

# **MAKING CONNEXIONS IN FURTHER EDUCATION**

Guidelines for developing effective partnerships between FE colleges & Connexions



# FOREWORD

The individual support needs of students vary enormously and usually change over time. Some young people have clear academic, vocational, personal and career goals and need information only about how they might achieve them. Other young people may need to be challenged to achieve their potential or broaden their aspirations. Some may need encouragement to apply to higher education and others may need help to break through racial, gender, disability or other forms of discrimination or stereotyping.

Connexions and Further Education (FE) colleges both have a role to play in supporting students, helping them to make a successful transition to adulthood and working life. *Making Connexions in Further Education* is designed to be a practical and useful resource for those involved in the area of student support services. Whilst the main aim of *Making Connexions in Further Education* is to demonstrate how colleges and Connexions might work more effectively with each other. It also serves as a useful source of reference on advice and guidance in colleges.

College staff who work in student support services and Connexions frontline staff have contributed to the contents of this document which are based on, and draw from, existing good practice in colleges. We hope colleges and Connexions Partnerships will use the information and guidelines contained in this document to review and improve upon current working arrangements and existing student support systems.

## Acknowledgements

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# INTRODUCTION - USING THIS TOOLKIT

The primary purpose of *Making Connexions in Further Education* is to help Further Education (FE) colleges and Connexions work more effectively together but specialist and 6<sup>th</sup> form colleges may also find this document useful. *Making Connexions in Further Education* is also designed to be a resource for all practitioners who contribute to providing advice, guidance and support in FE colleges.

The guidance contained in this document is presented in five sections:

- Part A: An introduction to Connexions in college**
- Part B: Managing Connexions in college**
- Part C: Student support – roles**
- Part D: Student support – processes**
- Part E: Additional information**

Senior college managers should find Parts A and B of most relevance as these sections provide practical information about how to gain the maximum benefit from Connexions.

Student support managers with responsibility for working with Connexions on a day-to-day basis should find sections C – E of most relevance.

If you are the person appointed to work with Connexions then you will have to decide how these guidelines can be used most productively. The successful integration of practice will come about where there is clarity of purpose between Connexions and college.

Connexions works alongside all those committed to supporting students in college and the case studies included demonstrate how successful partnerships have worked.

## **Definitions and terminology**

Due to the variety of organisational structures within colleges it has not been possible to arrive at a precise definition for a named job title alongside a set of responsibilities. A job title in one college may be the same as in another college but the responsibilities and day to day activities can be entirely different. We would ask you to take this in to account when reading *Making Connexions in Further Education* and applying the guidance to your college.

For this document we have used the term 'student' for young people who attend college and are aware that some might find 'learner' preferable. Some colleges had personal advisers before Connexions was established so for the purpose of this publication the term Personal Adviser refers to a Connexions Personal Adviser.

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**Making the connection between this toolkit and 'The Common Inspection Framework for Inspecting Post 16 Education and Training'**

A useful basis for setting out the range of issues addressed in *Making Connexions in Further Education* is section 6 of *The Common Inspection Framework for Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training - How well are learners guided and supported* (see note 1).

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

	Toolkit ref:
- support arrangements are planned and managed coherently.	B1 B2 B3 C1
- impartial guidance enables learners to choose course or programme which is right for them.	D1 D2 D3
- careers education and guidance are effective in guiding learners towards the opportunities available to them when they have completed their studies or training.	D10 D11 D12
- procedures are in place for recognising poor punctuality, non-attendance and poor performance early and for taking appropriate action.	D6 D7
- induction programmes enable learners to settle into their programmes quickly, to understand their rights and responsibilities and the demands of the course programme.	D4
- individual learning needs are accurately diagnosed and learners receive effective additional support throughout their studies or training.	D5 D8 D15 D16
- learners have effective personal support to help them complete their course or programme including access to specialist support services.	C2 C3 C4 D13
- guidance and support are sensitive to equality of opportunity.	D14
- partnerships with other providers and relevant agencies involved in advice and guidance are effective.	B4 D2 D17

(Note 1 – *The Common Inspection Framework for Inspecting Post-16 Education and Training* is an Office for Standards in Education (Ofsted) and Adult Learning Inspectorate (ALI) document, published February 2001.)

## AN INTRODUCTION TO CONNEXIONS

This section gives an overview of the aims of integrating Connexions into colleges and points to what are likely to be some of the key issues. These include:

- The importance of matching the aims of Connexions with those of college
- The development of the 14 – 19 agenda

## WHAT IS CONNEXIONS?

Connexions is a multi-disciplinary support service which offers a range of information, advice, guidance and support to young people aged 13 -19 and those aged up to 25 who have learning difficulties and disabilities. Young people are able to access Connexions through a network of Personal Advisers who work in schools, colleges, Connexions offices and community settings.

Connexions is an inclusive service that is differentiated according to the needs of the young person. All young people in the Connexions age range have access to a Personal Adviser but the level of support they need varies considerably from those who simply want information about careers options to those with multiple problems who need intensive one to one support.

Within the context of a universal service, Connexions' overarching objective is to reduce the number of 16 -18 year olds who are not in education, employment or training. By 2004, Connexions Partnerships have a target to reduce the proportion of 16 -18 year olds not in education, employment or training by 10% from the November 2002 figure.

As well as talking to a Personal Adviser young people can also access Connexions services through Connexions Direct, a website ([www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)) telephone and text service. Connexions Direct Advisers are contactable from 8:00am – 2:00am seven days per week 365 days a year. The Connexions Direct telephone number is 080 800 13219

### **Connexions Partnerships**

Connexions Partnerships are the strategic bodies responsible for the development and delivery of Connexions locally. They facilitate close working arrangements between agencies that deliver services to 13-19 year olds including health services, youth services, youth offending teams, drug action teams, social services and voluntary and community organisations.

Connexions Partnerships receive their funding from the Department for Education and Skills. Each year Partnerships determine how their allocated resources can best be used to meet objectives, nationally and locally agreed targets and the needs of their local community.

### **A shared agenda with colleges**

The goals of Connexions and colleges are very much in step; to raise young people's aspirations, to provide opportunities for young people which enable them to achieve their potential, to reduce disengagement from learning and to encourage more young people to continue, and succeed, in learning so that they can make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life.

Connexions work in colleges will benefit from the full support of the senior management team and from:

- clear planning and regular reviews
- clarity over roles and responsibilities
- student referral arrangements

Connexions activities will vary from college to college but they should all build on and complement the individual college arrangements for student support. Activities might include those that support student transition, retention and progression and which complement the college's student counselling and support arrangements.

## The 14 – 19 agenda

The Government's next steps paper "14 -19: opportunity and excellence" sets out plans for the structural reform of 14 -19 learning programmes and qualifications. A "Working Group for 14 -19 Reform", under the chair of Mike Tomlinson, is examining the proposals in more detail. The group published its interim report on the 17 February 2004 and expects to publish the final report in the autumn of 2004. Copies of the interim report are available by visiting the 14-19 reform website at [www.14-19reform.gov.uk](http://www.14-19reform.gov.uk).

In 2002 twenty-five phase one pathfinders were established to test out a variety of new ways of working, including increased collaboration amongst institutions in order to secure a greater choice of curriculum pathways. The national evaluation of the first year of the phase one pathfinders "14-19 Pathfinders: An evaluation of the first year" was published on the 17 February 2004. Copies of the report are available by visiting the 14-19 pathfinders website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19pathfinders/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19pathfinders/)

An extract from a summary of the report reproduced below states:

*The importance of enhanced advice and guidance for young people undertaking the 14-19 phase was widely recognised. There was also recognition of the need for partnerships between schools, colleges and Connexions in providing this advice and guidance.*

The details of the structural reform of 14-19 learning programmes and qualifications are still to be finalised but it is clear from the work that has been carried out so far that the expectation is that schools, colleges and Connexions will work more collaboratively and innovatively in the future to meet the needs of learners so that during the 14-19 phase:

- young people can choose from a range of courses and qualifications covering a wide range of subjects and skills from 14
- young people can start to develop their own mix of subjects from 14, combining options that meet their interests and aspirations
- young people facing difficult personal, family or social circumstances are helped to overcome any problems these present.



Truro College have provided the following case study which demonstrates some of the benefits the college identified after integrating Connexions into an expanded Student Services.

**EXAMPLE: Truro College** - The benefits of Connexions in the college have been seen on a number of fronts:

Expanding the existing team in Students Services. The increased size of the team has provided not only more intensive support for some students, but has increased access to tutors and lecturing staff. This is providing more time for planning for the needs of students.

Although there are personnel from two organisations contributing to student services there are clear advantages to working as a team in college. There is greater availability of staff to meet students' needs when they arise and to address multiple issues, and team members can draw easily on each others' expertise.

Where Personal Advisers work in local schools as well as the college this provides the potential for continuity in support between school and college.

The full-time Personal Adviser is planning a college wide lifestyle programme to be delivered through tutorial groups to all 16 – 19-year-old students. It will provide support and information on a range of different issues such as drugs, relationships, finance, parenting etc. Although attendance at the programme will be voluntary the activity will raise the profile of the Connexions Personal Advisers to both students and staff, and will provide opportunities for referrals.

## MANAGING CONNEXIONS IN COLLEGE

The effective management of Connexions in college will help to build on current student support networks and practices. This section is likely to be used by managers in either student support or learning services. It addresses the practical issues of integrating Connexions and the Personal Adviser in college. The section is divided into four parts:

- **Identifying what you need** – what Connexions can do for you.
- **The Partnership Agreement** and planning for the effective integration of Connexions.
- **Implementing Connexions in college.**
- **Other relevant issues** – including confidentiality, advocacy and information sharing.

## IDENTIFYING WHAT YOU NEED - WHAT CONNEXIONS CAN DO FOR YOU

Connexions aims to enhance the student advice, guidance and support already available in college. It is not intended as another level of support but can help towards integrating and drawing together the wide range of services already present in college.

### **How will a college get best value from Connexions?**

There is no single approach to integrating Connexions into colleges. The variety of college management structures and ways of organising student services will mean that each college should look to see where and how Connexions might positively work with and extend current practice. Colleges may wish to review existing student guidance and support provision and identify where there are gaps in services or where there is unnecessary duplication.

### **Reviewing existing provision**

Completion of the following check list provides an overview of how activities and responsibilities are currently allocated to practitioners. Information about each activity is referenced to a section in the toolkit. Once completed you will be able to see who does what. This may reveal some gaps and duplication. It may also suggest where resources could be focused and how roles might be adapted or altered in the light of support provided by Connexions.



# THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT & PLANNING FOR THE EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION OF CONNEXIONS

## **What are likely to be the main considerations in planning for the effective integration of Connexions?**

It is important that you have a clear idea of how you want to use the resources Connexions provides. Completing the check sheet in the previous section may have helped you with this. Before making any significant changes, colleges will want to look at the implications of doing this and plan for the changes. Someone with a key responsibility either in student or learning services with access to senior management decisions is likely to be the best person to do this or alternatively the person with responsibility for negotiating the Partnership Agreement with the Connexions Partnership.

## **What is the Partnership Agreement and can it really help?**

The Partnership Agreement is drawn up between a college and the local Connexions Partnership. It sets out what Connexions resources will be made available to the college and how Connexions and the college will work together to support students. The Partnership Agreement should set out the role and responsibilities of college staff, Connexions Personal Advisers and other non-teaching staff in providing support to students. It is a way for a college and partner organisations to make explicit the arrangements for working together.

## WHAT WILL THE PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT INCLUDE?

The overall design and content of a Partnership Agreement will depend on individual colleges and Connexions Partnerships. A Partnership Agreement may include the following:

Partnership Agreement checklist	Completed	To be completed
<b>Resources.</b> What resources Connexions will make available to the college, what the college will provide and what resources other agencies are providing.		
<b>The Personal Adviser.</b> Their role and responsibilities, allocation of time and how it will be focussed.		
<b>Management of the Personal Adviser.</b> Who will manage the Personal Adviser on a day to day basis, how they will be inducted to college practices and procedures and who will support them in college.		
<b>Objectives.</b> How Connexions and the college will support each others objectives, for example objectives relating to improved retention and attainment.		
<b>Prioritising Guidance and Support.</b> How students who need personal support will be identified, who will provide the support and how levels of need will be monitored and evaluated.		
<b>Communication and Access.</b> How students and parents will be informed of, and can access, the support, guidance and information available from the Personal Adviser and Connexions.		
<b>Impartiality.</b> How the impartiality of information, advice and guidance on learning and employment options will be guaranteed.		
<b>Training.</b> The identification of training needs for both Connexions and college staff and the arrangements for them to receive training which raises awareness of each other's roles and responsibilities.		
<b>Transition Arrangements.</b> How Connexions and the college will work together to support students through transition points and for individual students who continue to need support beyond the age of 19 in the most appropriate way and at the most appropriate time.		
<b>Data collection and sharing.</b> What information will be collected, who will collect it, how it will be collected and in what form and how it will be shared at various stages.		
<b>Contractual arrangements</b> with other organisation or agencies that have a direct bearing upon student guidance and support.		
<b>Evaluation of Connexions in college.</b> How this will be done, who will be involved and when.		

### How should the Partnership Agreement be introduced and developed?

As many of the key players as possible should be involved in negotiating the Partnership Agreement. This might include other agencies working within college that also provide students with advice and guidance. The Partnership Agreement provides the opportunity to tie in a variety of roles and responsibilities and can go a long way to building a shared understanding of student support structures.

The Partnership Agreement should be a working document which is regularly reviewed by college, the Connexions Partnership and other key players to see where things are working well and where improvements need to be made.

If the college principal is not directly involved in Partnership Agreement negotiations they may need to be made aware of the contents if they are to endorse it when negotiations are completed.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- Where will the Personal Advisers work from and how will they be integrated into the work of current support teams?
- What issues need to be included in the Partnership Agreement?
- When will the Partnership Agreement be reviewed, by whom and how often during the year?

# IMPLEMENTING CONNEXIONS IN COLLEGE

## **Who will manage Connexions in college?**

The day-to-day management of the Personal Advisers and other resources will be the joint responsibility of the college and Connexions. Personal Advisers will be working with college staff but will at the same time retain an independence enabling them to advocate for students should it be necessary. Potentially this can be a complex role and it is important that there is clarity about the Personal Adviser's position and how it will be managed within the Partnership Agreement.

## **What role will the Personal Adviser have in college?**

The role of the Personal Adviser should complement and extend the student support already given in college. The Personal Adviser will probably work alongside a number of staff in colleges who provide a range of student support services including careers advice and guidance. A list of the possible activities for the Personal Adviser is given in section C.

## **What can the college do to ensure the Personal Adviser's integration with present procedures in college?**

The Personal Adviser will usually have a role as part of student services and the wider student guidance and support network. They will, therefore, need to be aware of all college policies and practices relating to student support and have access to any necessary information. Staff and students should be made aware of the Personal Adviser's role and responsibilities and how and when they can be contacted. The Personal Adviser should also be informed about the best way of making contact with students and other ways of communicating with staff and students.

## **What other resources may be offered by Connexions?**

The local and national Connexions websites give extensive information about personal and social issues as well as information about career development and making university applications. Connexions also produces a range of publications, including careers material. Details of all publications available from Connexions can be found by visiting the Connexions website at [www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk).

Personal Advisers will inform students about the range of information available but colleges can also do a great deal to help promote this information.

## **Who decides the work of Personal Advisers and which students they take on?**

The management of referrals to the Personal Adviser and others in student services will be crucial in ensuring that students are supported by the person in college most able to respond to their particular needs at that time. The referral system should be transparent and publicised so that students and staff alike know how and to whom to make referrals.



## POINTS TO CONSIDER

The following check list may help with introducing and/or maintaining the profile of Connexions in college.

Integrating Connexions into college	Yes	No
Partnership Agreement negotiated.		
Review dates for Partnership Agreement set.		
Role of Personal Adviser identified.		
Agreement on how Personal Adviser will work with other student support roles.		
Personal Adviser provided with base where they can meet students.		
Personal Adviser inducted into college.		
Personal Adviser role explained to other members of staff.		
Referral mechanisms in place.		
Role of Connexions and Personal Adviser explained in college publicity, including website.		
College policies and student disciplinary procedures made available to Personal Adviser.		
Protocols - including confidentiality and data sharing – in place.		

This example from Warwickshire College demonstrates three important aspects about integrating Connexions in to college – which might also be written into the Partnership Agreement:

1. The joint management of the Personal Adviser.
2. Someone responsible for the day-to-day management.
3. Regular meetings between Connexions and the college.

#### **Warwickshire College: Joint management**

"We had always had a very close working partnership with our local Careers Service", says the college's Senior Director of Marketing and Student Support Services. "They provided careers education and advice as well as support for our special needs students... we have been able to build on this in setting up the work of Connexions in the college." Initially the Connexions Service was able to support one Personal Adviser (PA) in the college. She was appointed about a year ago to work three days a week in the college, the remaining two being spent on other essential activities based in the Connexions office, such as updating client records and professional training. The college and the Connexions Service agreed to the joint management of the PA role. The Connexions Service would hold the contract with the PA and be responsible for her support and training. The college's Senior Director of Marketing and Student Support Services would be responsible for her day-to-day management. Initially, the two managers met regularly with the PA to map out what she should do. As the PA's work and role in the college became clearer, these meetings became less frequent. This has worked well so far, although there have been one or two occasions when the PA has felt pulled in two directions. "But this hasn't really been a big problem," she says. These meetings now take place termly and are a requirement of the Partnership Agreement between the college and the Connexions Service. They are seen as important as both the college and the Connexions Service recognise that as the services from both parties develop, things may need to change. The meetings also provide opportunities to discuss ways of working and each organisation's own views and policies which affect the work of the PAs, such as working alone, doing home visits and sharing information about students.

## OTHER RELEVANT ISSUES - CONFIDENTIALITY, ADVOCACY & INFORMATION SHARING

### **Confidentiality**

Personal Advisers work to clear guidance on confidentiality, disclosure and to requirements of Child Protection and Data Protection Legislation.

Students will be advised of the confidential nature of discussions within the legislative frameworks and be encouraged to discuss appropriate outcomes and action points from interviews with college staff and tutors. If issues are discussed that require confidentiality to be breached (as in the case of child protection) referral will be made by the Personal Adviser to the appropriate college manager with responsibility for this area. The Personal Adviser will need to be made aware of college confidentiality policies, procedures and relevant personnel.

### **The advocacy role of the Personal Adviser**

Personal Advisers offer a confidential service for students wishing to discuss problems and difficulties. An outcome of these discussions may see the Personal Adviser acting as an advocate on behalf of the student; this could include seeking clarification or challenging college arrangements for learning or personal support. Where this is the case the Personal Adviser will follow policy and procedures agreed with the college as part of the Partnership Agreement. Where a Personal Adviser is advocating for a student with an external agency they should keep the college advocacy service informed.

### **Information sharing**

Connexions may have information on young people through contact in schools and with a student's permission relevant information may be shared with college. Information arising from contact with students in college can be made available to college staff including tutors and learning mentors unless students wish this to remain confidential.

Connexions Partnerships will aim to encourage information sharing to avoid duplication in assessment and to improve collaboration and service. Information sharing protocols and procedures will need to be put in place between Connexions and college so that relevant information can be passed on to the appropriate teaching and/or support staff.

Connexions Partnerships will have information sharing protocols which are agreed with other organisations. These protocols will clarify procedures and responsibilities.

## STUDENT SUPPORT - ROLES

College organisation of student support varies but the day to day activities are usually similar. Four roles are included in this section. They are:

- **Student services** – and those who organise and provide specialised advice, guidance and support.
- **The Personal Adviser** – and the variety of roles and activities they might undertake.
- **The personal tutor** – and those who come into regular contact with students and give pastoral support.
- **Mentors** - and other practitioners supporting learning, some who may be directly employed by the college and others from partner organisations.

# STUDENT SERVICES

**Key message:** Student Services, being at the centre of college support networks, play an important part in deciding how Connexions is integrated into the college.

Whilst structures and management arrangements of student support services will vary from one college to another, the areas covered by the services will be similar. Services are likely to include: advice about accommodation, careers advice and guidance, learning resources, financial help, counselling, pre-entry guidance, co-ordination of induction, liaison with tutors, planning personal development programmes, publication of information handbooks and a whole variety of other activities that ensure students have the appropriate information and help when they most need it.

## What can Connexions add to this?

The role of Connexions and the Personal Adviser is to build on the variety of existing support activities for students currently in place. Connexions can help in developing constructive approaches that are responsive to the constantly changing needs of students and the evolving education agenda.

Student services will probably have the closest contact with the Personal Adviser and with negotiating how the Personal Adviser will work as part of the student services team.

Communication is key to the successful integration of Connexions with college student support services. Where a number of Personal Advisers are working in college, students will need to know the specific role assigned to each Personal Adviser. College staff will also need to know how Connexions and the Personal Advisers fit into and add value to the structures of student support services.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

The continuing integration of Connexions and the Personal Advisers into college will require the support and advocacy of senior management. You could ask the following questions:

- Has the integration of Connexions and the Personal Adviser been discussed at senior management level?
- Are the governors aware of the contribution Connexions can make in college?
- Has time been put aside to inform other partners?
- Is the college able to feed in its views to the Connexions Partnership's local management committee and/or Partnership board?

## Further information about Connexions in colleges

Implementing the Connexions Service in Colleges DfES publications 2002

[www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

# THE PERSONAL ADVISER

**Key message:** Personal Advisers provide information, advice and guidance on a range of issues in college. They offer one-to-one support and arrange and broker specialist support from other agencies.

Personal Advisers work with young people – singly or in groups – to explore and assess their needs and offer information, advice, guidance and support on options for learning and personal development. They may be based in schools or colleges, at one-stop-shops, drop-in centres or engaged with outreach activities in the area. Personal Advisers are from a wide range of professional backgrounds including the Careers Service, Youth Service, Social Services, voluntary sector organisations and Department of Health. To be a fully qualified Personal Adviser an individual needs a professional qualification which is equivalent to at least NVQ level 4 in a relevant discipline. In addition, they must have completed either the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers or the Understanding Connexions Training Programme. All qualified Personal Advisers offer initial information and advice on the full range of Connexions support and in depth support according to their background and expertise. Where a young person has issues which are complex and go beyond the professional expertise of their Personal Adviser, the Personal Adviser will broker support from other support services or other Personal Advisers with the relevant specialist skills.

## How does the Personal Adviser contribute to student support in college?

The role of the Personal Adviser complements and contributes to the work of the college's student support services. Before a Personal Adviser starts working in a college their roles and responsibilities within the institution should be negotiated through the Partnership Agreement.

The check-list which follows sets out some of the Personal Adviser activities that have been implemented in colleges. It is important to note that these are **not** exclusive to the Personal Adviser's role but you can indicate on the check-list who has this role or function now and whether it might be appropriate for the Personal Advisers to take on this responsibility in the future. The check list groups possible Personal Adviser activities under the following headings:

### TRANSITION

Those activities that are supporting the young person in moving on from one stage to another and/or from one decision to another.

### RETENTION

The work designed to ensure that students successfully complete courses.

### PROGRESSION & ACHIEVEMENT

The support activities that motivate and help students reach or exceed their original goals.

### STRATEGIC

Those activities contributing to the development of effective planning for student support.

<b>TRANSITION</b>	Who does this now	Possible for our PA in future
Interviewing students about future career plans and giving advice about progression routes and the application processes.		
Meeting new students at enrolment to explain college routines and expectations.		
Liaising with schools, students and their PAs, to help with transition of vulnerable students – identifying needs and the appropriate support to be made available for the student until settled into the new course.		
Co-ordinate resources for young parents and pregnant teenagers to ensure a continuous and effective education with support for progression from college to continuing in learning, training or employment and liaising with appropriate agencies to achieve this.		
Working with schools to inform prospective students about the expectations of college and the best ways of approaching course selection.		
Maintaining contact with Personal Advisers in local schools to keep up-to-date with students who will need extra help when they start college and arranging induction programmes that help transition.		

<b>RETENTION</b>	Who does this now	Possible for our PA in future
Meeting students at informal drop-in centres to promote the services of student support and to provide guidance and/or make referrals where appropriate.		
Working with departments to recognise and respond to students who are experiencing difficulties with courses and arranging the necessary enhanced support or if necessary finding alternative provision.		
Identifying student absence patterns and making contact with students to look at potential difficulties.		
Identifying students joining courses late, ensuring they have full induction and are successfully integrated into college.		
Discussing with students about creating a balance between part time work and course commitments and advising students on coping with the two.		

<b>PROGRESSION &amp; ACHIEVEMENT</b>	Who does this now	Possible for our PA in future
Working one-to-one with identified students to support progress. This may involve reviewing progress with the help of an Individual Learning Plan (ILP), identifying difficulties and finding solutions.		
Giving identified students support in reviewing ILPs and ensuring they are accessing the support the ILP has highlighted.		
Encouraging and supporting the development of peer mentoring within the college; participating in any necessary training and acting as an adviser to peer mentors, buddy schemes or student self-help groups.		

Working with identified tutors to support students in their groups, taking referrals and responding to concerns as they arise. This might include contacting students with irregular attendance patterns or working with those who face difficulties on new courses.		
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<b>STRATEGIC PLANNING</b>	Who does this now	Possible for our PA in future
Participating as a member of student services or the guidance team and having responsibility for maintaining links with other agencies who are members of the team.		
Working with college to promote policies on disability, ensuring that students falling within this category benefit from the maximum support through provision of personal guidance and any necessary links with other colleges, training providers and employers.		
Working with the college information team to support developments through Connexions and to promote the Connexions Card and Connexions Direct.		
Fostering partnerships between college and other relevant outside agencies – Youth Offending Team, Drugs Action Team; Youth Service; Health and Social Services and considering how they might contribute to overall student services.		
Providing training sessions for personal tutors, especially in areas such as career choice and job and university applications.		
Ensuring young people are consulted about all aspects of college, perhaps participating with student councils or other student representative bodies.		
Conducting exit interviews with students, noting reasons for course changing or not completing courses and keeping college management informed.		

### Complementary information:

Transition and liaison with schools *D2*

Induction *D4*

Assessing and identifying student needs *D5*

Attendance monitoring and tracking *D6*

Learner support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities *D14*



*The following stages for the induction of the Personal Adviser are outlined by Highbury College*

**How the college approached the induction of the Personal Adviser:**

- ❑ Given a planned programme of meetings with relevant staff including Learning Mentors.
- ❑ Included in cross college training days.
- ❑ Trained to use our MIS system.
- ❑ Personal Adviser met with tutors to deliver 'understanding Connexions' training session.
- ❑ Initially Personal Adviser had weekly meetings with Tutorial, Careers and Enrichment manager to discuss caseload. Meetings now happen on a fortnightly basis.
- ❑ Initially Personal Adviser time was used to support cross-college at risk projects. This meant that our Personal Adviser quickly met with both staff and students.
- ❑ Tutorial, Careers and Enrichment manager have ongoing monthly meetings with Personal Adviser's line manager.

*This example of how the Personal Adviser works at St Helen's College demonstrates the flexibility of the role:*

**EXAMPLE St Helens College The Personal Adviser**

It is the flexibility and independence of the PAs role which are key to success. The students referred to her usually have multiple difficulties that cross the boundaries of existing services. For example, one student she has worked with needed financial support and had a health problem. The PA accompanied the student on her hospital appointment, sorted out her benefits and negotiated with her teachers to take time out to address these issues. Without this sort of support, the student would probably have 'dropped out'. In another instance, a student's EMA was not being paid. The PA spoke with the student's tutor, discussed the issues and completed the necessary paperwork and resolved the problem. The Head of Student Services comments, "there have been a number of occasions where the issues raised are better addressed by an independent third party."

# THE PERSONAL TUTOR

**Key Message:** The personal tutor will often be the person most aware of students' overall needs and plays a key role in finding further support.

The personal tutor in college is responsible for students' overall progress and general well-being. The tutor is concerned with the 'whole learner' and acts as a link between students and the learning opportunities and other areas of support and guidance provided in college.

In many colleges, the role of the personal tutor has evolved from being essentially pastoral, to one concerned with helping the student become a more independent and self-managing learner. This has included such activities as target setting and reviewing. Ways of delivering personal tutoring vary, but most are a version of one of these two models:

- The in-programme-based model, where learners in the tutor group are all on the same main programme of study, with the tutor usually a teacher, on the programme.
- The 'super tutor' model, where the tutor is a specialist, with several tutor groups composed of students from the whole range of college courses.

Typically the tutor's role might include the following: delivering induction; establishing or continuing individual learning plans; reviewing progress; setting targets; monitoring performance; helping students manage their learning; offering advice, providing guidance and support; referring to specialist support; monitoring attendance; communicating with parents, carers and employers; investigating causes for concern; acting as an advocate and providing references. Some tutorial programmes will also provide study skills, Citizenship, key skills, PSHE or enrichment.

## **How can Connexions and the Personal Adviser contribute to the support given by the personal tutor?**

The role of the Personal Adviser can complement the support provided by the personal tutor. Where a student has specific problems or where other agencies need to be involved then the Personal Adviser will broker further help. The personal tutor will need to understand the role of the Personal Adviser and know how to refer students quickly to the Personal Adviser. They will also need to know where and when students can access other information and support provided by Connexions. Equally the Personal Adviser will need to understand the role of the personal tutor and where they need to involve them in supporting a student. Joint training events and development activities may help personal tutors and Personal Advisers to understand each others roles and responsibilities. The effectiveness of the two-way communication between the Personal Adviser and the tutor will be essential, both to ensure that information is passed swiftly back and forth and to ensure a clarity of purpose between the two roles.

The Personal Adviser may have an active role in keeping tutors up-to-date with information about employment and access to higher education opportunities.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- Some colleges have devised joint training that brings together personal tutors and staff from Connexions. This allows time for the variety of roles to be explored and helps towards the clarification of when and how to make referrals. It also enables practitioners to develop an understanding of how student guidance in college is going to be enhanced by Connexions. One college held a day workshop bringing together practitioners from a variety of agencies to look at issues of transition and retention. The workshop resulted in a joint approach to transition and retention.

**Complementary information**

The Personal Adviser *C2*

Mentors, counsellors and others offering support *C4*

Induction *D4*

Assessing and identifying student need *D5*

Attendance monitoring and tracking *D6*

Referring students *D8*

Information, advice and guidance *D10*

# MENTORS, COUNSELLORS & OTHERS OFFERING SUPPORT

**Key message:** As there are often a range of agencies and individuals offering support to students there is a need to ensure that there is a clear focus of activities – avoiding confusion of roles and duplication of support.

Mentors work alongside students to give specific help in planning, organising and completing work. The aim is to raise the achievement of students through more intense one-to-one support by giving advice and encouragement to those who will benefit from this approach.

Learning mentors have been working in both primary and secondary schools and in some colleges through initiatives such as Excellence in Cities.

The role of learning mentor usually includes some of the following responsibilities:

- drawing up and implementing action plans for students who need extra support
- working with individual students, setting individual targets and action plans to overcome specific barriers to learning
- keeping in regular contact with families and carers of young people needing support and encouraging families to be involved in the student's learning
- developing networks of support with outside agencies and with other community groups.

There are also likely to be other agencies or individuals working with the college to provide specific types of support. These may include counsellors offering confidential personal support, the students union and welfare officers giving advice and guidance on welfare issues and other specialist practitioners who will each contribute to student support with their own skills and expertise.

## **How is it possible to ensure roles are not confused?**

There are times when support activities overlap so it will be important for the college and other participants to be clear about the role of each practitioner. The Partnership Agreement can be used to tie the contribution of other partners alongside Connexions. All college staff will need to be aware of the support on offer and how it can be accessed. The Personal Adviser may have an active role in helping to highlight the range of support to students and in seeing that their needs are matched by the available resources.

## **How does the role of mentor and other staff offering support differ from that of the Personal Adviser?**

The role of the Personal Adviser will not necessarily include an intense focus on students' learning needs.

All qualified Personal Advisers offer initial information and advice on the full range of Connexions support and in depth support according to their background and expertise. Where a young person has issues which are complex and go beyond the professional expertise of their Personal Adviser, the Personal Adviser will broker support from other support services or other Personal Advisers with the relevant specialist skills.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- In some colleges, mentors become involved with students either when they show signs of wanting to leave college or at the point of leaving college. In these instances a mentor can help the student consider decisions about future choices. The mentor may work closely with the Personal Adviser in these cases. They might also uncover the reasons for a student deciding to leave college and what went wrong. This information might be useful to the college in future planning.
- The provision of transition mentors. Some students in Aimhigher areas (previously Excellence Challenge areas) have a learning mentor at school. Schools might help by identifying a transition mentor, someone the student knows and who can maintain contact over the summer holidays before the start of college and during the first few weeks in college.

**Complementary information**

Transition and liaison with schools *D2*

Course transfer and students starting college late *D7*

Working with students causing concern *D15*

Links with other agencies and the voluntary sector *D17*

The following example, which received a National Association for Managers of Student Services (NAMMS) award for student services excellence, shows how co-operation between mentors and other 'help groups' can bring together partners in a single initiative to support students.

### **LEARNER MENTORS An initiative which has led to an increase in retention across a group of courses or a whole College**

In response to well below average retention rates for its level 2 courses **Great Yarmouth College** proposed the development of a small team of 'Learner Mentors' who would work closely with personal tutors in the support of students. Funded initially from standards fund monies a team of seven mentors were recruited and attached to specific programme areas. Working to clearly defined roles that complemented those of the Tutors the Learner Mentor initiative soon proved itself to be a success being highly rated by students and confirmed by a very significant increase in retention figures. An ongoing programme of training and development for the Learner Mentor team combined with a very comprehensive information resource pack has enabled the project to expand on the original brief and respond to all student cohorts at the College. Academic staff, initially sceptical were quickly turned around and are now enthusiastic advocates of the Learner Mentor role and its contribution to student support.

In the last year the Learner Mentor Team has been very pro-active with a range of other agencies and have brought these into the college to support students on a regular basis. There are weekly support sessions available from a Nurse from the Family Planning Team and also from the County Eating Disorders Association. There are monthly support sessions for Young Carers. Additionally they have targeted specific groups in the college for workshop sessions for sexual health (especially male dominated groups in construction and engineering) and these are supported through the "Young Men's Project" which operates in the town. The infrastructure of Learner Mentors being attached to every "Team/Programme Area" has facilitated the work of the Connexions Service. The Connexions workers are seen as part of this support team, working closely with the Learner Mentors, and tending to be involved with the more complex or time consuming issues. The college has a "housing support" Connexions worker in on a weekly basis, as it is an area of concern this year – the number of students being made homeless having escalated. There are strong links with The Norfolk Drugs & Alcohol Team (DAT) at local level and the college regularly hosts information days using their "Information Bus". Each of the Learner Mentors acts as a link person to a different set of agencies and cascades information to the rest of the team and links for the following have been established: Eating Disorders, Pregnancy support, Sexual Health, Mental Health, Homelessness, Young Carers, Alcohol and substance abuse.

There is a monthly student newsletter which reminds students what is on and when as well as who to turn to for support. It also highlights regular event days or weeks which support National Days i.e. World Aids Day, No Smoking Day, Christian Aid Week etc. What is noticeable is that now that other agencies in the area know what the college is doing (usually through IAG or other partnership groups) they approach the college to see if they can work together.

For more information contact Andy Hodgson at Great Yarmouth College Tel: 01493 419215 or [a.hodgson@gyc.ac.uk](mailto:a.hodgson@gyc.ac.uk)

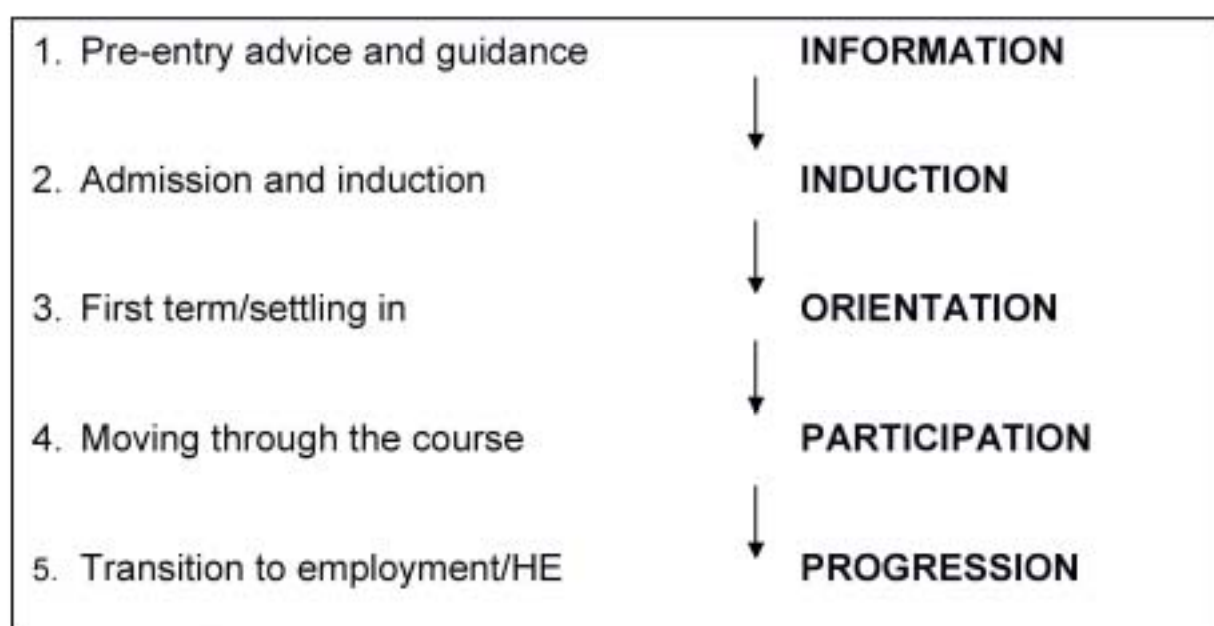
## STUDENT SUPPORT - PROCESSES

There will be a number of processes in place that support students' progress through college. These begin with the work in schools in helping to ensure smooth transition with information about college courses through to induction and the on-going support that will be available to students throughout their time at college

This section looks at how Connexions can work effectively with these college processes.

# THE STUDENT LIFE CYCLE

The student life cycle is a model (shown below) developed by Connexions Derbyshire as part of its work to support colleges through its pastoral support programme. The processes described are designed to support the variety of student support roles in college. Connexions can work with and between college and other support and guidance networks to strengthen partnerships and ease and develop constructive dialogue and communication.





## 14-19 PATHWAYS & PROGRESSION

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Transition staff in schools | Personal Advisers | Course tutors

**Key message:** The importance of coherence and integration in learning choices to give the most appropriate programmes of study for individual students over the 14 – 19 phase and to provide progression opportunities to higher education and work.

A pathway is a programme of study designed to meet the needs of, and provide progression for, an individual or group of students. The concept of a 'pathway' is not new as schools and colleges design courses for students with a variety of aptitudes, abilities, aspirations and interests. Recent developments (specifically set out in the government's next steps paper *14 – 19 Opportunity and Excellence*) give further emphasis to the importance of flexibility, pace and progression and the necessity of creating a coherent 14 – 19 phase that pulls together the resources of all local education and training providers. Colleges will be working closely with schools to share issues such as promoting the courses they offer and in guiding students onto correct pathways.

### What are the implications for a college?

There are a number of aspects that colleges might take into account in working with schools, training providers and employers. These include:

- Building on links already existing between education providers, schools and employers to ensure that there is an integration and co-ordination of pathways that seeks to enhance progression.
- Ensuring that the design of each pathway has a clear progression route and that students are aware of where each of them leads and how providers contribute towards the outcome.
- Allowing for flexibility and adaptability so students can easily alter a selected programme of study where necessary.
- Adapting pathways to accommodate the specific learning styles and study habits of students.
- Providing the guidance and advice required for students to make informed choices, whether starting out on an educational pathway or making decisions about any changes in mid-course.

### How can Connexions support 14 – 19 pathways and progression?

The provision of high quality guidance and unambiguous information is crucial if students are to make informed choices, both at transition points and during the mid stages of their courses. Tutors, subject specialists, Personal Advisers, mentors, careers advisers and family members might all provide support at different stages. Connexions Personal Advisers may take on an important role in ensuring that the relevant information is available to students at each stage and it is impartial and unbiased.

Personal Advisers may also play an active part in ensuring that there is regular liaison and productive partnerships between providers so that pathways are consistent, clear and integrated into the planning of all partners.

### **POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- Parents and carers often play an important role in influencing decisions made by their children. It will be essential to provide parents/carers/family members with clear information about the variety of pathways and progression routes and how they fit into the qualifications framework. This may be done at the pre-16 stage (in Year 11 at parents evenings for example) or through published information leaflets/website information or in prospectuses and other information from college. Connexions and the Personal Adviser can help in co-ordinating this information and in ensuring it reaches, and is understood by, all students.

### **Complementary information**

Transition and liaison with schools *D2*

Induction *D4*

Links with outside agencies and the voluntary sector *D17*

# TRANSITION & LIAISON WITH SCHOOLS

**AUDIENCE:** Transition managers in schools | Personal Advisers in schools and colleges | Student Services | Course tutors

**Key message:** Constructive and carefully orchestrated communication with schools can ensure that colleges have the information to place students on the right courses.

Most colleges have strategies for effective communication with local schools to explain what the college has to offer, the range of courses provided, together with accreditation and progression routes. Where students are well informed and prepared for changes in methods of study and expectations, there is a greater chance that there will be a smooth trouble-free transition from school to college.

## What are the implications for college?

The better informed a college is about new students, then the more prepared it can be in providing effective induction. In future, students are likely to have an Individual Learning Plan (ILP) or information that has been prepared through Progress File which will outline long-term goals and anticipated support needs. Some colleges negotiate with their network of feeder schools about the type of information they would like from them and at what time during the year. In some areas, 14-19 Pathfinder projects are exploring how electronic ILPs can be used to convey information from schools (with students' permission) to ensure it reaches the right people and at a time when it will be of greatest use in planning.

## In what ways might Connexions encourage transition between schools and colleges?

Information sharing between school Personal Advisers and college Personal Advisers should help to identify students who need extra help during transition, so that extra guidance and support can be given during their first months in college.

Transition strategies between Personal Advisers at school and college might include:

- Preparing students for college by setting up preparatory or taster days.
- Passing on of information that will help the college provide the student with the advice and guidance they need to choose the most appropriate courses.
- The school Personal Adviser maintaining contact with the student in the days between leaving school and starting college.
- Working together during the student induction at college. Contact with the school Personal Adviser at this time can bolster the confidence of a student who feels vulnerable in a new learning environment.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Working with a range of partners to support transition including providing students in school with information on post-16 options. These partners might include the local training provider network, other training providers, the Education Business Partnership (EBP) and the local Learning and Skills Council. Connexions will already have established links with most or all these and can play a formative role in devising a joint transition strategy.
- Identifying those students who will find transition most challenging and planning 'gradual transition'. The Personal Adviser can liaise with college and accompany students on initial visits. This might include introductory days, familiarisation visits and even initial part time attendance.
- The Personal Adviser may work with schools to identify students who are borderline candidates and who may be enrolled on what turn out to be unsuitable programmes. Together they can agree some backup support and consider alternative options should the student not be able to continue with their first choice.

### Complementary information

Induction *D4*

Assessing and identifying student need *D5*

Retention and students leaving courses early *D9*

'...increased liaison between colleges and schools and improved educational guidance to give students a better flavour of what their course might involve could reduce some of this wastage (of leaving early) and some of the problems arising from it.'

(LSC National Learner satisfaction survey 2001/2)

The following case study demonstrates how Connexions and Personal Advisers might help contribute to the transition of students from school to college:

**Case study:**

**South East Derbyshire College: Managing the School/College Transition**

As part of the discussions on how Connexions could add value to the work of Student Support in College, the school/college transition was identified as an area where closer collaboration could make an immediate impact.

To explore how the school/college interface might be improved, a conference for the whole student support team, the Additional Learning Support Co-ordinator and the team of Personal Advisors working in Amber Valley was held in the Summer Term. This resulted in an action plan with activities ranging from a summer programme of events provided by the College to work with those potential students who were apprehensive about moving to the College to a sharing of information on applicants to the College who were identified as having either level 1 or 2 support needs.

Clearly, the sharing of the information had to be handled carefully, because of data protection and client confidentiality concerns. The Personal Advisors were given a list of College applicants from their schools and when they could they provided information directly to the College. In some cases the Personal Advisor was not able to release the information in which case they provided enhanced support to the student to enable them to complete a successful transition into college.

Once again the information provided had to be handled sensitively and was used to encourage students to identify with College staff what levels of support they might need. This enabled us to arrange support (both academic and pastoral) for those students prior to them starting their programme, to present the available support in a positive light rather than as a deficit model and to make use of assessments carried out prior to College rather than put the students through the additional stress of further repeat diagnostics.

A further conference was held in the Spring Term to reflect on the impact of the measures taken with a view to 'sharpening' up the procedures and extending the work to other Connexions teams with whom the College works.

# IMPARTIAL ADVICE & GUIDANCE

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal Advisers | Careers staff

**Key Message:** The provision of impartial guidance enables students to make choices that respond to their specific aspirations and abilities. This ensures they move on to courses or training that is right for them.

Students, whether making course choices before starting college or revising plans at college, will need the support of impartial guidance at every decision point. To make well-informed and realistic decisions students need to understand all the options open to them.

The following extract is taken from "*College and Area-wide Inspections*" a report produced by the Adult Learning Inspectorate/Office for Standards in Education in April 2003

## **Advice and guidance**

In this context of sometimes inadequate, sometimes excessive, choice, the guidance provided to young people on their choice of pathway post 16, is of crucial importance. Most young people had access to adequate guidance, but naturally many relied on the advice of their school. In 11 of the areas inspected, their choices were found to be influenced by advice from schools that was neither impartial nor sufficiently comprehensive. Schools often provided inadequate information about work-based learning and opportunities outside their own 6<sup>th</sup> form. Too many students are enrolled on unsuitable programmes in both school sixth forms and colleges. Too many students with borderline entry criteria are enrolled on programmes that are too demanding for them. Not enough use is made of value-added information to advise students on their personal chances of succeeding on a particular programme. In many areas work-based training is regarded as suitable only for students with low achievements at age 16, and the advice given reflects this view.

## **How can Connexions play a role in providing impartial guidance?**

Personal Advisers work with staff, both in school and college, who are providing advice and guidance to students. They can help to check that the information provided to students about education and career routes is up-to-date and free from bias.

As part of their role in college, Personal Advisers may liaise with those Personal Advisers working in schools to ensure they have the latest information about college courses and the progression routes that result from selecting a course. Personal Advisers based in colleges might also facilitate closer links between school Personal Advisers and college admission teams. This work might include encouraging school students to visit the college to look at courses on offer. It might also include making arrangements for representatives of the college to visit schools to talk about college courses and progression routes.

Personal Advisers are required to provide young people with impartial, unbiased information. This remit needs to be communicated and understood by college staff as there may be times when a Personal Adviser will need to discuss, with a student, alternative education or training provision which take place outside of the college.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- Parents/carers have considerable influence on choices made by their children. A lack of understanding about modern progression routes and the qualifications framework could result in a student selecting inappropriate courses through parental advice that is based on outdated information. Parents' evenings may provide an opportunity to provide up to date information about careers progression routes and qualifications and what college courses involve.
- The college Personal Adviser and/or a member of the college admissions team can offer advice sessions in school aimed at parents/carers to explain the range of college courses available and the parity between them, potential progression routes through to further training, work or university and other issues of relevance for example information about financial support available.

**Complementary information:**

14 – 19 Pathways and progression *D1*  
Transition and liaison with schools *D2*  
Assessing and identifying student needs *D5*  
Course transfer and students starting college late *D7*  
Referring students *D8*  
Retention and students leaving courses early *D9*  
Information, advice and guidance *D10*  
Careers education and guidance *D11*

# INDUCTION

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal Advisers | Course tutors | Personal Advisers

**Key message:** An effective induction programme helps students to be aware of the expectations of the college and prepare them for new approaches to learning, ensuring a confident start to the course.

A planned, co-ordinated induction programme should ensure students are familiar with the college's processes and procedures, their course programmes, and what the college expects of them as students. An effective induction programme will often begin in the student's last year at school and may involve visits from college staff to the school or visits of students to college.

Close liaison between school and college can considerably help to smooth transition, successfully contribute to a student's induction and contribute towards improved retention rates. College and school Personal Advisers can play an active role in this.

## What is the contribution of Connexions to induction?

Personal Advisers working in schools should be aware of those students who will need extra help and support during transition/induction to college life. Personal Advisers can pass this information on to a college providing the young person has given their consent for the information to be shared. Colleges can then put the necessary support structures in place to meet the student's needs.

Colleges may wish to involve their Personal Adviser(s) in the planning and delivery of the college induction programme. This might include working with small groups of students to build up confidence through the first few weeks in college.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Establish a specialist team involving college staff, students and the Personal Adviser to review current induction processes and identify where improvements could be made.
- Seek to involve students in the induction process for example designing booklets and induction websites. Some students might even go out to schools to talk about their experience of college to prospective students.
- The first week of induction provides an ideal opportunity for introducing key people from different organisations and college departments. The Personal Adviser might take on the role of becoming a contact point for disseminating this information. If students are to be encouraged to access the full range of information and support services available then the induction programme can play an important part explaining: who people are; what they do; where they can be contacted and when.



**Complementary information:**

14 – 19 pathways and progression *D1*

Transition and liaison with school *D2*

Connexions information network *D12*

Electronic information can play an important part in helping to prepare students for college. Students might be encouraged to access initial information in their last year at school and this could also be a part of the transition programme. Connexions can play a part in promoting this in schools, incorporating links with its own partnership website. This example shows how one college has done this.

**Student Induction using a Virtual Learning Environment**

A Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) provides an ideal vehicle for student induction because:

- it uses a visually attractive web-based and graphical medium to present a wide range of information about the college in a flexible and easy to edit format
- it exposes students to the application of a VLE in their first days in the college
- it introduces a culture of embedding ICT as a learning tool at an early stage in the student's learning experience
- it eliminates the need for photocopying copious amounts of induction materials
- it standardises induction procedures for both full and part time students
- it provides induction for late enrolments

The production of materials for the course would require a collaborative effort between academic and support staff.

It is envisaged that this material would be a unit within a full college induction programme.

**Summary**

Our aim was to produce an induction package that would be inviting, informative and student friendly. The package would:

- provide essential information about the college and key personnel
- act as a repository for a variety of academic, support and leisure resources
- introduce the student to the full range of learning and support services provided by the college
- present a social dimension to student life by including information on the Students' Union and on leisure activities in the college and its immediate locality
- link to further useful sources of internal and external information.

Taken from [www.curdev-fe-ni.ac.uk/](http://www.curdev-fe-ni.ac.uk/)

# ASSESSING & IDENTIFYING STUDENT NEED

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal tutors

**Key message:** The identification of student needs enables resources to be successfully targeted where they can be of most benefit.

Student needs are identified so that time and resources can be effectively targeted to give specific, practical and sustainable support to secure individual progress. The two areas of need referred to here are:

- The immediate learning needs of the young person. Students will arrive at college with skills and knowledge already acquired at school. Assessments of these skills will enable the college to select the appropriate course level. It will also help with the identification of more specific support needs in basic skills.
- The broader needs of the young person, including social and personal needs. These will certainly impact on the way students engage with their work in college but contain a wider panorama of factors such as attitude and motivation, self-esteem, confidence, social skills and emotional well-being.

## What contribution can Connexions make to identification of need?

Connexions provides three broad levels of Personal Adviser intervention to meet young people's needs: Level 1 intervention provides intensive sustained support for young people with multiple problems; level 2 intervention provides in depth guidance and help for those young people at risk of disengaging and level 3 intervention provides information, advice guidance and review of career/learning/employment/personal development choices. (The three levels of support should not be confused with academic levels of achievements which work the other way starting at Entry Level upwards from Level 1 to Level 5).

The level of intervention and support being provided by a Personal Adviser may provide colleges with a way of broadly determining how well a student will engage with learning and the sort of background difficulties that might be obstacles to progress.

Students requiring support at Level 3 on the Connexions scale, for example, are probably well integrated into college, on courses that enable them to move forward. Any specific learning needs they have will be provided through direct general support. It would be expected that a large majority of students will be at this level.

However, students requiring support at level 1 on the Connexions scale may have a variety of difficulties that mean they may have problems even accessing courses. These young people may require support from a variety of practitioners. In these cases the Connexions Personal Adviser will play an active part in identifying and co-ordinating this support.

The following table summarises the three Connexions levels of support, and describes some of the observable characteristics that might indicate the level of support a student needs and identifies the practitioners who might be able to provide support.

**LEVEL 1: INTENSIVE AND SUSTAINED SUPPORT FOR THOSE STUDENTS WITH MULTIPLE PROBLEMS**

Support may be from:

**Personal Adviser**  
**Mentors**  
**Curriculum Co-ordinators**  
**Youth Service**  
**Voluntary organisations**  
**Youth Offending Teams**  
**Student Services**  
**Counselling Service**  
**Student Union**  
**Other agencies**

*The student may display one or more of the following characteristics/behaviours:*  
irregular attendance – long unaccounted for absences – regularly late – anti-social behaviour – lack interest in own progress – fear coming into college – display aggression towards own peers – constantly fail to meet deadlines for handing in work – lethargic – involved with social services/youth offending team – poor communication skills with adults or other students – tendency to be moody or despondent – lack interest in the future – little interest in activities outside college – has few friends – often falls out with friends – uneasy in new situations.

**LEVEL 2: IN-DEPTH GUIDANCE AND HELP FOR THOSE AT RISK OF DISENGAGING**

Support may be from:

**Student Services**  
**Mentors**  
**Curriculum Co-ordinators**  
**Personal Tutors**  
**Additional Support Workers**  
**Personal Development Programme**  
**Personal Advisers**  
**Counselling Service**  
**Other agencies**

*The student may display one or more of the following characteristics/behaviours:*  
lack of interest in some aspects of their work – occasions of poor attendance – little interest in progression to HE/work – there is evidence that in some subjects s/he is not reaching target level – can sometimes be discouraged by work in college – sometimes late for classes – tends to avoid discussion with adults unless for a specific reason – will talk about future but shows confusion/uncertainty/avoidance when the subject is raised.

<b>LEVEL 3: INFORMATION, GUIDANCE AND REVIEW OF CAREERS, LEARNING AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT CHOICES</b>	<b>LEVEL 3</b>
Guidance support is likely to be from: <b>Personal Tutor</b> <b>CEG and Personal Development Programme</b> <b>Personal Advisers</b> <b>Mentors</b> <b>Student Services</b>	<i>The student is usually:</i> Confident around college - on target for achieving grades – gets on easily with friends and adults most of the time – has researched career options – may be decided upon what s/he is going to do in the future – communicates own ideas with some confidence – good attendance and usually on time – has interests beyond college and can talk enthusiastically about them.

Where a student is thought to require support at level 1 or 2 of the Connexions scale, then a Personal Adviser will assess their needs supported by the Connexions Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) framework. Student services and Connexions might look at how the outcomes from college assessments can contribute towards the APIR framework. Where the Personal Adviser identifies that the student requires support from the college which is not currently being provided, the information will be shared with student services so that the necessary support can be put in place.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Students services and Connexions may wish to clarify the following – perhaps through the Partnership Agreement:
  - Who will be responsible for overseeing assessment and identification of student needs and how can Connexions support the process?
  - What assessment methods will be used and how will the outcomes be recorded?
  - How will the information be communicated to relevant staff?
  - How and when will support be reviewed and evaluated?

### Complementary information

Induction *D4*

Referring students *D8*

Skills for life and basic skills *D16*

The Connexions framework for assessment, planning, implementation and review *E4*

# ATTENDANCE MONITORING & TRACKING

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal Advisers

**Key message:** Prompt and effective monitoring of absence can help to identify unexplained difficulties a student might be experiencing, enabling problems to be addressed before resulting in the student leaving a course early.

The purpose of attendance monitoring is to ensure that colleges have an accurate record of student patterns of attendance, allowing for the prompt identification of those students showing signs of dropping out of courses or college. Attendance monitoring also provides essential information to support the payment of Educational Maintenance Allowances (EMAs) to students.

As part of the induction process, students should have been informed of the college's policy towards attendance, disciplinary procedures, the importance of regular attendance, who students need to contact if they cannot attend college for any reason, the procedures in place for monitoring attendance and the effects of non-attendance on any financial support students are receiving.

## How will a college deal with absence issues?

The onset of poor attendance can signify a student is having trouble in coping with a course. Poor attendance may also be related to other problems the student is having in college or difficulties the student may be facing outside college.

Some colleges have employed mentors to follow up students who have poor attendance records or a number of unexplained absences. This work often includes making contact with the student at home, finding out the reasons for the poor attendance, helping students to overcome the problems causing poor attendance and supporting students on their return to college to help avoid future absences. In some colleges, personal tutors carry out a similar role and in other colleges it is the role of the Personal Adviser .

## How can Connexions contribute to improving attendance?

In many cases students develop poor attendance patterns at school. Where this information is known to Connexions the Personal Adviser can support those students when they start college in establishing regular attendance patterns.

When a student returns to college after a long absence it might be part of the Personal Advisers role to support them on their return to college. This work might include finding out the reason for the long absence, arranging for the student to receive support which enables them to continue with their studies, seeing the student at regular intervals to discuss progress and any difficulties the student is facing.

## Complementary information

Transition and liaison with schools *D2*

Induction *D4*

Retention and students leaving courses early *D9*

Working with students causing concern *D15*  
Connexions Card *E2*  
EMAs and other financial support for students *E3*

# COURSE TRANSFER & STUDENTS STARTING COLLEGE LATE

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal Advisers | Careers staff

**Key message:** The importance of identifying and supporting those students who frequently request to change courses or who start courses late.

There are students who frequently request a course change or switch preferences. Underlying causes for this vary but include students who do not have a clear idea of what they want to do in the future, students experiencing difficulties with their course and those having difficulty adapting to learning in a college environment.

Students starting college late may have already faced some difficult decisions about changing from school to college, leaving employment or returning to learning. These students often miss out on the main induction programme and the other planned introductions to college. Students starting courses late may also have missed some important elements of their new course and will need extra support. If part of the college intranet provides induction information then the late starter can be encouraged to access this. There may even be a section devoted to providing information and assistance for late starters.

## How can Connexions help with indecisive students or those starting courses late?

Part of the Personal Adviser's role might be to work closely with those students who frequently request course changes or frequently seek to switch preferences. Personal Advisers can help students by exploring and addressing the underlying reasons for frequent course changing. Where there is a mismatch between a student's course and their career plan, the Personal Adviser could explore whether another course or provider would be a better match. Where the indecision is the result of a lack of any coherent career plan the Personal Adviser would arrange for the student to receive more intensive career support which might include arranging short taster work placements.

For students starting a course late, the Personal Adviser might contribute to an individual induction programme and oversee their first few weeks in college. Working in partnership with teaching and non-teaching staff the Personal Adviser might help in developing a special individual induction programme that can be provided to all students starting courses late.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ❑ Some colleges have a clear policy and procedures covering students who want to change courses. Students are made aware of them when they start college.
- ❑ Some colleges have a week in which any changes can be made. Despite this approach there will still be some students who fail to take the opportunities to change courses when given the opportunity. In these cases the Personal Adviser might be able to advocate for the student.

**Complementary information:**

Induction *D4*

Careers education and guidance *D11*

Working with students causing concern *D15*

Skills for life and basic skills *D16*

The following 5 staged approach to course change is suggested on the Qualifications and Curriculum Authority's website. It is worth reflecting where and how the Personal Adviser might contribute to this process, particularly in offering impartial guidance:

Taken from [www.qca.org.uk/ages14-19](http://www.qca.org.uk/ages14-19)

**Making changes to programmes**

There will inevitably be some changes of programme early in the first term and institutions need to have procedures to enable and manage this change, and to make sure that it is properly considered. One college has supported this process by a five step 'right on course' checklist.

- Step one asks students to reflect on their intended change.
- Step two asks students to discuss their concerns with their personal tutor.
- Step three asks students to discuss their concerns with their subject teacher.
- Step four asks students to discuss the matter in detail with a senior member of staff.
- Step five is associated with the administrative procedures for changing course.



# REFERRING STUDENTS

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal Advisers | Others working with students | Personal Advisers

**Key message:** Effective and prompt referral of students will ensure emerging difficulties are addressed as quickly and effectively as possible.

Within colleges there are a number of people who will be involved in referring students. Referrals might be made by tutors who identify a student has an erratic attendance pattern or where they identify a student who is disaffected with college or one who is struggling on their course. Referrals might be made by other college staff for example someone who has found a student's behaviour challenging or who sees a student having difficulties with personal and social relationships.

A well-timed and swift intervention can mean the difference between a young person resolving an issue and staying at college or leaving without any future plans.

## Who will be involved in the referral process?

The routines and procedures for making the referral should be clearly understood by students and staff and be as straightforward and uncomplicated as possible. This will be particularly important where a number of agencies, including Connexions, are part of the referral system. Students should also be able to seek help (self-referral) in a way that is responsive to their needs.

## How will the referral system work?

The referral process should:

- Be responsive to specific student needs as they arise.
- Be relatively quick and efficient.
- Find the appropriate level of support and the best person to provide that support.
- Ensure all those working with the young person are informed.
- Be open to review.

## How can Connexions contribute to an effective referral system?

The Personal Adviser could play an active part both in promoting and explaining the system of referrals and in taking referrals. The Personal Adviser might work closely with a representative of student services in allocating the appropriate support. They might also take on the responsibility of following up referrals, providing information to the person giving the support and feeding back to the member of staff who made the original referral.

Where Connexions and other agencies are part of the referral process, protocols and procedures should be negotiated. The Partnership Agreement can provide the forum for this and the setting out of agreed arrangements.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER

- Connexions can support referral processes.
- In reviewing effective referral the following might be considered:
  - Who will be responsible for managing referrals?
  - How will referrals be recorded?
  - Where will documentation be available?
  - When will the referrals process be reviewed?
  - Who will review the referral process?
  - How will students and staff be informed of the outcome of a referral?

### Complementary information

Transition and liaison with schools *D2*

Assessing and identifying student need *D5*

Example referral form *E6*

# RETENTION & STUDENTS LEAVING COURSES EARLY

**AUDIENCE:** Course tutors | Student services | Personal Advisers

**Key message:** An overall approach to prevention of students leaving courses early can considerably improve retention rates.

## What are the reasons for students leaving courses early?

Drop-out rates of students can be high in the first six weeks of a course. Reasons for this are varied and usually occur because of a series of complex issues rather than just one single cause. Students at risk tend to be constantly weighing up the pros and cons of studying. The scales often tip in favour of leaving college when a personal problem coincides with a lack of support or difficulties within or beyond college.

## What are some 'at-risk' indicators to help identifying students who may leave college or a course early:

- Late applicants and entrants
- Poor attendance and time keeping
- Evidence of poor attendance and commitment in the past
- Long part time work (15+ hours)
- Getting behind with assignments
- Having only just met entry requirements
- Unsure about the course

## How can Connexions help to reduce students leaving courses early?

Personal Advisers may be well placed in their role in the college to identify students who are in danger of leaving a course early or leaving college completely. The Personal Adviser can also play a part in raising the awareness of course tutors in college about the 'at-risk' indicators for students who may be about to leave a course early.

In some areas Connexions has supported the setting up of a retention team to look specifically at retention, to make use of drop-out data and raise awareness of the issues. Many colleges have recruited staff as retention 'key workers' and some Connexions Partnerships have funded extra Personal Advisers to focus on retention activity.

When a student is identified as likely to be considering leaving the college/course early the Personal Adviser will need to be informed as soon as possible. This will give them the opportunity to discuss the decision with the student and look at possible alternative courses or alternative provision. In some cases, students will cease to attend college without giving any notice or reason. Careful attendance monitoring may help to identify these students before they actually leave college. Early contact with a Personal Adviser may provide the opportunity to discuss what help and support could encourage or aid the student to continue in learning or return to college.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- Target individuals and programmes for additional support to improve retention and develop pro-active policies and strategies that target students. Use at-risk criteria and screening to target Personal Adviser support for students from the start of college. (See example from Greater Merseyside at the end of the section).
- Provide early careers education and guidance. Evidence shows that if students have a specific career aim, there is more chance of them staying and achieving.
- Form links with students' parents/carers. Some colleges produce a handbook for parents/carers explaining what is expected of students. Other ideas include events for parents/carers during induction, for example welcome meetings for parents/carers of new students. Some colleges have established an ongoing relationship with parents/carers through parents'/carers' consultation evenings and involving parents/carers in student progress reviews.

**Complementary information**

14 – 19 Pathways and progression *D1*  
Transition and liaison with schools *D2*  
Induction *D4*  
Attendance monitoring and tracking *D6*  
Course transfer and students starting college late *D7*  
Careers education and guidance *D11*  
Working with students causing concern *D15*  
Connexions Card *E2*  
EMAs and other financial support for students *E3*

The positive involvement of the Personal Adviser with students likely to leave college early is shown in the example from St Helen's College below:

**Helping to improve retention**  
Example: St Helens Greater Merseyside

Staff expressed concern that students attending two programmes in the Construction Area, (ICA Carpentry and Joinery and Bricklaying) often drop out during the first year for a variety of reasons - in particular they fail to return for the second year after the long summer break. The staff reported that the students frequently had very low expectations of themselves and poor self-esteem. The Personal Adviser (PA) suggested that she should run some group sessions with the students to get to know them and try to improve their confidence. In small groups of five or six, she has run regular sessions aimed at improving their motivation and creating a sense of belonging to the group. This has involved students sharing experiences, their expectations, and setting targets. "The students really enjoy these sessions and always attend. They are getting to know each other and communicating with each other .... there is much more of a group feeling." The staff appreciate these sessions too, as they are timetabled in the middle of a three-hour session. "This is far too long for them to concentrate on one subject" says one tutor "it gives them a break, and I can concentrate on individual students work. The PA provides extra support for students with difficulties..." There have been no drop-outs since the PA started this group work.

To address the issue of drop-out during the summer, the PA suggested that she should organise a series of activities for the students to keep them in contact with the college and help to keep them together as a group. In consultation with the students she is putting together a programme of events for up to 40 students. The proposed activities include archery, fishing, five-a-side football, paintball, indoor rock climbing, and gym sessions. Some of the staff have already volunteered some of their time to participate in these activities with the students. "This is a brilliant idea" said one programme leader. Obviously attendance is voluntary and students will be able to drop in and out of activities as they wish. The Connexions Service and the college (through the Standards Fund) contribute funding to the programme.

In the area of Health and Social Care, staff reported that many first year students simply felt lost in the large college, and some drop out. The PA suggested that they should set up some sort of 'buddy' scheme and this was greeted enthusiastically by the GNVQ staff team. As a result, the team are about to launch a peer-mentoring programme. At the end of year one, students will receive mentoring training in 12 two and a half hour sessions over three weeks. In September, as new students arrive, they will be allocated a mentor by the scheme co-ordinator, who is also one of the programme leaders. Peer mentors will receive supervisory support through their personal tutorial programme. Clearly there are links to the curriculum offered within the area and students will be able to put in to practice what they have been learning. The scheme will use the value base of the main programme. It will also support student's Key Skills development (Working with Others, in particular). If the scheme is successful, it may be extended to other areas within the college.

# INFORMATION, ADVICE & GUIDANCE

**AUDIENCE:** Careers staff | Personal tutors | Personal Advisers

**Key message:** Information, advice and guidance plays a critical part in helping young people to identify aptitudes and aspirations, overcome barriers and plan for their future and take appropriate actions to achieve their aims.

During their time at college, all students will need some level of advice, guidance and support with information about fees and finance, health, housing, part-time employment, voluntary opportunities and future career pathways. The type and level of support provided will be tailored to the needs of each student.

## In what way does college support the student in providing information, advice and guidance?

Most colleges have considerable experience in providing students with integrated support arrangements. This may be given through a taught personal development programme or by one-to-one advice through the offices of student services. There will also be a range of information available either in the library, at career information points or within departments. Students are also directed to other external agencies for specialist support and guidance.

## What does Connexions contribute?

Connexions is committed to supporting the progression of every young person. In some cases this will involve providing advice relating to career options whilst in other cases it will involve helping the young person overcome personal issues that are impacting on achievement at college and future career progression. The contribution Connexions will play will depend on the arrangements within college for giving information advice and guidance and how staff are deployed. The Personal Adviser might help co-ordinate the information, advice and guidance provision available in college, ensuring students are aware of where they might access information points, websites and direct one-to-one advice.

Students who are least motivated and most at risk of failing to complete courses are often least likely to access information and advice. The Personal Adviser might play an active part in ensuring that these students have the necessary information and access to support services.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ❑ Connexions might have a role in the linking of information, advice and guidance to other college information networks.
- ❑ Who has responsibility for updating and developing information, advice and guidance?
- ❑ What role will the Personal Adviser have? This might include developing appropriate training for all those delivering information, advice and guidance.

### Complementary information

Impartial advice and guidance *D3*  
Referring students *D8*  
Connexions information network *D12*  
Enrichment and tutorial programmes *D13*  
Links with other agencies and the voluntary sector *D17*  
Aimhigher *E1*

The following example shows how Connexions worked with the College of West Anglia to raise drugs and alcohol awareness amongst students.

The College of West Anglia and Connexions have successfully piloted the first of a planned series of information sessions aimed at raising awareness of various issues that affect 16 – 19 year olds. The project began with a meeting between Connexions Personal Advisers and representatives from Student Support at the college, which resulted in the concept of having specialist advisers come into the college to speak to young people during information and drop-in sessions to raise awareness and provide support.

The first series of sessions, aimed at raising awareness of drugs and alcohol in 16 – 19 year olds at the college, is to be followed by information sessions about sexual health and eating disorders to be presented by other specialist speakers. Liz Riseborough, T2 Youth Worker and specialist in providing drug and alcohol advice to young people, came to the college on two dates in January to raise awareness of drugs and alcohol and is planned to return on the 3<sup>rd</sup> February for another session. Four information sessions were held on each of the dates and approximately 300 students will have received guidance from Liz overall. The sessions were one and a half hours each and were attended by up to 30 students each time during college time through collaboration with college Course Directors. The sessions included quizzes and discussion but the main direction of the session was guided by the students themselves and by what they wanted to do during the session. She also provided drop-in clinics for students at the college to provide one-to-one support.

The first series of sessions about drugs and alcohol have been warmly received by staff at the college. Sue Porter, a Course Director at the college, said, “the sessions have been a very useful exercise for the students and I will be carrying on with the themes through tutorials. It was nice that everyone was included from all abilities and age groups. I look forward to the next sessions.”

Students gave a mixed reaction to the sessions but evaluations of their comments will be used to guide further sessions. Generally positive comments included, “It’s good to know that you have people to turn to if you have drugs or alcohol problems.” Constructive criticisms included comments along the theme of having more varied and interactive activities such as having a video and bringing in young people to discuss their problems and talk about how they have overcome drugs or alcohol abuse.

Note T2 is a Norfolk-wide specialist drug and alcohol support service, commissioned by the Drug Action Team and a partnership between the Matthew project, the Mancroft Advice Project and the Norfolk Youth and Community Service.

# CAREERS EDUCATION & GUIDANCE

**AUDIENCE:** Careers staff | Personal tutors | Personal Advisers

**Key message:** Effective careers education and guidance can improve retention and support progression.

Although there is no statutory duty to provide careers education, colleges recognise the importance of continuing to support students with their progression through learning. The Department for Education and Skills national Careers Education and Guidance (CEG) framework, published in March 2003, includes the 16 – 19 phase and provides a basis for careers education programmes. The framework fits students on Level 3 courses and the Key Stage 4 section can be modified for those students on Entry Level courses and on Level 1 or 2 courses.

Careers education and guidance is delivered in a variety of ways in college but usually consists of a combination of taught elements and individual study. In some colleges there might be a team of college advisers working with individuals and students in small groups. In other colleges, careers education and guidance may be incorporated into the tutorial programme or integrated into other aspects of the personal development curriculum including the development of key skills, reviewing and target setting.

## The contribution of Connexions to careers education in college.

Connexions has a key role in supporting colleges in developing careers education and guidance programmes. This might be through participation in taught programmes or working with groups or individuals. Personal Advisers may liaise with schools to explore how there might be continuity between school and college careers education programmes and how, in some cases, the individual needs of students might be met. Personal Advisers may also link the CEG programme with other paper and electronic information resources that are available in and beyond college. In this way they will assist in establishing coherence and continuity between the information, advice and guidance available and the tutorial or taught elements of careers in college.

Connexions also supports training for tutors and provides resources to ensure information is up-to-date and available to all those who need it.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- The National Framework for Careers Education and Guidance in England sets out the recommended learning outcomes for careers education. By the age of 19, young people should have acquired the knowledge, understanding and skills to:
  - undertake and use a range of assessments to confirm medium and long term goals and update career and learning targets
  - assess their career exploration and management skills and identify areas for development
  - take action to develop further the knowledge and skills they need to progress, and identify and take advantage of opportunities for adding to their experiences and achievements



- describe and evaluate personal action to promote equal opportunities and respect for diversity
  - evaluate the impact of external influences on personal views, attitudes, behaviour and career plans and respond appropriately
  - identify the strengths and weaknesses of different work scenarios and the possible implications of these for their own career development
  - make critical use of a range of information sources to explain how careers are changing
  - obtain careers information relevant to personal needs and process it effectively
  - describe different routes through to their career goals and the similarities and differences between higher education and employment with training
  - make good use of opportunities to extend their knowledge and understanding of destinations relevant to personal career plans
  - justify and evaluate the range of opportunities they are considering including HE, training, employment or starting their own business
  - take charge of their own career planning and management, evaluate previous transitions and use the outcomes when considering the future
  - evaluate and improve personal criteria for comparing different options and make critical use of all available information, advice and guidance
  - consider the possible implications of changes in learning and work for their own career goals and plans including financial options
  - follow application procedures correctly and use a range of self-presentation techniques that are fit for purpose
  - present themselves well at selection interviews and demonstrate enterprise, negotiation and self-marketing skills to an appropriate level
  - obtain and manage sources of financial support
- Identify the ways in which Connexions can support the college with careers education and guidance.

**Complementary information**

Information, advice and guidance *D10*

Connexions information network *D12*

Aimhigher *E1*

**Further information**

[www.cegnet.co.uk](http://www.cegnet.co.uk) The Careers education support programme

[www.nacgt.org.uk](http://www.nacgt.org.uk) The National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers

# CONNEXIONS INFORMATION NETWORK

**AUDIENCE:** Careers staff | Personal tutors | Personal Advisers | Student services

**Key message:** The Connexions information network can play an important part in providing students with a range of information that will support them both in learning and with wider social issues.

Colleges make available a broad range of information to students, their parents/carers and tutors and all colleges have developed careers libraries to meet the needs of their students. Connexions Partnerships are working with colleges to broaden and extend the type of information available.

## What sort of information might this include?

In addition to information about courses and careers, information should be available of relevance to the young person in their transition to adulthood. This is likely to include information about:

- Housing
- Money
- Health and sexual relationships
- Benefits
- Relationships
- Leisure
- Environment
- Drugs and Alcohol
- The Law
- Personal Safety
- Travel
- Rights and responsibilities

## Student access

The aim is to make this information easily accessible, either in one place or more likely as part of a network of information points. Information points might include notice-boards, leaflet dispensers, the library and publications such as student handbooks. Electronic information is also important and young people, parents/carers and staff should be encouraged to access quality website or helplines at college or home. The college intranet may also provide useful links to other information sites including the Connexions National site as well as the local Connexions Partnership site.

Students will need time and opportunity to become familiar with the information available in college and how to access it. This might be covered during induction process and at other important times of the year.

Tutors may also benefit from becoming familiar with the resources available to support individuals during the tutorial programme.

## Connexions contribution

In addition to the information available through college, students and their parents/carers can access information through Connexions centres based in the high street and community settings. All Connexions Partnerships have a website providing local information such as job opportunities and local support services. Nationally Connexions Direct offers a free and confidential information, advice and support service to 13 to 19

years. Young people can contact Connexions Direct by phone, email, webchat or text (Telephone 080 800 13 2 19 or see [www.connexions-direct.com](http://www.connexions-direct.com)).

Connexions might also produce leaflets for students in conjunction with the college providing specific information. Connexions staff may also work with student services and the college librarian to develop resources and an information policy.

### **Complementary information**

14 – 19 Pathways and progression *D1*

Information, advice, and guidance *D10*

Careers education and guidance *D11*

Enrichment and tutorial programmes *D13*

Connexions information is catalogued under a system called Connexions Resource Centre Index (CRCI). Details can be found on the CEGNET website ([www.cegnet.co.uk](http://www.cegnet.co.uk)).

# ENRICHMENT AND TUTORIAL PROGRAMMES

**AUDIENCE:** Personal tutors | Personal Advisers | Student services

**Key message:** Connexions can support enrichment and tutorial programmes which encourage students to develop personal competence in career planning and decision making.

Personal development, tutorial and enrichment programmes support students in managing their transition to adulthood. They encourage students to reflect upon and evaluate their own learning and identify where changes need to be made. Sometimes the programmes will contribute to the development of key skills.

Programmes support students as they become more autonomous and independent in decision-making. Sometimes the programmes form part of key skills development or sometimes activities may be linked to Progress File materials. Programmes are often tailored to individuals or small groups and may include some vocational and work-related experience. Colleges sometimes provide other enrichment activities that are designed to contribute towards personal growth and all round competence and confidence.

## What can Connexions contribute?

Connexions has links with numerous outside agencies, both statutory and voluntary and may be able to suggest where other agencies might contribute to personal development and enrichment programmes. For example Connexions may have close links with an organisation able to help in setting up placements for students and opportunities for volunteering within the community. A Personal Adviser or representative from Connexions might play a part in contributing towards the planning of enrichment and tutorial programmes.

## Complementary information

Links with outside agencies and the voluntary sector *D17*  
Citizenship *E5*

## LEARNER SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS WITH LEARNING DIFFICULTIES AND/OR DISABILITIES (Additional Needs)

**AUDIENCE:** Personal tutors | Personal Advisers (School & College) | Specialist learner support

**Key message:** Connexions can support students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities by; identifying learning needs, providing support to remain in learning, transition planning from college to future placements and by helping to co-ordinate the work of other agencies.

Most colleges already have some specialist facilities and discrete provision and/or support teams linked to student services for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. These facilities may include communication support, note-taking, personal and learning support assistance. At school, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should have benefited from carefully planned integrated support, sometimes involving practitioners from a number of agencies and regular reviews. In their last year at school any student that has a statement of special educational needs must have a transition plan prepared. The transition plan draws together information from individuals within and beyond the school in order to plan coherently with the young person for their transition to adult life. Connexions and/or head teachers will seek agreement of students and their parents/carers to pass on relevant information from the transition plan to colleges. This is to ensure that the young person receives any necessary specialist help or support during their continuing education and vocational or occupational training after leaving school.

### Providing specialist support

Connexions has a responsibility to ensure all young people who may have difficulty in transferring to further education or training after they have completed their compulsory schooling have a needs and provision assessment. This includes students with special educational needs but who do not have a statement. Before a student with learning difficulties or disabilities begins their course in college, the following will need to be asked:

- Have the student's learning needs been fully assessed?
- Has the college seen all the relevant information necessary for placing the student on the most appropriate course, matching their needs to the support and resources available to the college?
- What is the nature of support that the college needs to provide?
- How will this support be provided and by whom? Is there extra funding available to support the student? Where can it be obtained from?
- Will the support available meet all the student's identified learning needs, and if not what are the consequences of this?

All students including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities should have a carefully planned induction to college. Students, with their parents/carers if appropriate, should have regular reviews with their course/pastoral tutor. A Personal Adviser might attend a review meeting where there are concerns about a student's progress, their attendance or where additional support or other provision is needed.

### **In what ways might Connexions support?**

Where a young person with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who is already working with a Personal Adviser leaves school and moves on to further education it is expected that the Personal Adviser will continue to support the young person in their new learning environment. Where this is not the case the Connexions Partnership will make arrangements for a handover to another Personal Adviser.

Personal Advisers will support a young person with learning difficulties and/or disabilities during their time in college and will help them make the transition from college to their chosen next step. This might be continuing in education, entering employment or taking up a personal development opportunity.

Connexions can continue providing support up to the age of 25 for those students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Soon after the student's 19<sup>th</sup> birthday, the Personal Adviser will arrange a review meeting. Attendees will include the student, their parent/carer if appropriate and representatives from other support agencies. The purpose of the meeting will be to identify whether support is needed beyond the student's 20<sup>th</sup> birthday. If continued support is needed, Connexions will agree with the student and other people/agencies concerned which organisation is best placed to provide the support needed. The arrangements will be reviewed at least annually with the aim of helping the client make a smooth transition to the use of adult services.

### **POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- The part a Personal Adviser might play in college in supporting students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. This could involve membership of a specialist group looking at future developments as well as the review of the present provision.

### **Complementary information**

14 – 19 Pathways and progression *D1*

Transition and liaison with schools *D2*

Induction *D4*

Assessing and identifying student need *D5*

Skills for life and basic skills *D16*

# WORKING WITH STUDENTS CAUSING CONCERN

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal Advisers | Course tutors | Mentors

**Key message:** Students identified as needing intensive support should have a carefully planned induction and transition programme.

Students who are dealing with a range of personal, social and emotional issues are unlikely to achieve their potential. Students that fall into this category might include those who have drifted into college and whose attendance at school was sporadic. It might also include those students who have fallen behind in their studies or have been excluded from school. These young people may be more inclined to change their plans, be unrealistic in their goals and lack transition skills which lead to difficulties with engaging them in college. They may display a combination of the following characteristics and/or behaviours:

- irregular attendance
- regularly late for classes
- reluctance to come into college
- aggression towards own peers
- constant failure to meet deadlines
- poor communication skills
- tendency to be moody or despondent
- little interest in activities outside college
- long unaccounted absences
- anti-social behaviour
- lack of interest in own progress
- involvement with social services or Youth Offending Team
- lethargy
- lack of interest in the future
- uneasy in new situations
- few friends or often falling out with friends

Not all students will necessarily be openly disaffected. Some will not have settled into college and may be withdrawn and on the verge of leaving college. This could be because of problems at home, difficulties in making the transition to college or failure to adapt to the demands of their chosen course. Some students may act impulsively and leave college after a seemingly trivial incident.

The following list outlines the sort of processes that can help to identify and work with students, particularly those who are causing concern:

- Systems are in place to identify students who require support.
- Support is in place to help young people select appropriate college courses or appropriate progression route.
- Information sharing protocols are in place which enables information about the student to be communicated to college – indicating specific support needs.
- Pre-induction programmes are provided – introducing students to college before leaving school – with tasters, interviews and visits.
- Contact with students is maintained during the summer holidays and students are supported where there is a change of circumstances.
- Students are made aware of what the college expects of them and information is provided about what to do if they are having problems e.g. who to see, where to go.
- Support is provided to students during induction programme.
- Incentives/rewards are identified and put in to place to encourage attendance.

- Information is provided about the types of financial support available e.g. Education Maintenance Allowance – how to apply etc.
- Students are asked for feedback about the college's induction programme, their responses are reviewed and evaluated and, if appropriate, action is taken to improve the induction programme.
- Students' attendance is monitored and processes are in place, which are understood by staff and students about action to be taken should there be unauthorised absences.
- Students' progress is reviewed at the end of the first semester.
- A student handbook, or other literature and/or information is developed for issue to students which sets out the college's rules, policies and codes of conduct.

### **How can Connexions contribute to working with students causing concern?**

Providing support and guidance to young people who are dealing with a range of personal, social and emotional issues can often be time intensive. Personal Advisers can help to ensure that support is appropriate, timely, planned and linked to the students own future intentions.

#### **POINTS TO CONSIDER:**

- The long summer holidays can be a time when young people drift away from education. This makes the return to college more difficult for them and a number of young people cite this as a reason for not going to college. Maintaining contact with those students during the summer, through holiday programmes, for example, can provide the necessary bridge to college. In some areas, Personal Advisers have taken on this role.
- Part-time work is often a reason for poor attendance. There may be room for some flexibility in adapting a student's learning programme with time for the student to do part-time work. Some colleges have set up 'job clubs' for their students.

#### **Complementary information:**

Transition and liaison with school *D2*

Impartial advice and guidance *D3*

Induction *D4*

Assessing and identifying student need *D5*

Retention and students leaving courses early *D9*

Skills for life and basic skills *D16*



The following example from Bolton College demonstrates how Connexions and other agencies can work together to support students who need help.

### **The Hear 4 U Project**

Bolton Community College has a partnership with Bolton LEA on behalf of all the secondary schools in the area, in order to support Bolton's year 10 and 11 pupils who had been excluded from main stream education.

In September 2002, when the programme commenced for the academic year, it soon became apparent that the twenty pupils needed much more guidance and support when out of the classroom. They were congregating in a corridor to smoke inside the College, which is a non-smoking building. Instances of being asked to move outside by security staff and the College Counsellor led to verbal abuse directed at the staff members. There were also problems with fire alarms being set off on an almost daily basis, broken windows, instances of theft and interruptions to counselling sessions by banging on the door and running away. A further concern was that when pupils were excluded from the programme for abuse or violent behaviour, they still entered the College (a public building) to seek out their friends. When the staff asked them to leave the building, they were so abusive that the police were called on several occasions. By November 2002 their behaviour had caused such concern that it was an agenda item for senior management discussion.

Learner Services was tasked with finding a solution to the problems around the area of learner support. At the time, the College was piloting a new learner support system known as the PAL project. A Proactive Advocate for Learner (PAL) was responsible for monitoring and acting on non-attendance across particular programmes and enabling learners to overcome difficulties in order to remain in College. Referrals to Connexions was to play an important part in this support service.

A close working relationship had already been entered into with the local Connexions and Youth Services management so the College was able to discuss ideas for the under 16's Programme with them. The concept for support was centred on the PAL monitoring system while incorporating youth work activities during the start of the day, breaks and lunchtimes.

The Hear 4U project is run as follows. The two youth workers arrive between 8.30-9.00am in order to welcome the pupils, supervise the refreshments and encourage conversation. The group is able to discuss any issues that have arisen overnight. They encourage the smokers to go outside and have a cigarette before 9.30am, making sure they all arrive at class on time. The workers then liaise with the course tutor and any non-attendance is discussed. The tutor starts the session while the workers start trying to track down the non-attendees.

The tea and toast idea came from the Youth Workers knowledge of relevant theories behind youth work, such as Maslow's (1943) hierarchy of basic needs (food, drink, warmth, security) which were missing from these pupils lives. Their experiences told them that these needs must be met before all others on a daily basis. The concept of walking into a safe warm environment which offers food, drink and people they can converse with who will listen and offer confidentiality, unconditional positive regard and empathy was the starting point.

## The Hear 4 U project continued

Support and fun activities continue throughout the day during breaks and lunchtimes. The Youth Workers also run a Youth Service based personal development session on a Friday morning designed to raise awareness of topical issues, build self esteem and encourage the pupils to be actively involved in group work projects.

The following is a quote from Nia Hughes, Connexions PA, based at the College -

*'The youth workers have made a real difference as the pupils seem to really enjoy the issues based sessions and the informal chats that are carried out. During appointments with the young people, a youth worker is present and their input has been vital in drawing up action plans, looking for strategies for change and coping strategies. The thing I value most is the inter-agency involvement which is essential in reducing duplication and offers young people continuity – something which many don't have.'*

This regime has made a very positive impact on recruitment (young people know about the provision and try to self refer) attendance, retention and progression to mainstream.

The Hear 4U project was set up in the first instance to support appropriate behaviour. It has done a lot more than this and is enabling young people who have been excluded from local schools to grow, develop and make their own choices.

# SKILLS FOR LIFE & BASIC SKILLS

**AUDIENCE:** Personal Advisers | Student services | Mentors

**Key message:** Skills programmes designed to improve learners' literacy, language and numeracy skills can help students move more confidently into further learning, training or work.

Many colleges are involved with improving students' literacy, language and numeracy skills as part of the government's Skills for Life strategy. Students arriving at college from school are likely to be given an initial assessment either before they start college or during induction. The purpose of the assessment is to identify the skill level of the student and ensure the student is on an appropriate course. Once a basic skills need has been established, then a diagnostic assessment may be needed to identify skill strengths and weaknesses more accurately.

Where a student's basic skills are not at the required level, learning support might be delivered as an integral part of the student's selected course or it may be provided separately to meet more specific learning needs. Colleges often provide discrete basic skills courses for those students who are not yet ready for mainstream courses.

All basic skills programmes are now mapped to the Skills for Life national standards at Entry level, Level 1 and Level 2 and are underpinned by the new adult core curricula for literacy, language and numeracy. The national standards sit within the National Qualifications Framework and are aligned with Key Skills at Level 1 and 2 and with the national curriculum at Entry level and Level 1.

## How can Connexions support college with Skills for Life?

Many students needing support with basic skills will have had their needs assessed by their school. If information sharing protocols are in place, and with the students' permission this information may be passed on to the college. For example, some students will have had a carefully arranged programme of study with consistent support during Years 10 and 11 and so their schools should be able to provide accurate background information. Students may also bring with them an Individual Learning Plan that identifies realistic milestones and targets and identifies the type of support necessary for them.

Some students who have not attended school regularly may face considerable barriers to progression. In addition they may be resistant to traditional approaches to engage them in learning. Where these students are known to Connexions, valuable background information may be passed on to the college Personal Adviser with suggestions of ways that might motivate and stimulate the young person. Where a student has had erratic attendance during their last year at school, it will be important to take time in putting together a plan that is realistic, understandable and achievable for the student.

**In what way might Connexions help the young person who is working to improve basic skills?**

Many young people taking basic skills courses are lacking in confidence and self-esteem. They will often have been supported by Personal Advisers during their time at school and may have been in receipt of intensive support. For them college may be an intimidating institution. Closely planned induction might remove some of the anxieties and a Personal Adviser can play an important part in either providing the support or identifying where it might come from.

During their courses students may need more intense and closely planned careers guidance and it may be possible to link elements of the Basic Skills programme to this, providing it with increased relevance and purpose.

**POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- Setting up a programme between college and local schools in Year 11 where students complete Basic Skills assessments before starting at college, enabling course tutors and other relevant staff to prepare for students before starting college courses.
- Involving mentors, both from within and beyond college, to work alongside students on Basic Skills courses, offering encouragement and support.

**Complementary information**

Assessing and identifying student need *D5*

Learner support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities *D14*

Working with students causing concern *D15*

Links with outside agencies and the voluntary sector *D17*

# LINKS WITH OUTSIDE AGENCIES & THE VOLUNTARY SECTOR

**AUDIENCE:** Student services | Personal Advisers | Staff from other agencies working in college  
Learning Mentors

**Key message:** Positive co-operation between statutory and voluntary services in college can enhance the quality of delivery to students.

Connexions aims to strengthen the support networks and the range of guidance and information services available to young people. This includes encouraging a coherent approach to working with young people by improving communication between organisations and building partnerships through a shared understanding of roles and responsibilities. The result can be the integration of a variety of expertise and experience ensuring the specific needs of the young person can be met with the appropriate resources at the right time.

## Implications for college

Connexions is not another agency to add to the list of youth support services. It is a service that assists in the integration of youth support services and provides continuity of support for young people. Closer links can provide genuine opportunity to attune and co-ordinate services in such a way that resources of each organisation are most economically and effectively deployed.

## How can Connexions support this?

The presence of Connexions and the Personal Adviser in college provides a good opportunity for colleges to review how they currently work with outside agencies and voluntary and community organisations. Connexions brings together a wide range of agencies that deliver services to 13 -19 year olds. Health services, police and probation, youth services, social services, youth offending teams, drug action teams, voluntary and community organisations and many more play a part in Connexions locally. Personal Advisers in some Connexions Partnerships are jointly funded and managed by other participating agencies. Personal Advisers are well placed to take on a key role in making links with other agencies and putting college in touch with partners and voluntary services not already known to college. Agencies usually welcome the opportunity to help to raise their profile in college and clarify what they can provide for students.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- ❑ The variety of agencies contributing to student support will vary from college to college and will depend largely on local arrangements. A college might develop a contacts data base/directory of all those practitioners contributing to support and outlining their particular role. This might be made available on the intranet and in induction information.
- ❑ Connexions could also play a part in helping promote the work of other agencies in college and suggesting ways that communication between the various practitioners is maintained.

**Complementary information**

Transition and liaison with schools *D2*

Enrichment and tutorial programme *D13*

## ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

The information in this final section is likely to be available already to colleges but has been included here as a summary for practitioners.

## AIMHIGHER

Aimhigher is designed to raise the aspirations and attainment of young people to give more of them the chance to enter Higher Education (HE). The primary target group is 13 - 19 year olds. Aimhigher supports the government's target to enable 50% of 18-30 year olds to experience HE by 2010.

Aimhigher aims to improve links between schools, colleges and Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in order to encourage and support young people who have the ability and potential to go in to HE to do so.

### How might Aimhigher work in college?

Aimhigher co-ordinators develop and deliver regional plans of work with colleges, schools, training providers and HEIs and co-ordinate the activities between them. These activities can include:

- visits to and from HEIs
- taster programmes at FE colleges and HEIs
- summer schools
- mentoring programmes
- revision and research study support programmes
- target setting days
- self esteem raising activities
- mock university interviews
- roadshows
- the provision of information, advice and guidance to young people and their families about higher education, application procedures, choice of institutions, study support and financial matters.

### How can Connexions contribute to Aimhigher?

Connexions Personal Advisers support the work of Aimhigher in a number of ways including follow up work with students following Aimhigher roadshows, carrying out mock university interviews, arranging visits to HEIs and contributing to information and advice events about HE for parents and students.

Other aspects of Connexions work complements Aimhigher e.g. working with colleges to produce effective careers, education and guidance programmes which cover HE, offering support to colleges in preparing students for HE Fairs and similar events, working with individuals and groups of young people to raise their aspirations and provide relevant information, advice and guidance about HE.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER

- The Partnership Agreement between colleges and Connexions should refer to how Personal Advisers, alongside tutors and mentors, will provide information, advice and guidance on learning and career options and support to students researching and applying to HE. This could also cover any Aimhigher activity taking place in the institution.



- What role could the college play in encouraging school students to progress to FE as a means of accessing HE?
- Who would be the best link in college to work with Aimhigher Co-ordinators?

**Where to get further information?**

Further guidance about the role Connexions has in supporting Aimhigher is available at [www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships](http://www.connexions.gov.uk/partnerships) in the 'Working with Us' section.

The Aimhigher website: [www.aimhigher.ac.uk](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk) provides guidance on HE for young people and practitioners who are supporting them in considering HE.

The Aimhigher website: [www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprogramme/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprogramme/) provides details of Aimhigher objectives and activities.

### **Chesterfield College** Aimhigher Case Study

North-East Derbyshire Education Action Zone (EAZ) has managed the Aimhigher initiative since April 2001. The EAZ includes 3 secondary schools, none of which have 6<sup>th</sup> forms, so key partners in the initiative have been the local colleges, primarily Chesterfield College and West Nottinghamshire College.

The EAZ contract with Connexions to co-ordinate Aimhigher activities in the schools and colleges, and to provide enhanced careers guidance to the students involved in the initiative (ie students identified as having potential to progress to Higher Education but who may face socio-economic, cultural, or personal barriers to progression). This has allowed continuity of support for students through from Y9 – Y13. The Connexions service also completed a series of destination surveys, which showed progression rates to FE and HE in the area as substantially below the national average.

The colleges have been involved in the initiative in a number of ways, both in providing support and encouragement to students in school to progress to Further Education, and then working with EAZ students once they are in FE to encourage them to consider Higher Education. Activities have included:

- Enhanced A level Taster Days for EAZ students in Y11, to enable them to visit college as a group from school and meet ex-students from their school who have already made the transition to FE.
- Contribution to a 'College Survival Guide', distributed to all Y11 students containing information and advice to help students address issues which may prevent them from commencing a college course.
- Engineering project for female Y10 students involving 3 days of hands-on activities on college premises.
- A fund to support EAZ students at college with the financial costs of attending University Open Days, interviews, revision courses and other costs associated with progression to HE.
- A programme of link activities with local universities, including visits and presentations in college.
- Mentoring support for EAZ students starting at college.
- Delivery of a motivational teaching programme to students (college staff trained alongside school staff to ensure continuity of delivery).

Connexions PA's have been involved in many of these activities, either in promoting them to students or providing follow-up guidance and individual support.

Regular Aimhigher meetings including college staff, school staff and Connexions have allowed all partners to work more closely together on a range of other issues.

The recent introduction of Aimhigher (P4P) in the area has resulted in a wider range of activities in schools and colleges. P4P staff also attend local Aimhigher meetings to ensure coherence in bringing together different aspects of the initiative.

# CONNEXIONS CARD

## What is the Connexions Card?

The Connexions Card is a secure smartcard that is available to all 16-19 year olds in England. It was introduced as a means of encouraging participation and attendance in post-16 learning. It allows young people who are taking part in learning, work-based training and voluntary activities at learning centres participating in the Connexions Card scheme to collect reward points. These points can then be exchanged for discounted or free goods and services or for 'money can't buy' experiences such as a look behind the scenes at a football match or concert.



In addition, the Card can be used by schools and colleges to electronically record attendance.

The Card can also be used by all 16-19 year olds as proof of age and for on-the-spot discounts and special offers from outlets and businesses displaying the Connexions Card window sticker.

## How do young people obtain the card?

The Connexions Card team plans to visit every school and college in England so that all 16-19 year olds can apply for their Card. Young people can also obtain the Card by 'phoning the free helpline on 0808 172 3333 to request an information pack.

## The Connexions Card website

The Connexions Card website at [www.connexionscard.com](http://www.connexionscard.com) provides details of rewards and discounts that are available to Connexions Cardholders. It also has a wealth section, summarising the financial support available to students, and a career zone which includes information on Post-16 career choices, different jobs and a CV builder facility.

## EDUCATION MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE (EMA) & OTHER FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

Students facing financial difficulties are more at risk of leaving learning early. There is a range of financial support available to help increase student participation, motivation and ultimately achievement.

One of these financial support measures is the Education Maintenance Allowance

### Education Maintenance Allowance

The Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) will be available nationally across England from September 2004. It is a weekly payment of up to £30, depending on household income, paid directly to young people who stay in further education after they reach statutory school leaving age. Bonus payments of £100 are also payable if students remain on their course and make good progress with their learning.

### Who is eligible?

Young people who:

- live in a household with an annual income of £30,000 or less a year
- are in their last year of compulsory education and planning to stay on at school or go to college from September 2004
- are currently at a school or college in an existing EMA pilot area and plan to continue their education for another one or two years from September 2004
- will be doing a recognised further education course (such as AS/A2, GNVQs, NVQs) at a school or college which offer at least 12 hours of guided learning each week

### How will the EMA be paid?

If a young person is eligible for EMA they will sign an EMA contract with their college or sixth form once they have enrolled on a course. This contract outlines what is expected from the student in terms of attendance, coursework and learning progress. If the student meets the conditions of their contract they will receive their weekly EMA payment and bonus payments. If they fail to meet the conditions e.g. through unexplained absence or failing to hand homework in on time, the EMA and bonus payments will be stopped.

Schools/colleges will be required to notify Capita, the Department for Education and Skills appointed Assessment and Payment Body, whether or not each student has met the conditions of their contract and whether they should receive their weekly and/or bonus payment. If the conditions of the student's contract have been met the Assessment and Payment Body will issue authorised payments directly to the student's bank account.

The weekly allowance will be paid at 3 levels - £10, £20 and £30 depending on household income. Bonuses will be payable in January and July in the first year of study, and in September, January and July in subsequent years of study.

### **For how long will the EMA be paid to young people?**

Most young people will receive EMA for two years (as long as their household income does not rise above the £30,000 per annum threshold) The EMA will be available for up to three years to enable those young people who need extra time in FE to fulfil their potential.

### **Will the EMA affect other benefits or income?**

EMA is paid in addition to other support and benefits. It does not affect benefits received by parents/carers for their dependents such as Child Benefit and Income Support and is not affected by any money the student earns through a part-time job.

Enquiries can be made to the EMA Unit on 0114 259 1212 or e-mailed to [ema.enquiries@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ema.enquiries@dfes.gsi.gov.uk)

Website: [www.dfes.gov.uk/ema](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ema)

### **What other financial support is available to Further Education students**

The information which follows provides only a brief overview of some of the financial support available.

#### **Learner Support Funds**

Learner support funds are available in all school sixth forms, colleges or training provision to help students with costs involved in starting and following courses post 16. These costs can include books and equipment, visits and field trips. The funds can also be used to cover costs relating to transport, hardship and childcare provision and residential and lodging costs, in certain cases. To apply for learner support funds, students in colleges should speak to the Student Support or a Welfare Officer. If they are in a sixth form they will need to speak to their year tutor or the Student Awards or Student Support Officer at their Local Education Authority.

#### **Dance and Drama Awards**

These are available to students who pass an audition for an Award at selected private dance or drama schools and they help to pay for tuition fees. An information booklet: *Dance and Drama Awards* is available from DfES publications - quote D4 or via the website at [www.dfes.gov.uk/dancedrama](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/dancedrama)

#### **Residential Allowances**

Students studying at a designated specialist college may be eligible for help from the Residential Bursary Scheme. To apply students should contact the colleges they wish to attend and request an application form.

#### **Career Development Loans**

Career Development Loans are available to students aged 18 or over. The loans help to fund up to 2 years vocational learning or education, plus up to a further 12 months if the course includes practical work experience. The Career Development Loan Application Pack includes full details of the programme, eligibility criteria and an application form. The

Pack is available from Jobcentre Plus offices, colleges, Connexions Centres or contact the Career Development Loan Information Line on 0800 585 505 or visit [www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl/index.htm](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl/index.htm)

### **Care to Learn?**

From August 2004 Care to Learn becomes a single universal childcare scheme, available to any parent up to the age of 19 who is in learning or training. Up to £5000 per year is available to help with childcare and some travel costs. Young parents can find out more information about Care to Learn? by telephoning the helpline number: 0845 600 2809. The Care to Learn? website also contains useful information [www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn)

### **Benefits**

You can find detailed information and advice about benefits by contacting your local Social Security or Jobcentre Plus office or visiting the following websites [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk) or [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk)

### **Tax Credits**

You can find detailed information on all Tax credits on the Inland Revenue website [www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits)

### **POINTS TO CONSIDER**

- ❑ Identify who will be responsible for keeping up-to-date with developments in student finance and how they will disseminate information to staff and students
- ❑ Students should be able to access information on financial support as and when they require it. How will they do this? Who would they go to?

### **Where to get further information**

- The DfES booklet: *Financial Help for Students* provides information on financial support available to 16-18 year old school and college students. Available from DfES publications– quote reference: DfES/0053/2003 or at [www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/quickguide](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/financialhelp/quickguide)
- Contact details for DfES publications:  
Telephone: 0845 60 222 60  
Fax: 0845 60 333 60  
Minicom: 0845 60 555 60  
Email: [dfes@prolog.uk.com](mailto:dfes@prolog.uk.com)

## THE CONNEXIONS FRAMEWORK FOR ASSESSMENT, PLANNING, IMPLEMENTATION & REVIEW (APIR)

The Connexions Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review (APIR) framework provides a structure to assist Personal Advisers in their one-to-one work with young people. The framework enables young people supported by their Personal Adviser to develop and implement a personal action plan for realising their goals based on a holistic assessment of their needs.

The framework identifies 18 factors which have the potential to impact on a young person's participation and progression in learning in both positive and negative ways.

<b>EDUCATION AND EMPLOYMENT:</b> participation achievements basic skills key skills life skills aspirations	<b>SOCIAL AND BEHAVIOURAL DEVELOPMENT:</b> identity and self-image attitudes and motivation relationships within family and society risk of (re-) offending
<b>FAMILY AND ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS:</b> capacity of parents/carers family history and functioning social and community factors housing income	<b>PERSONAL HEALTH FACTORS:</b> physical health emotional well-being substance use issues

The APIR process involves four key stages: assessment, planning, implementation and review.

### Assessment

The assessment stage involves gathering information from the young person, through informal discussion, structured assessments or self assessment.

### Planning

The Personal Action Plan is at the heart of the APIR process. It summarises the young person's current situation, strengths and recent achievements and gives clear milestones and specific commitments both from the young person and from those whose support is necessary to achieve the plan.

### Implementation

The Personal Adviser will continue to provide one-to-one support to the young person during this stage such as assisting them with a specific task as well as keeping in contact to ensure that the young person is carrying out their action plan. The Personal Adviser may also be required to act as broker for the young person. They will negotiate relevant provision with other agencies and ensure that these elements of the plan are delivered.

## Review

The Personal Adviser at specific intervals will review progress against the Personal Action Plan and use this as a basis for updating the assessment profile of the young person.

### POINTS TO CONSIDER

- The APIR framework is not an assessment tool.
- The APIR framework is designed to promote and assist information sharing between the range of agencies working to support young people.
- A college may find it useful to incorporate aspects of the APIR framework as a part of its processes for identifying students' needs.

For further information on APIR, talk to your local Connexions Partnership or Personal Adviser.



# CITIZENSHIP

Citizenship is designed to give students the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to play an active part in society.

## What part does Connexions play in Citizenship development?

Citizenship encourages young people to be aware of the individual's responsibility towards others in the local, national and international community. Connexions supports Citizenship in providing young people with the opportunities and responsibilities to become effective citizens.

Connexions and the Personal Adviser may support Citizenship by providing access to information and specialist expertise and opportunities for volunteering within the community. Citizenship is not likely to be 'taught' within college but the Personal Adviser may facilitate and encourage small groups and individuals to plan and carry out activities linked to Citizenship.

## POINTS TO CONSIDER

- A college might identify someone – possibly the Connexions Personal Adviser - to co-ordinate Citizenship activities within and beyond college. This might include researching and promoting opportunities, reinforcing the place of Citizenship in the personal development programme, involving students in planning how Citizenship might be developed in college and creating partnerships with other local institutions, including schools, training providers, Education Business Partnership, employers, CSV and voluntary organisations.
- There may be a variety of opportunities for active Citizenship within college itself. Students may act as representatives in a variety of forum such as subject or course committees, and in areas such as health, drugs, bullying and inclusion. The student council gives the opportunity for a larger number of students to take on responsibilities and develop skills of advocacy, negotiation and conflict resolution.

## Complementary information

Links with outside agencies and the voluntary sector *D17*  
Careers education and guidance *D11*

## Further information:

[www.citizenshippost-16.lsda.org.uk](http://www.citizenshippost-16.lsda.org.uk)

[www.qca.org.uk/ages14-19/subjects/citizenship.html](http://www.qca.org.uk/ages14-19/subjects/citizenship.html)

[www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship)

# AN EXAMPLE REFERRAL FORM



## REFERRAL FORM To a Personal Adviser

YOUNG PERSON'S PERSONAL DETAILS		
Name:	Age:	Male/Female:
Address:	Date of Birth:	
	Carers:	
Tutor Group where applicable:	Name of those with parental responsibility:	
Telephone No.:	Mobile No.:	
Name of Agency Referred to:		
REASONS FOR REFERRAL		
PLEASE NOTE YOUNG PERSONS WIDER INTERESTS OR ACHIEVEMENTS		
ASSESSMENT INFORMATION – DETAILS OF ANY COMPLETED ASSESSMENTS OR IDENTIFIED NEEDS		

Wider Agency Involvement	Contact Names:
Careers	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Child & Adolescent Mental Health	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Educational Services e.g. Educational Psychology Educational Welfare/Social Work Learning Mentor Student Support	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Health	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Housing	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Social Services	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Voluntary Sector	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Youth Offending Teams	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Youth Service	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Other Please attach any other information that you may think is relevant to the referral.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/> Unknown <input type="checkbox"/>
Date of Referral:	
Referred by:	Address:
Organisation:	Telephone No.:
	Mobile No.:
Relationship to YP:	Fax No.:
	E-Mail:

Is the young person aware of this referral? Yes  No

Has the young person given consent for this referral? Yes  No

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## USEFUL WEBSITE ADDRESSES:

### AIMHIGHER

The Aimhigher website: [www.aimhigher.ac.uk](http://www.aimhigher.ac.uk) provides guidance on HE for young people and practitioners who are supporting them in considering HE.

[www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprogramme/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/aimhigherprogramme/) provides details of Aimhigher objectives and activities for practitioners.

### BASIC SKILLS

[www.bbc.co.uk/skillwise](http://www.bbc.co.uk/skillwise) provides resources for both tutors and learners. It is primarily aimed at just below Level 1 in the Adult Basic Core Curriculum for literacy and numeracy. There are areas for learners on number and words, including quizzes and games, which can be used in the classroom or individually.

[www.lsda.org.uk/programmes/basicskills/](http://www.lsda.org.uk/programmes/basicskills/)

[www.basic-skills.co.uk](http://www.basic-skills.co.uk) Basic Skills Agency - resources online, information for all education sectors (primary, secondary, FE, adult), family literacy & numeracy, Basic Skills News online, also National Telephone Referral Service for people who need help with improving basic skills on 0800 700 987.

[www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/readwriteplus/) **Read, Write, Plus** - key resources & links from the Adult Basic Skills Strategy Unit of the DfES, including key documents, policies and research, including research on the issues for people with learning difficulties and impairments and on English for speakers of other languages. National standards, the national core curriculum, practice tests, planning & funding.

[www.basic-skills-observatory.co.uk/](http://www.basic-skills-observatory.co.uk/) The Observatory of Basic Skills is a major library and research website which has been developed by the Basic Skills Agency. The Observatory offers practitioners, and those interested in basic skills, a source of information on research, policy and good practice relating to literacy, numeracy and language across all age groups and a range of sectors.

### CAREERS EDUCATION AND GUIDANCE

<http://www.guidancecouncil.com/>

National Advisory Council for Careers and Educational Guidance, an umbrella organisation for professionals and volunteers who give guidance to young people and adults.

<http://www.after16.org.uk/>

information and advice on education and training for disabled young people.

[www.cegnet.co.uk](http://www.cegnet.co.uk) The Careers education support website.

[www.nacgt.org.uk](http://www.nacgt.org.uk) The National Association of Careers and Guidance Teachers.

## CITIZENSHIP

[www.citizenshippost-16.lsda.org.uk](http://www.citizenshippost-16.lsda.org.uk)

[www.qca.org.uk/14-19/colleges/index\\_s2-12-citizenship-post-16](http://www.qca.org.uk/14-19/colleges/index_s2-12-citizenship-post-16)

[www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/citizenship)

<http://www.csv.org.uk/>

Community Service Volunteers runs training programmes for young people and adults with special needs

## CONNEXIONS

[www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)

## 14 – 19

[www.14-19reform.gov.uk](http://www.14-19reform.gov.uk)

[www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19pathfinders/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/14-19pathfinders/)

[www.qca.org.uk/14-19](http://www.qca.org.uk/14-19)

## FINANCIAL SUPPORT FOR STUDENTS

[www.dfes.gov.uk/ema](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/ema) - Education Maintenance Allowance website

[www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl/index.htm](http://www.lifelonglearning.co.uk/cdl/index.htm) - Career Development loans

[www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/caretolearn) - Care to Learn? Website

[www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk) - Department for Work and Pensions website

[www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk) - Jobcentreplus website

[www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits](http://www.inlandrevenue.gov.uk/taxcredits) - Inland Revenue tax credits site