cross-checked against the scenarios used in the 2005 survey to avoid direct repetition.

After initial design, groups of young people in the Connexions age range and Connexions PAs provided input on the scenarios, background information and demographic profile of the enquirer. They discussed ideas for scenarios for the pre-defined topics and reviewed scenarios drafted by researchers. Finally, they selected three possible scenarios for each topic, with their own recommendations for the age, level of education, family situation (if appropriate) and other relevant characteristics to a young person making each enquiry. The finalised scenario list can be found in Appendix 2.

The young people also commented on the assessment factors to be included on the draft evaluation form. This process provided valuable information about which factors are particularly important to the CXD service user cohort in determining their overall satisfaction with the service, and ensured that the evaluation form did not omit factors important to them. The greatest number of assessment factors was used for interactive channels (telephone and webchat), fewer for emails, and least for SMS text, where content is limited (see Appendix 3 – Fig. 29).

## APPENDIX 2: SCENARIO TEXT

### **Scenario 1 (Directory Enquiries)**

#### **Phases 1 - 3**

##### **You want to know where your nearest Connexions Centre is.**

Young person: You are 19 and left school (with 4 GCSEs at D-G grade. You now have a job without formal training (e.g. shop work) and find the work boring, but don't know what to do instead).

### **Scenario 2 (Careers & Learning)**

#### **Phase 1 - You are worried that you have made the wrong choice - college feels so much different from school.**

You are 16, just starting in your first term at college. You are studying for a BTEC National Diploma in Media Studies. You got 5 GCSEs at C or over.

#### **Phase 2 - You want to know how to find information about current job vacancies.**

You are 17. You have left school (with 3 GCSEs of Grade C or above, including English) and are currently unemployed, still living with your parents. You are getting bored, and want money, and know your parents want you to start working. You want to know where to look for jobs.

#### **Phase 3 - You are not sure whether you can afford to go to college, and wonder whether you should just get a job and work your way up from there.**

You are 16. You have been looking at the courses available and the likely costs associated with carrying on in learning next year. You are concerned about the wisdom of running up debt and delaying your entry to the workplace. You are wondering whether in the long run you would do as well by starting work and building up experience and taking part-time courses alongside employment.

### **Scenario 3 (Careers & Learning)**

#### **Phase 1 - The A level courses you have chosen seem so academic. You are wondering if you should have done something more practical – perhaps moving to college. Is it too late?**

You are 16, just starting your first term in the sixth-form at school. You are studying for AS levels, and planned to stay for A levels. You got 5 GCSEs at C or over. However, you are also good at practical tasks such as design and technology, and you are interested in electronics. You are wondering which is the best direction to go in.

#### **Phase 2 - You want to know how to research for projects/coursework without getting in trouble for copying from the internet.**

You are 16 and studying for AS levels. You want to do a lot of research for current projects and coursework. The internet seems the easiest way to do this. You want to know how much you can copy from the internet without getting into trouble with your teachers.

#### **Phase 3 - You want to know how to choose a university that will suit your interests and lifestyle.**

You are 16 and studying for AS levels. You feel a bit overwhelmed by the shelves of prospectuses, and want some suggestions on how to narrow down the search. You want a course that will have modules that interest you and make sense for what you want to do long term. You also realise that different universities will have different approaches and outlooks, and you want to go to one where you'll feel you fit in.

### **Scenario 4 (Careers & Learning)**

#### **Phase 1 - You want to know how to search for a career that uses your ability in languages.**

You are 14, in Year 9 and confident of your ability in languages. You are starting to think about what you will do after leaving school. You want to know how to find out about courses/jobs you can do in this area.

#### **Phase 2 - You want to know how to search for a career that uses your ability and interest in science.**

You are 14, in Year 9 and confident of your ability in science. You are starting to think about what you will do after leaving school. You want to know how to find out about jobs (and courses) you can do in this area.

**Phase 3 - You want to know how to search for a career that uses your ability and interest in art and design.**

You are 14, in Year 9 and confident of your ability in art and design. You are starting to think about what you will do after leaving school. You enjoy working free hand and are also exploring technical drawing and computer-aided design. You want to know how to find out about jobs you can do in this area.

**Scenario 5 (Careers & Learning)**

**Phase 1 - You want to know how to arrange an apprenticeship to be a painter/decorator.**

You are 17, currently in a job without training, and looking for a job combining money with training. You are concerned about the balance between work and college, but want to earn while you train. You have heard about apprenticeships, don't know much about them. You like doing 'hands-on' work, and so are thinking about a trade, such as painting or decorating.

**Phase 2 - You want to know how to arrange an apprenticeship to be a chef.**

You are 18, currently in a job without training. You don't want to go back to college full time, but you do want to learn a trade on the job, and carry on earning. You have heard about apprenticeships and wonder if they could be the answer.

**Phase 3 - You want to know how to arrange an apprenticeship in landscape gardening.**

You are 18, currently in a labouring job/shop job, and want to find a job that will allow you to earn while you train. You have heard about (modern) apprenticeships and wonder if they could be the answer. What types of apprenticeships are available, or what kinds of opportunities are there? You like doing 'hands-on' work, and so are thinking about a trade, such as gardening.

**Scenario 6 (Careers & Learning)**

**Phase 1 - You want to know how to become a teacher.**

You are 17, just starting Year 13. You have 8 GCSEs at C or over and 3 AS levels. You are wondering what sort of qualifications you would need to be a teacher.

**Phase 2 - You want to know how you can get into nursing.**

You are 17, just starting Year 13. You have 5 GCSEs at C or over and 3 AS levels (inc. biology). You are wondering what to do next to get into nursing.

**Phase 3 - You want to know how to become a social worker.**

You are 17, just starting Year 13. You have 8 good GCSEs (at C or above) and 3 AS levels. You are wondering what sort of qualifications you would need to be a social worker. You are interested in this career because you want to help people, especially families.

**Scenario 7 (Health – Sexual)**

**Phase 1 - You want to get some contraception but are too scared to see your doctor. You want to know if there is anywhere else you can go.**

You are 15 and have had a boy/girlfriend of the same age for 3 months, and want to start having a sexual relationship. You know that contraception is the way to prevent pregnancy, and reduce the risk of catching AIDS and other illnesses.

**Phase 2 - You are worried that you (your girlfriend) might be pregnant. You want to know what you can/should do.**

You and your boyfriend/girlfriend are both 15 and have started having sex. You have used condoms, but your (girlfriend's) period is now late and it's never been this late before. You don't want to talk to your parents about it, and you are worried about going to see the doctor in case someone finds out.

**Phase 3 - You are concerned that you might have an STI (sexually transmitted infection).**

You are 15 years old and have slept with someone new recently. You didn't always use a condom. You wonder whether there's anything you can do to avoid going to your family GP.

**Scenario 8 (Health – Mental)**

**Phase 1 - You are starting your final year of GCSEs and are feeling stressed. You struggled to keep up last year, and you are now feeling worried and not sleeping properly.**

You are 15 and just starting Year 11. You are tired and can't concentrate because of lack of sleep and worry. You have two younger brothers and a sister and have to help mum around the house quite a lot. You are finding it difficult to balance homework for school and tasks around

the house, as well as meeting up with friends.

**Phase 2 - You think your friend might be anorexic. You are really worried about her and want to know what you can do to help her.**

You (and your friend) are 14. Your friend has almost stopped eating and has lost a lot of weight. You have tried to encourage her to eat more, but she just keeps saying that she is overweight. You don't know what to do.

**Phase 3 - Your friend has been smoking cannabis and this worries you.**

You are 14. Your friend told you some time ago that s/he had started smoking cannabis occasionally, but you now think that occasionally has become regularly. You also feel that your friend's personality has changed. How can you usefully raise your concern with your friend?

#### **Scenario 9 (Health – General)**

**Phase 1 - You have been getting really bad toothache on and off, but don't have a dentist.**

You are 16 and are not registered with a dentist. You have not been to the dentist for 3 years. Your family move around a lot which is why you aren't registered. Your parents are not registered either.

**Phase 2 - You feel that you are overweight and out of shape, but want to get more active and healthy. You want some suggestions about what you can do that won't cost a lot of money.**

You are 16 and in Year 12 and have a part-time job at weekends in a shop (9-6 Sat and 11-5 Sun). You tend to snack a lot and eat fast food. You don't play any sports, and have never liked sport. You don't have any transport.

**Phase 3 - You have quite a lot of spots and people are making fun of you.**

You are 13. You have tried lots of creams and face washes but nothing is working. Is there anything else you can do?

#### **Scenario 10 (Family Relationships)**

**Phase 1 - Your stepbrother and sister have just moved in with you. They are both younger than you but you feel left out and feel like they're invading your personal space.**

You are 14 and not very confident. In the past you have had a good relationship with your mum but things have changed now. You get on OK with your stepfather, but you now feel like your stepbrother and sister are getting more attention than yourself.

**Phase 2 - Your mum and dad seem to be arguing a lot, and you are worried that they will split up. You want to know what you can do.**

You are 13. As Christmas approaches/during Christmas your parents have started to argue more. You have a good relationship with your parents usually but can't speak to them about this as you are too scared to.

**Phase 3 - Being asked to look after your younger siblings is stopping you from going out.**

You are 16. Your parent(s) go out a lot/are often at work in the evenings and at the weekend, and expect you to look after your younger brother/sister(s). Your plans have to take a back seat, and you are missing out on time with your friends, and going out yourself. You don't even think you can take a part-time job yourself because you don't know when you can commit to be available to work.

#### **Scenario 11 (Personal Relationships)**

**Phase 1 - All of your friends have got boyfriends/girlfriends, but you are not as confident around boys/girls. It's getting you down because you want a boyfriend/girlfriend too.**

You are 13. You have lots of friends at school but are quite shy. You are an only child. You haven't told anyone about this worry.

**Phase 2 - You think your friend might be gay, but they won't talk about it.**

You are 15. You have a friend who you think may be gay. You don't know how to approach him/her about this, but you would like to let them know that it's OK and doesn't bother you / will not affect your friendship. If you are right, you'd like to be able to support them, e.g. as someone to talk to, whether or not they want to 'come out'.

**Phase 3 - Your girlfriend/boyfriend wants a baby, but you don't think you are ready for that.**

You are 17. You have been together for 18 months and feel quite serious about each other. How can you say no without sounding like you are not serious about the relationship?

### **Scenario 12 – (Money)**

**Phase 1 - You want to know how you can get some money quickly. You don't know of any part-time jobs that are available locally, and going to college is costing you.**

You are 16 and have started college. Your family are not very well off, and you realise how much money you are going to spend on travel, lunch and books. You haven't applied for an EMA. You need money immediately.

**Phase 2 - You want to know if it is too late to apply for an EMA.**

You are 16 and have started college. You are spending a lot of money on travel, meals and books. You didn't think you need to apply for an EMA before you started college, and thought you wouldn't get much, but you are now skint. You have friends in similar situations to yourself who get an EMA.

**Phase 3 - You want to know how to tell a good credit card offer from a bad one.**

You are just 18 and are getting a lot of credit card applications through the post. You know that credit cards can cost you a lot if you miss a payment and owe interest, but realise they are very useful especially for buying things over the internet. You would like to know what features to look out for and what to avoid.

### **Scenario 13 – Housing**

**Phase 1 - You want to know if it is possible to live independently of your parents.**

You are 16 and at college, and you would like move into a flat with your boyfriend. You get on well with your parents, and they like your girl/boyfriend. S/he is also 17 and has a full-time job, which is not very well paid. You have a part-time job which fits around college. You wonder if there are any benefits available to help you live independently of your parents, and if there's any help available to find accommodation.

**Phase 2 - Your parents are moving, but you want to stay in the area so that you can complete the course(s) you are part way through. You want to know how to find somewhere to stay, and whether there is any help available with paying the rent.**

You are 16 and in Year 12. Your parents are planning to move away from the area. You have started AS levels and want to stay to finish your A levels. You have a part-time job which fits around college. You wonder if there are any benefits available to help you.

**Phase 3 - Your dad/mum says that if you stay out late once more s/he's going to throw you out of home, you want to know if s/he can do this. You are 15.**

You are 15. You know that you are pushing the boundaries at home a bit, but you are now worried that you might get thrown out of home. You are still in Year 11 and don't know what to do. How could you get somewhere else to live? Can your dad/mum do this?

### **Scenario 14 – Bullying**

**Phase 1 - You are worried that your brother/sister is being bullied at school. You want to know what you can do.**

Your brother/sister (aged 14) has become very quiet recently. They are not talking to you or your parents as much as they used to. You have noticed them looking agitated when they receive texts on their mobile. They are complaining more about going to school and have started asking to walk to school with you and your friends. What can you do to help, you are in Year 11 at the same school, but don't see him/her much during the day?

**Phase 2 - You are getting some hassle from a boy/girl in your class, and want to know what would happen to him/her if you tell the teacher that you are being bullied.**

You are 15. Recently someone in your class has been calling you names etc. You are worried about talking to your teacher about what is happening and wonder what would happen to the person and to yourself if you do so.

**Phase 3 - You've been getting nasty emails/text messages.**

You are 15. You don't recognise the sender's address. You've heard that there's a way to stop certain messages from getting through, but are worried that they'll just start again from a new SIM/email address. It must be someone you know, and you wonder if there's a way of finding out who, then you might be able to deal with it.

### **Scenario 15 – Legal**

**Phase 1 - You are worried that your brother/sister is shoplifting. You are worried that they**

**will be caught and want to know what would happen if they are.**

You are 18. Your brother/sister is 15. S/he has a Saturday job, but the sort of clothes and goods they have been bringing home recently are well above what they earn. You want to talk to them about it and want to be able to tell them what sort of trouble they will get in if they are caught, and what would happen if the police become involved. You don't want to talk to your parents about it, and you want to know what will happen if the police become involved.

**Phase 2 - You want to know how much work (paid work) you can do when you are still at school.**

You are 15 (Year 10). You are thinking about getting a part-time job in a shop. You want to earn as much as you can, so need to know what the maximum number of hours you can work while you are at school are.

**Phase 3 - You want to change your name legally to be the same as your mum (and stepfather).**

You are 15. You do not have a positive relationship with your father (and he hasn't lived with you for years). Your mum has married a great guy who's made you feel like a real family again. You want to change your name. You don't want to have your dad's name, and think it would be nice to take your stepfather's name. You'll be 16 in a few months, and would like to know what you have to do to change your name, and whether it is expensive.



## APPENDIX 3: EVALUATION FORMS

The table below shows the assessment factors for the evaluation of interactions by channel. The greatest number of factors was used for interactive channels (telephone and webchat), fewer for emails, and least for SMS text, where content is limited by the technology.

**Fig. 29: Assessment Factors for Evaluation Forms by Channel**

	Webchat	Phone	Email	SMS
Length of time to respond	x	x	x	x
Clear greeting mentioning Connexions Direct	x	x	x	
Adviser's name	(x)*	x	x	x
Mention of confidentiality	x	x	x	
Tone of voice/style of writing – put at ease	x	x	x	
Collection of service user profile info for MI	x	x	x	
Remain quiet & listen to/read & understood request		x	x	x
Ask additional or probing questions (inc. rhetorical)	x	x	x	
Summarise understanding of request	x	x	x	
Type of information given	x	x	x	x
Relevant contact details given	x	x	x	x
Offered 'pop-up' of recommended website	x			
YP's understanding of advice/information received**	x	x	x	x
YP's perception of the relevance of advice/info received	x	x	x	x
Check that request was fully answered	x	x	x	
Check whether there was a secondary issue	x	x	x	
Close with 'Thanks/Take care' or other positive phrase	x	x	x	x
Reminder of methods of contacting CXD	x	x	x	x
Tone kept YP at ease throughout	x	x	x	
Remained objective and impartial	x	x	x	
Clear and appropriate language used	x	x	x	
Speed of conversation/interaction	x	x	x	
Amount of information given	x	x	x	x
Understanding of information given	x	x	x	x
Put on hold at any point		x		
Loss of webchat	x			

\* Computer generated for webchat

\*\* Young People

The evaluation form (amalgamated from 4 forms: 1 for each channel) is shown over the page.

To summarise evaluation by channel:

### Webchat

Question 6a not used.

### Telephone

All questions used.

### Email

All questions used.

### SMS text

Questions 3a, 3c, 3d, 4a, 4b, 5a, 5b, 6b, 6c, 7a, 7b, 10a, 10b, 11a, 11b, 12a, 12b, 13a, 13b, 14a, 14b, 15a, 15b, and 16a not used.

# MYSTERY SHOPPING OF THE CONNEXIONS DIRECT SERVICE

1	Mystery Shop Number	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>	Scenario number	<input style="width: 100%;" type="text"/>
2a	Day of week:	<input style="width: 25%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 25%;" type="text"/>	<input style="width: 25%;" type="text"/>
2b	Time of day:	<input style="width: 25%;" type="text"/> :	<input style="width: 25%;" type="text"/> :	<input style="width: 25%;" type="text"/> :
3a	Did the greeting make it clear that you had reached Connexions Direct?	Y	N	
3b	Did the adviser tell you their first name? (In addition to the label on webchat).	Y	N	
3c	Did the adviser tell you that the service was confidential?	Y	N	
3d	Did the adviser's tone of voice/style of writing in the greeting make you feel at ease and comfortable to explain your problem/ask your question?	Y	N	
4a	Please assess the overall quality of the greeting on the scale below. Circle one			
	Totally unacceptable			Excellent
	1	2	3	4
				5
				6
				7
				8
				9
				10
4b	Explanation of the overall assessment / comments on greeting			
5a	Which of the following pieces of information did the adviser ask about you? Circle all that apply			
5b	And did you give a reply / reveal that information? Circle all that apply			
				Location/ Postcode
				Status (educ/emp)
				Ethnic origin
				Disability
				How heard about CXD
				Contacted CXD before
5a	Asked	x	x	x
5b	Revealed	x	x	x
6a	Did the adviser remain quiet and listen to/show that they had read and understood the whole of your explanation of the question or problem?	Y	N	
6b	Did the adviser ask any additional or probing questions to assist their understanding of your question or problem?	Y	N	
6c	Did the adviser summarise their understanding of your question or problem?	Y	N	
7a	Overall quality of listening and probing for understanding. Circle one			
	Totally unacceptable			Excellent
	1	2	3	4
				5
				6
				7
				8
				9
				10
7b	Comments on quality of listening and probing for understanding			



--

<b>13a</b> Did the adviser's tone keep you at ease throughout the interaction?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>13b</b> If not, explain why		

<b>14a</b> Did the adviser remain objective and impartial throughout the interaction?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>14b</b> If not, explain why		

<b>15a</b> Did the adviser use language that was clear and easy to understand, without using inappropriate slang?	<b>Y</b>	<b>N</b>
<b>15b</b> If not, give examples of inappropriate language		

<b>16a</b> How would you rate the speed of the conversation? Please circle one				
Too slow	A little slow	About right	A little fast	Too fast
1	2	3	4	5
<b>16b</b> How would you rate the amount of information you were given? Please circle one				
Not enough	Not quite enough	About right	A little too much	Too much
1	2	3	4	5
<b>16c</b> How well did you understand the information and/or advice you were given? Please circle one				
Not at all				Totally
1	2	3	4	5

<b>17</b> Overall, how would you rate the quality of the service in answering your question/problem thoroughly and appropriately? Please circle one										
Totally unacceptable										Excellent
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	

<b>18</b> Any further comments
--------------------------------

<b>19</b> Were you able to complete the webchat the first time you were connected to an adviser? Did the adviser put you on hold at any point during the call, and if so, did they explain what they were going to do? When was the reply received? (Day and time)
--

<b>MYSTERY SHOPPER DECLARATION</b>
This mystery shop of the Connexions Direct service has been conducted by myself within the guidance of the MRS Code of Conduct. I have followed all of the instructions provided for this mystery shop, paying close attention to the specific scenario provided, and ensuring that no information was offered to the adviser which was contradictory to the specifications of this scenario. Furthermore, I have provided assessment scores and comments on all points required.
Mystery Shopper Name : _____
Mystery Shopper Signature : _____
Date : _____

## APPENDIX 4: ANALYSIS BY SCENARIO

### SCENARIO 1 - NEAREST CONNEXIONS CENTRE

100 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 1, which posed questions about the nearest Connexions centre.

In a small number of cases, information other than the address and phone number of a Connexions centre was given: website addresses of local Connexions Partnerships and others (such as Multimap to help find the centre) and opening times for the centre(s) (Fig. 30)

**Fig. 30: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 1**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 34, v2 = 33, v3 = 33)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs	29	31	29	89
Other local information sources	3	0	0	3
Connexions Direct website	4	1	2	7
Local Connexions Partnership website	3	1	4	8
Other websites	0	2	1	3
Other national helplines	1	0	1	2
Speak to responsible adult/professional	0	0	0	0
Speak to the person giving cause for concern	0	0	0	0
Suggested self-help options	1	0	0	1
Given relevant information	5	3	2	10

Mystery shoppers reported some difficulties with CXD advisers' lack of knowledge of local areas and restricted facilities to help them to find the Connexions centre most appropriate for the enquirer.

*The adviser asked a few questions about where Kingswinford is, and whether I had a postcode for it. But after I revealed first half of postcode he typed it into Multimap to find out which towns appeared to be nearest, also gave the web address and offered fax number. (Mystery shopper)*

*The adviser didn't recognise the place name, so focused on Surrey as a broader area. (Mystery shopper)*

*There were 3 responses to my initial text, asking where Chislehurst was and also the nearest town, I thought that the PA should have some sort of access to a map that could tell them this. (Mystery shopper)*

Some advisers went beyond finding the address details from the database, and made steps to check that the enquirer would be able to travel to the locality and find the centre itself.

*The adviser asked and made sure I knew where the Connexions centre was and made sure I knew how to easily access it. (Mystery shopper)*

*It was really good that the adviser pointed out that the centre will be closed till Monday. (Mystery shopper)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.5:

- 7.4 for version 1;
- 7.7 for version 2;
- 7.8 for version 3.

In 74 out of 100 mystery shops using scenario 1, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 20 'not quite enough'; 5 'not enough' and just 1 was felt to have provided a 'little too much'.

All of the mystery shoppers in this scenario felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. The mystery shoppers in scenario 1 also all thought the adviser remained objective and impartial during the interaction (see Fig. 31).

**Fig. 31: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 34, v2 = 33, v3 = 33)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	0	0	0

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 1 was 7.4:

- 7.1 for version 1;
- 7.5 for version 2;
- 8.1 for version 3.

## SCENARIO 2 - POST-16 CHOICES

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You are worried that you have made the wrong choice - college feels so much different from school.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You want to know how to find information about current job vacancies.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You are not sure whether you can afford to go to college, and wonder whether you should just get a job and work your way up from there.</b>

93 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 2, posing questions about post-16 choices.

Overall the most common response in scenario 2 was to recommend that the enquirer contacted their local Connexions centre (often with an offer of, or search for, contact details).

### Fig. 32: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 2

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 31, v2 = 31, v3 = 31)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	11	25	13	49
<b>Other local information sources</b>	3	6	1	10
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	8	6	7	21
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	4	8	5	17
<b>Other websites</b>	2	9	15	26
<b>Other national helplines</b>	1	1	6	8
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	17	1	1	19
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	8	10	9	27
<b>Given relevant information</b>	8	6	14	28

Local Connexions centres were recommended in 25 out of 31 instances in version 2. When expressing concerns about the choice to go to college for post-16 learning (version 1), the most common recommendation was to speak to a responsible adult/professional (frequently college tutor) or to a Connexions PA.

*Suggested I speak to college tutor about my concerns and also to go back to my old school to see if I could go back there for sixth form. (Mystery shopper)*

*Suggested speaking to my college tutors and also my friends. Have a good think about what I like/dislike about school and college. (Mystery shopper)*

In at least half of the cases for version 3, relevant information was given and/or links to websites other than CXD or local Connexions Partnerships were given.

*I was given some really useful info and places to look for jobs, like newspaper, friends and to go and talk to some one from the Connexions centre, she also took time with me giving me info on the Connexions centre. (Mystery shopper)*

*Wow! Loads of advice and info given! Very impressed! (Mystery shopper)*

Comments about interactions for version 3 included:

*Very good. Broke down my options clearly and in detail. Wasn't afraid to suggest college wouldn't actually cost me a lot. (Mystery shopper)*

*Very good info given: both written info and relevant websites for more detail on all areas of my query. I would have liked relevant websites on apprenticeships too but good to encourage me to speak to a Connexions PA. (Mystery shopper)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 8.0:

- 7.3 for version 1;
- 8.5 for version 2;
- 8.4 for version 3.

In 64 out of 93 mystery shops using scenario 2, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 16, 'not quite enough'; 5, 'not enough'; and just 2 were felt to have provided a 'little to much'.

In the majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 3 out of 29 mystery shops using version 1, and 1 mystery shop using version 3, resulted in mystery shoppers reporting not being kept at ease throughout the interaction.

In three cases using version 1, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 33).

*Had one view: I hadn't given college long enough to settle in. (Mystery shopper)*

*They seemed to disagree with everything I said and instead of giving information or good advice they just gave personal opinions. (Mystery shopper)*

### **Fig. 33: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 31, v2 = 31, v3 = 31)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	3	0	1	4
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	3	0	0	3
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	0	0	0

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 2 was 7.8:

- 7.4 for version 1;
- 7.8 for version 2;
- 8.1 for version 3.



## SCENARIO 3 - LEARNING CHOICES

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>The A level courses you have chosen seem so academic. You are wondering if you should have done something more practical - perhaps moving to college. Is it too late?</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You want to know how to research for projects/coursework without getting in trouble for copying from the internet.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You want to know how to choose a university that will suit your interests and lifestyle.</b>

A total of 102 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 3, posing questions about learning choices.

Fig. 34 shows that overall, across the three versions of this scenario, the provision of weblinks and relevant information were the most common forms of response given by CXD advisers, with recommendations to speak to a responsible adult/professional or Connexions PA following close behind.

*Very helpful, described content of several websites and how to make best use of them. Asked if I had access to internet, if I wanted to put PC on to find a website now with her help, great idea. Recommended looking at websites together, explained what NVQs are, even gave opening times for local Connexions. (Mystery shopper)*

*Advised that I speak to a teacher to discuss the concerns and contact the local college admissions re availability of courses. (Mystery shopper)*

*Encouraging that I don't have to be trapped but also realistic. Signposted to more detailed advice from local partnership. (Mystery shopper)*

### Fig. 34: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 3

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 32, v2= 34, v3= 36)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	22	0	14	36
<b>Other local information sources</b>	6	2	1	9
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	7	1	12	20
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	1	1	3	5
<b>Other websites</b>	6	9	26	41
<b>Other national helplines</b>	1	1	0	2
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	14	18	5	37
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	2	6	15	23
<b>Given relevant information</b>	8	20	10	38

None of the enquiries relating to avoiding plagiarism when researching for projects/coursework resulted in a recommendation to contact Connexions locally. Generally relevant information was provided and/or it was recommended that advice was sought from a teacher or tutor.

*Explained what plagiarism was and how not to do it, advised me to talk to my teacher for more information. (Mystery shopper)*

*Fairly decent coverage of the main issues and what counts as cheating. (Mystery shopper)*

*Gave me self-help tips but I couldn't help thinking there must be some guidelines she could have directed me towards. (Mystery shopper)*

The most common response to version 3 was to provide links to websites such as [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com), [www.opendays.com](http://www.opendays.com) and [www.thegooduniversityguide.org.uk](http://www.thegooduniversityguide.org.uk), or to describe a process by which the list of possible universities could be narrowed down.

*Good systematic approach to narrowing down by geographical area to exclude some, then urban/more rural, then course content and social life. (Mystery shopper)*

*Gave some info on attending open days/researching a lot but only gave me one link to help me which I feel wasn't enough to help me completely. (Mystery shopper)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.9:

- 7.9 for version 1;
- 7.6 for version 2;
- 8.4 for version 3.

In 71 out of 102 mystery shops using scenario 3, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; in 1 a 'little too much'; in 23 'not quite enough'; and 5 'not enough'.

In the vast majority of cases, mystery shoppers in scenario 3 felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 4 of the 98 mystery shoppers discussing learning choices felt they were not kept at ease. In both versions 1 and 3, just one case showed that the mystery shoppers felt the adviser had not remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 35).

### **Fig. 35: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 32, v2 = 34, v3 = 36)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	2	2	0	4
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	1	0	1	2
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	2	0	2

When the overall level of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 3 was 7.8:

- 7.7 for version 1;
- 7.6 for version 2;
- 8.2 for version 3.

## SCENARIO 4 - CHOOSING A CAREER

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You want to know how to search for a career that uses your ability in languages.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You want to know how to search for a career that uses your ability and interest in science.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You want to know how to search for a career that uses your ability and interest in art and design.</b>

92 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 4, posing questions about choosing a career.

Overall, across the three versions of scenario 4, by far the most common form of information or advice given by CXD advisers was to visit the Connexions Direct website (particularly the Jobs4u database area). The second most common recommendation (made in around half of cases) was to contact the local Connexions centre to have a conversation with a PA (Fig. 36).

*Only recommended Jobs4u, but then talked about it as a starting point with links. Told me I could call back with more specific questions or contact other organisations listed on the site. Made it clear that it is jobs 'number 4 letter u'. (Mystery shopper)*

*The adviser did not give me any suggestions of what I could do as a job in art and design, but did direct me to a relevant website. Also suggested that I then go and visit my nearest Connexions centre for further advice. (Mystery shopper)*

*The information given was very clear and gave me an idea of what jobs I could do with a language. (Mystery shopper)*

*She gave me contact details for Connexions website and UCAS website and to go and see Connexions centre and gave me various job titles in language sector. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 36: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 4**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1=32, v2=30, v3=30)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	14	14	9	37
<b>Other local information sources</b>	4	2	0	6
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	26	26	27	79
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	6	3	5	14
<b>Other websites</b>	8	7	6	21
<b>Other national helplines</b>	1	0	1	2
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	4	2	3	9
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	4	3	2	9
<b>Given relevant information</b>	9	7	2	18

Other weblinks frequently provided were [www.prospects.ac.uk](http://www.prospects.ac.uk), [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com) and [www.s-cool.co.uk/careers\\_final/default.asp](http://www.s-cool.co.uk/careers_final/default.asp).

*Good initial advice for looking at careers and promoted looking at UCAS to show aspirations. (Mystery shopper)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.9:

- 7.9 for version 1;
- 8.5 for version 2;
- 7.5 for version 3.

In 65 out of 92 mystery shops using scenario 4, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 4 a 'little too much'; 20 'not quite enough' and 4 'not enough'.

*Good links, no actual info, but did say that there are so many possibilities that couldn't go through them all by email but was good I had some idea of what I wanted to do. (Mystery shopper)*

*Lots of good information although there was slightly too much information to understand. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good spread of info, directly relevant to scenario. (Mystery shopper)*

*Felt it took quite a long time for the adviser to check the website address - these must be very common links to give out. (Mystery shopper)*

In most cases the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 2 out of 32 mystery shops using version 1, and 3 out of 30 mystery shops using version 3, resulted in the mystery shoppers not feeling at ease.

In just one case using version 1 and two cases using version 3, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial throughout the interaction (see Fig. 37).

### **Fig. 37: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 32, v2 = 30, v3 = 30)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	2	0	3	5
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	1	0	2	3
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	0	1	1

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 4 was 7.7:

- 7.6 for version 1;
- 8.4 for version 2;
- 7.2 for version 3.

## SCENARIO 5 - ARRANGING AN APPRENTICESHIP

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You want to know how to arrange an apprenticeship to be a painter/decorator.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You want to know how to arrange an apprenticeship to be a chef.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You want to know how to arrange an apprenticeship in landscape gardening.</b>

103 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 5, posing questions about arranging an apprenticeship.

Fig. 38 shows that overall, across the three versions of scenario 5, the most common form of advice given by CXD advisers was to contact the local Connexions centre or a PA to discuss suitable apprenticeships available in the local area.

*Good, she gave me additional websites to get additional info on apprenticeships and websites so I could contact my local Connexions centre and find out about apprenticeships in my local area. (Mystery shopper)*

In half of the cases, enquirers were provided with links to non-Connexions websites, e.g. [www.apprenticeships.org.uk](http://www.apprenticeships.org.uk). A relatively small number of enquirers were also given the Apprenticeships Helpline telephone number, 080 800 13219. In one in three mystery shops, advisers were also recorded as providing some relevant information during the interaction or written response.

*Advised me to go to local Connexions office to gain help in finding a training provider/being allocated to a college. Looked at the relevant links to give me an idea of the salary. Go to college one or two days a week. (Mystery shopper)*

*Lots of relevant numbers and websites given and reason why he gave them, which helped my understanding. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 38: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 5**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1=34, v2= 32, v3= 37)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	24	27	29	80
<b>Other local information sources</b>	3	2	0	5
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	8	6	8	22
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	4	9	6	19
<b>Other websites</b>	14	15	21	50
<b>Other national helplines</b>	7	4	8	19
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	3	1	3	7
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	2	7	8	17
<b>Given relevant information</b>	11	9	13	33

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 8.0:

- 7.6 for version 1;
- 7.9 for version 2;
- 8.5 for version 3.

In 65 out of 103 mystery shops using scenario 5, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of data; 12 'not quite enough'; 2 'not enough', 7 'a little too much' and just 1 'too much'.

*We had a really good chat about my options and the career of being a chef – fantastic. (Mystery shopper)*

*Gave info on where to get more advice on specific jobs but not so much on the nature of apprenticeships. (Mystery shopper)*

*Gave me a lot of advice, he talked about all options for about ten minutes. It was a long phone call, he really wanted to help. (Mystery shopper)*

In the majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. In total for scenario 5, four mystery shoppers felt the adviser did not keep them at ease throughout the interaction.

Out of the 103 mystery shops in scenario 5, just one case in version 2 felt that the adviser did not remain objective and impartial (see Fig. 39).

**Fig. 39: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 34, v2 = 32, v3 = 37)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	2	2	0	4
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	1	1	0	2

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 5 was 7.6:

- 7.4 for version 1;
- 7.5 for version 2;
- 7.9 for version 3.

## SCENARIO 6 - GRADUATE CAREER ENQUIRY

<b>Version 1</b> (phase 1)	<b>You want to know how to become a teacher.</b>
<b>Version 2</b> (phase 2)	<b>You want to know how to get into nursing.</b>
<b>Version 3</b> (phase 3)	<b>You want to know how to become a social worker.</b>

A total of 95 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 6.

Fig. 40 shows that overall, across the three versions of scenario 6, looking at the Connexions Direct website (particularly the Jobs4u database area) was the most common form of information or advice given by CXD advisers, mentioned in around two out of three mystery shops. In around half of cases, other websites were recommended, including: [www.ucas.com](http://www.ucas.com); [www.tda.gov.uk](http://www.tda.gov.uk) for prospective teachers; [www.nhscareers.nhs.uk](http://www.nhscareers.nhs.uk) and [www.nmas.ac.uk](http://www.nmas.ac.uk) for prospective nurses; and [www.socialworkandcare.co.uk](http://www.socialworkandcare.co.uk) for prospective social workers.

Only in exceptional cases were national telephone helplines recommended. CXD advisers were assessed to have provided relevant information more frequently when responding to enquiries about becoming a social worker than for the other two graduate careers tested.

*Made good suggestions about getting some work experience, also gave info on entry requirements and relevant subject for social work. (Mystery shopper)*

### Fig. 40: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 6

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 30, v2= 33, v3= 32)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	6	10	4	20
<b>Other local information sources</b>	2	2	0	4
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	17	22	21	60
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	1	2	1	4
<b>Other websites</b>	10	22	19	51
<b>Other national helplines</b>	0	2	3	5
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	3	1	0	4
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	1	3	8	12
<b>Given relevant information</b>	13	17	25	55

In particular, advisers tended to give information about the different qualifications that could be taken for these careers, and the basic entry requirements.

*Initially just tried to signpost me to local Connexions centre but then told me about GCSE and A level requirements and that the subject to teach must be at least 50% of degree subject, then do a PGCE. Finally gave lots of info including mentioning NQT year. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good, as gave me the basic info about the nursing courses available (diplomas and degrees). She gave me info about the entry requirements and didn't just point me in the direction of websites or other sources. (Mystery shopper)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 8.2:

- 8.1 for version 1;
- 8.2 for version 2;
- 8.0 for version 3.

68 out of 95 mystery shops using scenario 6 were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 15 'not quite enough'; 4 'not enough'; 6 'a little too much'; and just 2 'too much'. Examples of reasons for wanting more information included:

*I would have asked what universities specifically do teaching, 'cos that wasn't discussed. (Mystery shopper)*

*The adviser didn't actually do that much for them, they just send the one link through. They don't talk about specific universities or ask for any background information like what grades they are expecting. (Young person reviewing a webchat)*

All of the mystery shoppers in scenario 6 felt that the adviser kept them at ease throughout the interaction.

In just one case using version 3, the mystery shopper felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial throughout the interaction (see Fig. 41).

**Fig. 41: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 30, v2 = 33, v3 = 32)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	2	0	2

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 6 was 8.1:

- 7.7 for version 1;
- 8.1 for version 2;
- 8.4 for version 3.

*Although it took the adviser a while to get into the specific topic, once he had the advice and guidance [was] really good and appropriate. (Mystery shopper)*

*Very good information given and was very easy to talk to. Excellent. (Mystery shopper)*



## SCENARIO 7 - SEXUAL HEALTH ISSUES

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You want to get some contraception, but are too scared to see your doctor.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You are worried that you (your girlfriend) might be pregnant. You want to know what you can/should do.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You are concerned that you might have an STI (sexually transmitted infection).</b>

A total of 103 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 7, posing questions relating to sexual health.

A range of approaches were taken to respond to scenario 7. In around half of cases, young people were advised to speak to a medically trained professional such as a GP, nurse, or a Family Planning or Genito-Urinary Medicine (GUM) clinic (Fig.42).

*Made it clear that CXD advisers are not medically trained so can't advise on the best contraception for the individual. Mentioned that Family Planning Association can advise on this and on local services. (Mystery shopper)*

Similarly, around half of the sexual health mystery shops resulted in the provision of weblinks, such as [www.ruthinking.co.uk](http://www.ruthinking.co.uk), [www.fpa.org.uk](http://www.fpa.org.uk) and [www.brook.org.uk](http://www.brook.org.uk) as well as detailed 'Multimap' links showing the location of the nearest appropriate clinic.

More than one in three mystery shoppers felt that the CXD adviser had provided them with relevant information through their response or interaction.

*I got given loads of advice and information on how to get contraception and family planning clinics and Young People's drop-in centres. (Mystery shopper)*

*Very forthcoming with information about condoms and the pill. Also talked a lot about relationships and deciding to have sex for the first time. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 42: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 7**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 35, v2= 33, v3= 35)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	6	5	1	12
<b>Other local information sources</b>	12	3	2	17
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	4	3	2	9
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	0	1	1	2
<b>Other websites</b>	18	12	20	50
<b>Other national helplines</b>	7	0	3	10
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	8	22	22	52
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	2	3	1	6
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	4	12	6	22
<b>Given relevant information</b>	17	6	15	38

Fig. 42 shows that mystery shops using version 1 were more likely than others to result in advisers directing young people to local information sources, offering to find the address and/or telephone number for local Family Planning or Young People's Clinics. Version 2 (possible pregnancy) was more likely than other versions to result in CXD advisers suggesting 'self-help' options.

*Advised to go to chemist/clinic to have pregnancy test, speak to doctor if pregnant to find out options. (Mystery shopper)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 8.3:

- 8.7 for version 1;
- 7.8 for version 2;
- 8.3 for version 3.

In 67 out of 103 mystery shops using scenario 7, advisers were judged to have provided the right amount of information; 28 'not quite enough'; 6 'not enough', and just 1 'a little too much'.

In most of the cases the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction.

*Given the sensitivity of problem, achieved right balance of further info through websites/help lines plus practical advice. (Mystery shopper)*

*Handled sensitively, encouraged me to see a doctor and not to worry because they are professional, used to seeing people in my situation. (Mystery shopper)*

*Was really helpful and went through everything with me and wasn't trying to rush through it. (Mystery shopper)*

Just 5 of the 103 mystery shops conducted for scenario 7 were judged not to have kept the enquirer kept at ease throughout the interaction. In all of the cases referring to sexual health, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser remained objective and impartial throughout the interaction (see Fig. 43).

*Very good advice. Advised me that sex under 16 was illegal. Non-judgemental, impartial, understood my query. (Mystery shopper)*

### Fig. 43: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 35, v2 = 33, v3 = 35)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	1	2	2	5
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	1	0	1	2

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 7 was 7.8:

- 8.2 for version 1;

- 7.3 for version 2;
- 7.7 for version 3.

## SCENARIO 8 - MENTAL HEALTH ISSUES

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You are starting your final year of GCSEs and are feeling stressed. You struggled to keep up last year, and you are now feeling worried and not sleeping properly.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You think your friend might be anorexic. You are really worried about her and want to know what you can do to help her.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>Your friend has been smoking cannabis and this worries you.</b>

A total of 91 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 8 regarding mental health.

Fig. 44 shows that a range of different approaches were used to respond to scenario 8. Around half of mental health-related queries resulted in young people being advised to speak to a responsible adult or professional.

*He gave me loads of options like asking school, mum/friends/websites. (Mystery shopper)*

*Told me to talk to form tutor as I have a good rapport with her, found this very positive advice, looking at other aspects of life where I might be able to change lifestyle to make me feel less tired. (Mystery shopper)*

*Gave lots of info on talking through the problems to others and my friend. Understood my concerns, empathised fully, talked a lot about feelings and lots of tips/hints on what to do. (Mystery shopper)*

Similarly, in around half of the mystery shops in scenario 8, the CXD adviser provided a weblink to a non-Connexions website such as:

- [www.youngminds.org.uk](http://www.youngminds.org.uk)
- [www.supportline.org.uk](http://www.supportline.org.uk)
- [www.talktofrank.com](http://www.talktofrank.com)
- [www.knowcannabis.org.uk](http://www.knowcannabis.org.uk)
- [www.something-fishy.org](http://www.something-fishy.org)
- [www.b-eat.co.uk](http://www.b-eat.co.uk)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/schools/revision](http://www.bbc.co.uk/schools/revision)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/slink](http://www.bbc.co.uk/slink)

*Detailed websites where I could get information to help my friend as well as myself, very useful and gave a detailed explanation of what was on the site and of helplines available. (Mystery shopper)*

In response to the two versions where the 'problem' is described as a concern about a friend having a mental health issue, it was common for CXD advisers to recommend that the enquirer tried to talk to their friend about the situation.

*Suggested talking to my friend or talking to her parents, said I could talk to a teacher and ask them to speak to her parents, also could tell friend to see their doctor or give her the Connexions Direct contact details. (Mystery shopper)*

While speaking to an adult or professional had been recommended in around two out of three cases of versions 1 and 2, this recommendation was made in only four out of thirty cases in version 3.

**Fig. 44: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 8**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 30, v2= 31, v3= 30)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs	7	2	4	14
Other local information sources	2	0	0	2
Connexions Direct website	7	5	2	14
Local Connexions Partnership website	1	0	0	1
Other websites	11	14	19	44
Other national helplines	0	4	10	14
Speak to responsible adult/professional	23	19	4	46
Speak to the person giving cause for concern	3	15	11	29
Suggested self-help options	8	11	14	33
Given relevant information	6	12	9	27

*Good advice about looking after yourself as well as remembering to eat properly. (Young person reviewing mystery shops)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.7:

- 7.2 for version 1;
- 8.0 for version 2;
- 7.9 for version 3.

In 55 out of 91 mystery shops using scenario 8, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; in 24 'not quite enough', '5 not enough' and 3 'a little too much'.

In the majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 2 out of 30 mystery shops in version 1 resulted in mystery shoppers who did not feel at ease.

In just one case using version 3, the mystery shopper felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 45).

**Fig. 45: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 30, v2 = 31, v3 = 30)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
Tone did not keep me at ease throughout	2	0	0	2
Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial	0	0	1	1
Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language	2	0	2	4

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 8 was 7.7:

- 7.3 for version 1;
- 8.1 for version 2;
- 7.7 for version 3.

## SCENARIO 9 - GENERAL HEALTH ISSUES

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You have been getting really bad toothache on and off, but don't have a dentist. How can you get treatment, as you've heard that it's almost impossible to get an NHS dentist, but couldn't afford to pay privately?</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You feel that you are overweight and out of shape, but want to get more active and healthy. You want some suggestions about what you can do that won't cost a lot of money.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You have quite a lot of spots and people are making fun of you.</b>

100 mystery shops using scenario 9 were conducted, posing questions about general health.

Fig. 46 shows that, in common with the other two health-related scenarios, mystery shops conducted in scenario 9 received a relatively wide range of type of response. Few resulted in a recommendation to contact the local Connexions Partnership, most were dealt with by the provision of relevant information, weblinks, self-help options or the recommendation that the advice of a medical professional be sought.

### Fig. 46: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 9

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 35, v2= 33, v3= 32)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	1	6	0	7
<b>Other local information sources</b>	4	2	0	6
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	1	11	1	13
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Other websites</b>	7	25	14	46
<b>Other national helplines</b>	23	1	2	26
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	2	17	27	46
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	1	0	3	4
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	6	24	11	41
<b>Given relevant information</b>	14	12	5	31

The most common response in version 1 was to give out the NHS Direct telephone number – 0845 46 47.

*Reassured me that NHS treatment is free while under 18 and told me how to find a local dentist. (Mystery shopper)*

In the majority of cases for version 2, some self-help options were suggested and in most cases useful weblinks were provided, such as [www.mindbodysoul.gov.uk](http://www.mindbodysoul.gov.uk) and [www.weightconcern.org.uk](http://www.weightconcern.org.uk).

*The adviser told me perhaps to try to walk to school, take small steps at building up on the exercise I did, it was good advice! (Mystery shopper)*

The majority of mystery shops in version 3 resulted in a recommendation to talk to a medical professional, and around half were also given weblinks (such as [www.stopspots.org](http://www.stopspots.org) and [www.embarrassingproblems.co.uk/spots.htm](http://www.embarrassingproblems.co.uk/spots.htm)) and some self-help options were also suggested.

*Recommended speaking to someone medical, they might be able to recommend lifestyle changes as well as treatments. Also said it would be best to see someone medical before spending more money on high street products. Very good advice. (Mystery shopper)*

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.9:

- 7.6 for version 1;
- 8.5 for version 2;
- 7.6 for version 3.

In 66 out of 100 mystery shops, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; in 23 'not quite enough'; 7 'not enough' and in 3 a 'little too much'.

*Could have said a little more, even just adding that NHS Direct may be able to give some guidance on cost and waiting times or something like that as I expressed concern about these things, but the adviser did not really acknowledge them. (Mystery shopper)*

*Wasted a lot of the space available saying something like it's one of those things - live with it. Could have popped in a couple of self-help options. (Mystery shopper)*

In the vast majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 3 out of 35 mystery shops using version 1, and 2 out of 32 mystery shops using version 3, resulted in mystery shoppers not being kept at ease throughout the interaction.

In one case using version 3, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 47).

#### **Fig. 47: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 35, v2 = 33, v3 = 32)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	3	0	2	5
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	0	1	1
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	0	0	0

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 9 was 7.5:

- 6.9 for version 1;
- 8.1 for version 2;
- 7.4 for version 3.



## SCENARIO 10 - FAMILY RELATIONSHIPS

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>Your stepbrother and sister have just moved in with you. They are both younger than you, but you feel left out and feel like they are invading your personal space.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>Your mum and dad seem to be arguing a lot, and you are worried that they will split up. You want to know what to do.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>Being asked to look after your younger siblings is stopping you from going out.</b>

A total of 98 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 10, posing questions about family relationships.

Questions about difficult family relationships or situations very rarely resulted in a recommendation to talk to the local Connexions Partnership, but in immediate advice being given by CXD advisers. In 2 out of 3 cases, part of the advice given by CXD advisers involved speaking directly to the family member(s) concerned (Fig. 48).

*Advised that I talk to mother to address the situation, also gave suggestions about how to raise the concerns. (Mystery shopper)*

*Suggested speaking to my mum about how I felt, either face to face or put it in a letter if didn't think I could say it face to face. (Mystery shopper)*

*Was very understanding that it's hard to be relied on to be at home so much, but couldn't really offer ideas of how to convince dad it'd be good to let me and siblings be more independent. (Mystery shopper)*

In a smaller number of cases, some options for self-help were suggested, or suggestions that the enquirer should talk to another responsible adult or more distant family member to act as mediator.

*The advice was to go to someone else's house when parents are arguing. Provided a useful website that had relevant information for the scenario given. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 48: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 10**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 30, v2= 32, v3= 36)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	0	2	2	4
<b>Other local information sources</b>	30	0	0	30
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	2	0	5	7
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Other websites</b>	1	5	4	10
<b>Other national helplines</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	12	7	5	24
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	14	20	20	54
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	10	11	16	37
<b>Given relevant information</b>	4	7	8	19

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.7:

- 7.5 for version 1;
- 7.5 for version 2;
- 8.0 for version 3.

In 63 out of 98 mystery shops using scenario 10, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 4 'a little too much'; 8 'not quite enough' and 3 'not enough'.

In most cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. In just 3 out of the 98 mystery shops relating to family relationships, the mystery shopper did not feel that the adviser managed to keep them at ease.

In one case using version 1, the mystery shopper felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 49).

**Fig. 49: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 30, v2 = 32, v3 = 36)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	0	1	2	3
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	1	0	0	1
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	1	1	0	2

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 10 was 7.5:

- 7.5 for version 1;
- 7.3 for version 2;
- 7.6 for version 3.

*I thought it was very polite and straight to the point giving simple but very relevant advice. Showed clear understanding of the situation and was sensitive. (Mystery shopper)*

*A little more info could have been provided i.e. helpline numbers. However, the advice that was given was helpful and given in an impartial, sympathetic manner. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good understanding of situation and empathy shown, really nice response. 'Seems like things are hard for you, perhaps give yourself some time to get used to your step bro and sis, perhaps also talk to your dad about this'. (Mystery shopper)*

## SCENARIO 11 - PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>All of your friends have got boyfriends/girlfriends, but you are not as confident around boys/girls. It's getting you down because you want a boyfriend/girlfriend too.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You think your friend might be gay, but they won't talk about it.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>Your girlfriend/boyfriend wants a baby, but you don't think you are ready for that.</b>

A total of 93 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 11, posing questions about personal relationships.

Fig. 50 shows CXD advisers tended to do what they could to provide advice on the spot rather than referring the caller to other support services. The most common types of response in scenario 11 were self-help options and talking to the person involved. For example:

*I got given three really good websites to help boost confidence and I was given lots of self-help options to help me feel more confident. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good gave me lots of info so I felt I had more than one option, successful advice. (Mystery shopper)*

*Gave good advice about how to start the conversation, to keep calm, not to raise voice and gave a summary of advice at the end. (Mystery shopper)*

*Very caring adviser, talked in depth about how to approach the problem. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 50: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 11**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 31, v2= 33, v3= 29)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	1	3	0	4
<b>Other local information sources</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	5	3	0	8
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Other websites</b>	13	6	0	19
<b>Other national helplines</b>	0	2	0	2
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	1	2	3	6
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	5	6	19	30
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	8	17	18	43
<b>Given relevant information</b>	7	14	7	28

Websites recommended for young people who feel shy around the opposite sex included:

- [www.shykids.com](http://www.shykids.com)
- [www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/personalrelationship](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/personalrelationship)

- [www.bbc.co.uk/slink/](http://www.bbc.co.uk/slink/)

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 8.0:

- 8.2 for version 1;
- 7.5 for version 2;
- 8.3 for version 3.

65 out of 93 mystery shops using scenario 11 were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 2 ‘a little too much’; 8 ‘not quite enough’, and 1 ‘not enough’.

In most cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser’s tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 4 out of 33 mystery shops using version 2, and 1 out of 29 using version 3, resulted in mystery shoppers not being kept at ease throughout the interaction.

In one case using version 2 and three cases using version 3, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 51).

*Clearly felt that [I] shouldn't be having kids yet and just talked about reasons not to, as if trying to talk me out of it, not help me talk to my boyfriend. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 51: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 31, v2 = 33, v3 = 29)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	0	4	1	5
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	1	3	4
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	1	0	1

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 11 was 7.8:

- 7.9 for version 1;
- 7.3 for version 2;
- 8.3 for version 3.

*Really good. Friendly and understanding. Carried on talking and kept the conversation going. Encouraging and understanding. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good answer, not patronising, offered more talk if I wanted but didn't sound pushy, really good tone. (Mystery shopper)*

## SCENARIO 12 - MONEY

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You want to know how you can get some money quickly. You don't know of any part-time jobs that are available locally, and going to college is costing you.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You want to know whether it is too late to apply for EMA.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You want to know how to tell a good credit card offer from a bad one.</b>

105 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 12, posing financial questions.

Fig. 52 shows that a wide range of approaches were taken by CXD advisers to respond to scenario 12. The most common included recommending at least one non-Connexions website for further information. In version 1, almost half of the enquiries resulted in a recommendation to contact the local Connexions centre for further advice and assistance. A similar number also received recommended weblinks, such as [www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/work](http://www.bbc.co.uk/radio1/onelife/work) and [www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/ema](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/ema) [valid at the time of the survey].

Almost all enquiries in version 2 resulted in the EMA helpline telephone number 0808 101 6219 being given out, and the website address [www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/ema](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/ema) provided in a third of cases.

*The adviser didn't say that not everybody can get EMA. (Mystery shopper)*

*Suggested that I ask neighbours and friends about jobs, also to go and ask at local business. (Mystery shopper)*

*Signposted local employers, sorting out CV, checking local newspapers, Connexions, college boards as sources to get jobs. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 52: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 12**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 37, v2= 33, v3= 35)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	13	3	1	17
<b>Other local information sources</b>	9	4	2	15
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	8	2	6	16
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	2	0	2	4
<b>Other websites</b>	15	11	18	44
<b>Other national helplines</b>	6	29	1	36
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	9	0	4	13
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	11	3	10	24
<b>Given relevant information</b>	10	12	14	36

In version 3, some advisers gave no information or advice at all, saying that the CXD service could not provide financial advice.

*Received reply text message: 'sorry we do not offer advice on credit cards, perhaps talk to UR bank for more advice? CXD'. (Mystery shopper)*

In some cases, advisers did provide website addresses for organisations such as the Financial Services Authority:

- www.fsa.gov.uk
- www.moneymadeclear.fsa.gov.uk

Where advisers did feel comfortable to provide information and advice directly rather than simply signposting the young person elsewhere, the advice tended to be simple and straightforward, such as to look for the lowest percentage interest charged, and to pay off all money borrowed each month.

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.9:

- 7.9 for version 1;
- 7.5 for version 2;
- 8.2 for version 3.

In 70 out of 105 mystery shops using scenario 12, advisers were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 2 a 'little too much'; 23 'not quite enough'; and 8 'not enough'.

In the majority of cases, the mystery shoppers felt that the tone of the adviser kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 2 out of 37 mystery shops discussing version 1, and 1 out of 33 using version 3, resulted in mystery shoppers not being kept at ease throughout the interaction.

In all of the cases using the money scenario, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 53).

**Fig. 53: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 37, v2 = 33, v3 = 35)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	2	1	0	3
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	1	0	1

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 12 was 7.6:

- 7.5 for version 1;
- 7.3 for version 2;
- 8.0 for version 3.

## SCENARIO 13 - HOUSING

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You are 16 and your boyfriend/girlfriend is 17. You want to know if it is possible to live independently of your parents.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>Your parents are moving, but you want to stay in the area so that you can complete the course(s) you are part way through. You want to know how to find somewhere to stay, and whether there is any help available with paying the rent.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>Your dad/mum says that if you stay out late once more s/he's going to throw you out of home, you want to know if s/he can do this. You are 15.</b>

A total of 101 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 13, posing questions about housing.

Fig. 54 shows that overall, across the three versions of the housing scenario, the most common form of information or advice given by CXD advisers was to contact the local Connexions centre for more detailed advice and access to local area information. In 2 out of 5 mystery shops about housing problems, CXD advisers were assessed to have provided relevant information direct to enquirers, and to have made self-help suggestions in around a third of cases (rising to a half for version 3).

*Directed me towards Citizens Advice Bureau where I could obtain relevant info on housing benefits. Said: 'Usually would need parents' permission to move out if under 18, and it is hard to find housing. If parents stand as guarantor(s), some landlords may let you rent but parents would need to sign that legal document. Most young people in council housing would be there because they are homeless or in danger.'*

*Mentioned that if mum/dad did throw me out, Social Services would have a responsibility for me and they may try to help both sides to work it out at home. Recommend trying this for ourselves before it gets that far. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 54: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 13**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 34, v2= 34, v3= 33)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	17	18	8	43
<b>Other local information sources</b>	3	6	5	14
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	9	6	2	17
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	4	6	1	11
<b>Other websites</b>	5	4	3	12
<b>Other national helplines</b>	1	2	8	11
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	7	5	4	16
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	0	7	15	22
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	7	7	14	28
<b>Given relevant information</b>	12	13	16	41

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.6:

- 8.0 for version 1;
- 7.2 for version 2;
- 7.5 for version 3.

54 out of 101 mystery shops using scenario 13 were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 1 'a little too much'; 35 'not quite enough' and 10 'not enough'.

*The adviser didn't seem to know much about housing, sounded unsure of the advice she was giving. Eventually asked to put me on hold to check something with a colleague. (Mystery shopper)*

*Told me where to find advice, but little [advice] given in this call itself. (Mystery shopper)*

*Reasonably helpful but didn't give enough information. (Mystery shopper)*

In the vast majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. In total, just five out of the 101 mystery shops in scenario 13 led to the mystery shopper not feeling at ease throughout the interaction, as a result of the adviser's tone.

In two cases using version 2 and one case using version 3, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser did not remain objective and impartial (see Fig. 55).

**Fig. 55: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 =34, v2 = 34, v3 = 33)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	1	3	1	5
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	2	1	3
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	1	1	0	2

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to Scenario 13 was 7.3:

- 7.7 for version 1;
- 6.9 for version 2;
- 7.3 for version 3.

*Very factual, lacking in guidance and short on empathy. (Mystery shopper)*

*The adviser was very nice, just didn't offer much help. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good that the adviser wasn't getting the young person's hopes up about support that probably isn't available. (Mystery shopper reviewing)*



## SCENARIO 14 - BULLYING

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You are worried that your younger brother/sister is being bullied at school. You want to know what you can do.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You are getting some hassle from a boy/girl in your class, and want to know what would happen to him/her if you tell a teacher that you are being bullied.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You've been getting nasty emails/text messages.</b>

93 mystery shops concerning bullying were conducted using scenario 14.

Across the three versions of scenario 14, the most common form of advice given by CXD advisers was to speak to a responsible adult or professional (often a teacher), but in half of mystery shops some self-help suggestions were also made.

*Gave me loads of relevant advice, which you could tell the adviser had spent time thinking about as it was detailed and went over every detail I wrote about. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good, gave me lots of ideas on how to make the bully not think they were hurting me instead of just telling a teacher. (Mystery shopper)*

*Gave me various options and told me what would happen if I went through with them. Also mentioned the [school] anti-bullying policy. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good, sensible advice given, to not respond to the messages, to get in touch with my phone service provider to get the number blocked, to consider changing my phone number. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 56: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 14**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 34, v2= 30, v3= 29)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	2	1	0	3
<b>Other local information sources</b>	1	1	0	2
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	7	1	1	9
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	2	0	0	2
<b>Other websites</b>	11	6	10	27
<b>Other national helplines</b>	3	2	1	6
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	22	27	18	67
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	15	2	0	17
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	16	12	18	46
<b>Given relevant information</b>	14	5	10	29

Many relevant weblinks were provided to young people including:

- [www.need2know.co.uk](http://www.need2know.co.uk)
- [www.childline.org/bullying.asp](http://www.childline.org/bullying.asp)
- [www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/bullying)

- [www.stoptextbully.com](http://www.stoptextbully.com)

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 7.9:

- 8.2 for version 1;
- 8.0 for version 2;
- 7.5 for version 3.

55 out of 93 mystery shops using scenario 14 were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 5 'a little too much'; 25 'not quite enough'; and 7 'not enough'.

In most cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just 1 out of 30 mystery shops in version 2, and 1 mystery shop in version 3, resulted in mystery shoppers not being kept at ease throughout the interaction.

In one case using version 2, the mystery shopper felt that the adviser had not remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 57).

*Just kept saying I need to tell the school about the bullying and kept avoiding answering my question of what would happen to the bully. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 57: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 =34, v2 = 30, v3 = 29)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	0	1	1	2
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	1	0	1
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	1	0	1	2

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 14 was 7.7:

- 7.7 for version 1;
- 7.9 for version 2;
- 7.6 for version 3.

*The adviser talked me through everything and gave me loads of options and spurred me on to help my brother to come out with his problem. (Mystery shopper)*

*The advice given was very appropriate for the situation I was in. (Mystery shopper)*

*Lots of ideas about how to raise issue, e.g. if can't ask directly, talk about an imaginary person, pretend doing a project at college about this. Talked to me like an adult. (Mystery shopper)*

## SCENARIO 15 - LEGAL

<b>Version 1 (phase 1)</b>	<b>You are worried that your brother/sister is shoplifting. You are worried they will be caught and want to know what would happen if they are.</b>
<b>Version 2 (phase 2)</b>	<b>You want to know how much work (paid work) you can do when you are still at school.</b>
<b>Version 3 (phase 3)</b>	<b>You want to change your name legally to be the same as your mum (and stepfather).</b>

88 mystery shops were conducted using scenario 15, posing questions about legal issues.

In around half of the mystery shops using scenario 15, CXD advisers provided 'relevant information' to enquirers. There were considerable differences in the types of responses between the scenarios, with weblinks and helpline numbers much more commonly being given in response to questions about changing a name than about employment legislation or shoplifting.

*Gave me good though obvious advice and told me the consequences of the situation, also found a resolution to the problem without me having to consult parents immediately. (Mystery shopper)*

*Superb, gave full details of legal ramifications if 15 year old is caught shoplifting, advice on how to address situation. (Mystery shopper)*

*Good, found as much info as possible which she could give me, told me about number of hours on school days, weekends and school holidays and work permit. (Mystery shopper)*

*The adviser also told me that it's not a legal procedure changing my name, I just need to gain proof by Deed Poll, public announcement, letter from reasonable person or statutory declaration. (Mystery shopper)*

**Fig. 58: Types of Information and Advice Given by CXD Adviser in Response to Scenario 15**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1= 25, v2= 32, v3= 31)

	<b>Version 1</b>	<b>Version 2</b>	<b>Version 3</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Local Connexions Partnership centre/PAs</b>	1	9	1	11
<b>Other local information sources</b>	0	2	2	4
<b>Connexions Direct website</b>	3	7	0	10
<b>Local Connexions Partnership website</b>	0	2	0	2
<b>Other websites</b>	5	2	20	27
<b>Other national helplines</b>	3	0	10	13
<b>Speak to responsible adult/professional</b>	8	1	6	15
<b>Speak to the person giving cause for concern</b>	14	1	0	15
<b>Suggested self-help options</b>	5	8	8	21
<b>Given relevant information</b>	8	22	18	48

The most common weblinks given were:

- [www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/family\\_parent/family/change\\_of\\_name.htm](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk/index/family_parent/family/change_of_name.htm)
- [www.ukdps.co.uk](http://www.ukdps.co.uk)
- [www.deedpoll.org.uk](http://www.deedpoll.org.uk)

Overall satisfaction with the quality of information and advice provided on a scale of 1 to 10 was 8.0:

- 7.9 for version 1;
- 8.6 for version 2;
- 7.6 for version 3.

61 out of 88 mystery shops using scenario 15 were judged to have provided about the right amount of information; 19 'not quite enough'; 7 'not enough'; and 1 'too much'.

In the vast majority of cases, mystery shoppers felt that the adviser's tone kept them at ease throughout the interaction. Just one out of 25 mystery shops in version 1, and one out of 32 mystery shops using version 2, resulted in mystery shoppers not being kept at ease throughout the interaction.

In all of the cases for the legal scenario, the mystery shoppers felt that the adviser remained objective and impartial (see Fig. 59).

**Fig. 59: Dissatisfaction with Tone, Objectivity and Language**

Base: All Communication Channels (v1 = 25, v2 = 32, v3 = 31)

	Version 1	Version 2	Version 3	Total
<b>Tone did not keep me at ease throughout</b>	1	1	0	2
<b>Adviser didn't remain objective and impartial</b>	0	0	0	0
<b>Adviser didn't use clear/appropriate language</b>	0	0	0	0

When the overall quality of service provided by CXD was rated on a scale of 1 to 10, the mean score given for responses to scenario 15 was 7.9:

- 7.5 for version 1;
- 8.2 for version 2;
- 7.9 for version 3.

*Commented that I was doing the right thing by asking for help, recommended that I contact the CAB for legal advice. (Mystery shopper)*

*The adviser should have advised her how she could have talked to her sister properly about the shoplifting. (Mystery shopper)*

*Not only gave me info on hours but advised on careers and CV and using a temporary job to build to a career. Gave websites to help with CV. (Mystery shopper)*

*The adviser couldn't find contact details of my local council, but kept me informed whilst she was looking but couldn't locate it. In the end told me to look in Yellow Pages and where to go within the council. (Mystery shopper)*

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