

Putting Young People First

Young People in Connexions
Annual report 2002-2003

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connexions

1. INTRODUCTION

The active involvement of young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of Connexions is one of the eight key principles upon which the Connexions Service is built. This is the second Annual Report on this key element of Connexions.

The first report published in June 2002 focused primarily on embryonic activity in the first year of operation, as Partnerships were very much in the development stage. This second report provides a picture of the progress made as most Partnerships move from a period of initial establishment and development into a fully operational service for all young people aged 13 - 19.

The Connexions Service National Unit (CSNU) supports Connexions Partnerships and Government Offices to promote the active involvement of young people in all areas of work. This report identifies success stories over the last year or so and the way in which the Service continues to push back the boundaries. It has set the standard for active involvement work across the Department for Education and Skills (see www.dfes.gov.uk/listeningtolearn) and beyond.

But there is more to be achieved - CSNU continues to stress the importance of Partnerships involving young people in all aspects of the Service so that it is fully integrated into Partnerships' culture and practices. That means putting active involvement on a more strategic and systematic footing, moving from the involvement of young people on a piecemeal basis into the mainstream operation of all Partnerships.

Only then will we be able to say confidently that Connexions is putting young people first.

2. SUPPORTING CONNEXIONS PARTNERSHIPS

2.1 Connexions Partnerships continue to develop their strategies for involving young people, with support and guidance from CSNU and Government Offices. There is now a huge variety of activity which demonstrates the innovation and commitment within Connexions.

2.2 In the last year our achievements were recognised through the Institute of Public Policy Research (IPPR) public involvement awards sponsored by the Guardian newspaper. Connexions was nominated and achieved runner up status in the category for involving young people, alongside stiff opposition from several local authorities, private and voluntary sector organisations. The runner-up award was a major achievement bearing in mind that Connexions only began to roll out as a fully operational service two years ago.

2.3 The support from CSNU has included:

- *'Aide Memoire'* on developing a strategy for involving young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of Connexions. This was produced to support the Ofsted findings from their first inspection of Connexions Partnerships and was issued to all Partnerships. It is aimed at senior managers and those with responsibility for involving young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of Connexions. Its main purpose is as a reference tool to assist in the development of a clear and effective strategy for involving young people.
- *'Encouraging and Recognising Young People's Active Involvement in Connexions – A Guide to Providing Incentives and Rewards'*. This has been well received by Connexions Partnerships as a tool providing them with guidance and support to help make informed decisions as they develop their policies on incentives and rewards for young people's involvement in Connexions. The guide is aimed at those responsible for developing youth engagement policies, budget managers and other professionals working with young people.
- *Training workshops* entitled 'Involving Young People in Policy Development'. These workshops were jointly planned and delivered by CSNU and several groups of young people. They were designed to support people working in CSNU and Government Offices to develop better understanding of how to involve young people in all areas of their work, including policy development and operational delivery. The workshops were delivered with the aim of raising awareness, enhancing knowledge and developing skills in involving young people. The evaluation received from both young people and the Connexions staff showed that the workshops were a great success. Participants said that they felt more aware of the techniques for involving young people in their everyday work and better equipped to take this issue forward within their policy area and delivery programme.
- The Connexions Service National Unit contracted with Crime Concern to develop *support materials on the active involvement of 'Hard to Reach' young people*. This project was in two stages. The first was to research and develop

a compendium of current practice and materials on working with Hard to Reach young people. The second was to produce support materials and guidance on involving Hard to Reach young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of Connexions. The project is due to be completed in autumn 2003 with guidance materials to be released by the end of 2003.

- The *Youth Involvement 'Observatory'*. This is a 'Good Practice' information service. A key element of CSNU's strategy to promote and support active involvement activity in Partnerships is to gather and share evidence of such activity. At the time of going to print the Observatory is a sub-section of the main Connexions website. However, the Observatory will soon have its own dedicated space on the main website and will be fully interactive. This means that Partnerships and others will be able to submit their own material electronically.
- *Evaluation of Guidance*. CSNU has undertaken an evaluation of the guidance documents produced in the 'Active Involvement' series, mostly within the first operational year of Partnerships going live. The exercise enabled CSNU to assess whether the guidance had been useful to Partnerships, which elements were less useful and to elicit ideas for future guidance on active involvement. The report of this evaluation exercise has now been published and made available through the Connexions Website.
- *Government Office Network*. CSNU has established and maintained a network of people from each Government Office who have responsibility for 'involving Young People' across their regions. This network acts as the link between CSNU and Connexions Partnerships. It meets on a quarterly basis and provides an opportunity to feed back on the position of local activity and networks across Partnership areas, to raise and discuss issues relating to active involvement and informally to disseminate messages and information from CSNU. The network has been used to influence and shape the further development of the CSNU's strategy for involving young people.

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3. PUSHING BACK THE BOUNDARIES

3.1 In August 2002 CSNU began a programme of 12 Connexions Partnership visits to observe and understand how Partnerships are involving young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of their local service. The visits focused particularly on the following areas:

- Identifying and exploring innovative good practice for involving young people
- Assessing the impact of young people's involvement on Partnerships
- Promoting CSNU guidance and support – including the Observatory and guidance on Active Involvement, Rewards and Incentives, Youth Charters and Governance
- Informally reviewing progress against proposals identified in Partnership Business Plans
- Identifying current activities within the Partnership for CSNU to use to influence national policy and guidance – for example our work on involving hard to reach young people, incentives and rewards and other policy work such as training young people to become Personal Advisers.
- Cementing good working relations with Partnerships
- Gaining access to young people (through their youth forums) for future consultation work.

3.2 This part of the report provides a summary of the outcome of the visits and identifies some key areas of current and emerging practice from each Partnership. For copies of each individual report please get in touch with the named contact - at end of the report.

3.3 The following 12 Partnerships were visited, combining a mixture of Phase 1, 2 and 3 organisations¹:

Greater Merseyside
Luton and Bedfordshire
Tees Valley
Tyne and Wear
Durham
Norfolk
Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire
South Central
Gloucestershire
Staffordshire
West Yorkshire
Nottinghamshire

¹ Connexions Partnerships began operating on phased basis. Phase 1 from April 2001, Phase 2 from April 2002 and Phase 3 from September 2002

Summary of Visits

3.4 All the visits were extremely worthwhile, informative and enjoyable. During most visits there were opportunities to meet with young people and discuss their involvement in Connexions. Their comments are reflected throughout this report.

3.5 All the Partnerships that the team visited displayed some excellent examples of involving young people and are making real strides towards meaningful involvement of young people in a variety of Connexions projects. Details of case studies of good practice identified during the visits are set out in the Annex to this report.

3.6 We witnessed a real commitment amongst Youth Engagement Workers to provide young people with opportunities to have a say about decisions that affect them and a real understanding of the benefits of involving young people.

3.7 The visits revealed that young people are being involved in a variety of projects across Partnerships. Many are particularly innovative and make real attempts to involve young people from a diverse range of backgrounds. We identified a number of areas of work across the country common to all Partnerships. These include:

- Recruitment and selection
- Youth Charter development
- Decision making – either on LMCs, Boards or Shadow Youth Boards
- Websites
- Design and publicity

3.8 The visits highlighted a number of emerging issues, the main ones being:

- The importance of targeting “hard to reach” young people to ensure a broad base of involvement.
- Ensuring young people have more meaningful involvement in decision making and the overall Connexions strategy (e.g. funding and priority setting), as well as in the day to day aspects of service delivery (e.g. commenting on a one-shop-shop design).
- Convincing partner organisations of the importance of them also involving young people.
- Avoiding over reliance on single groups as the main source of involvement and influence on the local Connexions Service
- The difficulties of capturing softer information on the value and impact of young people's involvement.

3.9 The visits also provided young people themselves with an opportunity to put their points across. These included:

- Not enough young people know about Connexions. The best way to promote Connexions is through other young people, so when Peer Tutors in Tyne & Wear gave out Connexions leaflets they were mobbed by young people

- wanting to get involved.
- Young people tend to be restricted from having a say unless they join a group. There should be more ways for individuals to influence decisions. Drop in centres, for example, should encourage young people to have a say
 - There should be more opportunities for young people to be employed by Connexions and become PAs.

Future of the Visits Programme

- 3.10 The programme of visits will continue in the coming year as there are a number of benefits to all parties. By affording CSNU the opportunity to see at first hand the work of Partnerships in this area, it enables us to see how we can work with and support Partnerships in the future. It also ensures that examples of practice are exposed for other partnerships to benefit from. In addition, by establishing relationship with key contacts, Partnership staff have been able to develop an awareness of CSNU's work and future plans and the opportunities to assist in national projects such as guides and conferences. On top of that, talking to young people and hearing first hand their experiences of being involved and what they have gained, enhances the work to further develop the involving young people agenda.

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4. THE FUTURE

4.1 Connexions has come a long way in a short period of time in the active involvement of young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of the service. It is regarded amongst Government services as an exemplar in this area. However, we have further to go before young people's involvement is fully mainstreamed in all Partnership activity.

4.2 There are a number of ways in which CSNU will support Partnerships in their active involvement work. These include:

- Offering support pre and post Ofsted inspection to assist Partnerships prepare for the inspections and develop and deliver their action plans in response to the Ofsted findings. This follows on from the work done in January to produce an Aide Memoire on developing an involving young people strategy.
- Links with the emerging work on Personal Development, in particular how the activities of both mutually support each other.
- Developing support to Partnerships through a series of 'rough guides' aimed at young people and Partnerships on quality management – this will build on the young people's version of the Business Planning Guidance.
- Guidance on involving Hard to Reach young people in the design, delivery and evaluation of Connexions to be published by the end of 2003.
- Support to Government Office and Connexions Partnership colleagues as they develop regional networks amongst Connexions Partnership youth engagement workers.
- Work with a group of young people from Nottingham to design and deliver a national conference aimed at young people and those with responsibility for active involvement of young people in Connexions Partnerships. The conference will provide an opportunity for Partnerships and those young people involved in Connexions to share practice and network with their peers, learning from each others experiences. *This was achieved in July 2003.*
- Develop the Youth Involvement Observatory of good and emerging practice into an interactive web based database within the Connexions internet site to support Connexions Partnerships with the involvement of young people.
- Deliver training workshops on involving young people to CSNU and GO colleagues to support the mainstreaming of active involvement into policy development and operational activities within Connexions.

4.3. These additional activities are not set in stone and will evolve as the needs of Partnerships, Government Offices and CSNU change as the Connexions service itself evolves into a fully operational service.

5. ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS & FURTHER INFORMATION

5.1 We would like to thank the young people and staff from the Connexions Partnerships in Greater Merseyside, Luton and Bedfordshire, Tees Valley, Tyne and Wear, Durham, Norfolk, Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, South Central, Gloucestershire, Staffordshire, West Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire for their help in gathering the case study material for this report.

5.2 If you want to have more information about the case studies or aspects of this report please contact Daniel Pedley, CSNU, Room E4c, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ - 0114 259 1397 - email daniel.pedley@dfes.gsi.gov.uk

Case studies

The following case studies attempt to give a flavour of what emerging and good practice we uncovered on the visits. For further information on the examples given please contact the Participation and Volunteering team or the Partnership directly.

Connexions, Schools and Peer Support

Durham Peer Support - Durham County Council Anti-Bullying Service has a history of delivering peer support training in the school and now delivers it alongside Connexions County Durham. Young people are trained to provide peer support through a listening post service, one to one meetings, patrolling, mediation and information during assemblies.

The 'Tanfield Settlers' so called because they settled arguments in their school in Tanfield, are one such group. They focus on peer mediation and conflict resolution between pupils that are referred to them. All Year 9 young people are trained in peer mentoring so when they reach Year 10 they can become a peer mentor.

Their support is advertised through a Peer Support Pupil Information Pack and there has also been a successful Peer Support Event - both designed by young people. The school is currently looking at how to accredit young people's involvement in peer support. They are proposing to develop a training programme themselves and to seek accreditation from the Open College Network. All the peer support projects have links with other local initiatives such as MV, the Echo Conference and Changemakers that have a big presence in Durham. Peer support is now moving to alternative settings such as youth groups and alternative education programmes.

Impact:

As a result of young people's involvement, the scheme has a different name, different room, is more people centred, has been publicised and the work is taken seriously. Young people within the school not only have a sense of support, they have also seen a reduction in the number of conflicts amongst young people.

Tyne & Wear Peer Tutors - Young people from Tyne and Wear deliver peer education in a variety of settings, for different lengths of time and on different issues. The initiative started in 1998 and is now a part of Connexions.

The Peer Tutors' training is supplemented by specialist trainers from particular agencies. The group liaise with the school to create a workshop suitable for the pupils, with a big emphasis on interactivity. The Peer Tutors handle the disruptive pupils by engaging them in the workshop particularly encouraging them to help lead the workshop.

The Peer Project has partnership agreements with local schools and word of mouth often attracts new projects. The group are currently considering how they can take

their work into youth centres.

Impact:

Having 'older' young people delivering education within schools has meant that other young people have taken more notice of what they are being taught regarding the issues facing young people. The Peer Tutors have also developed new skills around preparing and delivering presentations, teaching skills and in many cases gained new confidence and a clearer career plan.

Many of the Peer Tutors are interested in becoming Personal Advisors because of the experiences they have gained. Being a Peer Tutor has led to their involvement in other areas of Connexions; some are on the Youth Engagement sub-committee; all have been trained for Connexions recruitment and selection and some young people are involved in helping the Partnership with the self assessment.

Developing a Strategy for Involving Young People

Bedfordshire & Luton strategy - Young people were asked to comment on the Partnership's strategy for involving young people in Connexions. The young people consulted suggested that it be simplified and include diagrams and pictures to make it accessible to a broad range of young people. This would enable them to see how they could be involved and influence the development of connexions locally.

Impact:

The resulting document provides a clear strategic approach to involving young people. Its format ensures that it can be accessed and understood by a wide range of people and fosters a much more systematic approach to involving young people across the Partnership area.

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Youth Forums

West Yorkshire Youth Parliament - Calderdale Youth Service has established a Youth Parliament which has been running for a year. It is made up of 76 young people from a number of towns in the area and there are currently between 10 and 12 young people on the Executive Board of the Parliament. The Parliament has termly meetings with the Director of Schools and they perform a consultation function with the consultation agenda being decided by their members.

All services wishing to access young people's views must go through the Parliament to minimise consultation overload and ensure an area overview. Calderdale Borough Council, for example, uses the parliament as the consultation body for young people.

The Youth Parliament has its own office, complete with lap top, fax machine, etc, which is used as the base for regular 'surgeries' on various topics. Surgeries are also held in mobile units across the area to ensure that young people in the various satellite towns do not feel excluded.

The Youth Parliament has been involved in interviewing various Connexions staff, including some for senior posts within the local authority. Local schools have also expressed interest in linking up with the Youth Parliament as they are very keen to have their pupils involved in this work.

Impact:

The success of the Youth Parliament has led to the creation of a Children and Young People Participation Project. A number of agencies are involved in this project, namely, the Police, health service and the social services. The projects primarily meet to co-ordinate involving young people and discuss future plans via the Youth Parliament. As a consequence of the co-ordinated approach to consultation in Calderdale young people are being given real opportunities to express their views as

more and more agencies are approaching the Youth Parliament.

Gloucestershire Youth Council - The County has a number of youth councils in operation. There are five main groups, called the 'Foghorns', covering Forest, Cheltenham, Stroud, Gloucestershire and Cotswolds. The Forum groups receive funding from the County Council and National Youth Agency.

Members from the Forum represent young people on the Connexions Partnership board. The board originally invited two young people to join them but the groups persuaded them that the representation should be four. The forums are currently looking at setting up a shadow youth board to discuss in detail issues raised at the main board. Plans are also being set in place for the four members to train other young people to replace them when they move on from their role.

Impact:

The Foghorns have influenced a number of aspects of the service including, getting involved in advertising Connexions and the development of the Connexions bus that travels around the county as a mobile Connexions centre servicing the most isolated rural areas.

Recruitment and Selection

Young people have been involved in recruitment and selection in all the Partnerships visited. This involvement usually takes one of two forms: young people are either represented on the adult interview panel or they have a panel of their own that runs in addition to the adult panel.

Tyne and Wear Recruitment Training - The Connexions Partnership held a training course for the recruitment and selection of Connexions staff. The training, which some 60 young people have now received, was accredited by the North East Open College Network. It took place during two residencies at Otterburn Hall and included drama based activities covering job profiles, job and person specification, short listing of candidates, interview processes, evaluation of candidates and employment law. The successful trainees were presented with certificates by Maggi Hunt, Chief Executive of Tyne and Wear at an award ceremony to mark their achievements.

One young person, Anthony, said "The training programme was very informative and I have picked up lots of useful tips. I think it's great that Connexions gives young people like me, the opportunity to take an active role in its recruitment process."

Impact:

A number of the young people who received the training have since been involved in the recruitment process for the Partnership, and have influenced who will be working with them as Personal Advisors as well as other key Connexions posts.

The Partnership now has a pool of young people that can be drawn in to conduct and participate in interviewing staff quickly without the need for long training sessions.

Youth Charters

All Partnerships visited had developed youth charters but were at different stages of implementation and review.

Staffordshire Youth Charter - *Staffordshire Connexions used an innovative approach to involving young people to promote of their charter.*

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Young people involved in the project did not just want a Charter that was written on a poster, they wanted to launch and promote the Charter in an interactive way. The group therefore turned the Youth Charter into a drama project. Four separate groups of young people across the county worked with New Vic Boarderlines Theatre Company, an award winning outreach initiative taking theatre into local communities.

Each group underwent 8 drama sessions focusing on soft outcomes for young people around developing skills and becoming involved in Connexions. The written Youth Charter statements were turned into feelings. These were then turned into images which form part a key aspect of the drama. The performances took place at four separate theatres during May 2002.

Next steps in developing the Charter will involve a focus on three main areas: accountability, promotion and responsibilities.

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Impact:

Young people's involvement helped cement partnerships working within Connexions. It ensured the project was led by young people and focused on personal development. It also resulted in the creation of a 'three dimensional' charter that was alive and would continue to develop.

Youth Charter Awards

Tees Valley Youth Charter Award - To accompany their Youth Charter, young people in Tees Valley have developed a Young People's Charter Award to ensure the charter becomes an active document. The Award is a symbol of commitment for businesses and organisations to sign up to in recognition of their achievement in making their service young people friendly. The Award is designed, managed and run by young people.

Young people worked with the Partnership Quality team to design the award criteria which is linked to the Connexions Quality standards. The award consists of four certificates and a plaque that is awarded upon completion of each of the stages.

The four stages are: BRONZE (agreeing in principle the Young People's Charter), SILVER (signing up to the Charter), GOLD (the production of project based policies matching the 10 principles of the Charter) and PLATINUM (which involves the monitoring of the policies to ensure they are being implemented).

Impact:

Awards are only given when the young people as assessors are happy with the level of successful involvement and young people focussed services. This means that

businesses and organisations have to meet the needs of young people and are given a clear target for improvement towards the higher awards.

Decision-Making / Governance of Connexions

South Central Shadow Youth Group - *In South Central Connexions (SCC) there is a shadow youth group for every adult LMC covering Portsmouth, Southampton, Isle of Wight and Hampshire Connexions. Some youth group members were also representatives on the Connexions Board.*

Young people explained that they became members of these groups because they had the opportunity to shape their local Connexions, make a difference and were listened to. "We are on the Hampshire LMC because when we say something, it happens".

Young people and adults alternate in attending each other's board or LMC meetings to get feedback from each other. Two young people who attended the adult board explained how at first it was really boring and all that the adults discussed was pensions (!) but since then the meetings have got better.

Young person representatives often feed back to other young people by e-mail. Issues currently being addressed include how the shadow youth groups could become more inclusive and open themselves up to involve more marginalised groups of young people in decision making.

Impact:

Young people are beginning to shape the format and outcomes of meetings. In addition, not only are the adults more readily seeking the young people's opinions but they are also beginning to question the boring aspects of their own meetings.

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Nottinghamshire LMC - The structure is such that the young people form the majority (14 young people on the County LMC and 12 on the City LMC). These representatives are drawn from a range of organisations and backgrounds including UK Youth Parliament MPs, schools & colleges, the voluntary sector and employed young people. Young representatives are also drawn from specific groups such as disabled young people and those from black and minority ethnic and the traveller community.

Adults on the LMC include councillors, the Youth Service, Local Authority education and social services departments, as well as youth offending services and voluntary organisations. Other partner organisations are invited to attend when the business of the meeting is likely to have a direct bearing on them. In this way the majority view of young people is maintained without making the meetings too big.

Young people attend the LMC meeting at least an hour beforehand so that they can be briefed on the meeting and run through any issues that they might wish to raise.

Impact:

As a result of the structure and arrangements, young people play a significant part in a wide range of discussion. For example, the issues that were covered at the LMC meeting attended by the team included a stimulating debate on CSNU's funding formula with concern and ideas for change being expressed by young people and adults alike. In another discussion on the Partnership's Quarter 3 Report the young people were concerned that the Partnership was not considered to be the best and asked probing questions as to how this might be improved!

One-Stop-Shops

Most of the areas that the team visited had Connexions drop in centres or one-stop-shops for young people.

South Central i-stop shop - This is a multi-agency information, advice and support service for young people. It is used by nine different agencies and supported by PAs. A number of ways were used to involve young people in the design of the centre:

- A competition for young people to come up with a name and logo for the centre
- Consultation with different groups of young people on the layout of the centre. This included young people on life skills courses, clients using the centre and young people on work experience. They designed the outlay of the centre on the computer and recommended the provision of a young mum's facility.
- A specific exercise to break the image of the centre just being a careers and counselling centre. Young people were commissioned to identify the key issues that were important to them and highlight areas on which they wanted to see advice and information.
- Employing young people on work experience to design the garden.

Impact:

All of this has had the effect of cultivating a real sense of ownership by the local youth community. Indeed, one example of how appealing the centre is to young people is that attendance rates of young offenders turning up for their supervision orders at YOT offices was 25% when asked to attend i-stop instead, the attendance rate increased to 95%.

Youth Projects

Staffordshire Re-engagement Programme - "Club 180" is for 16 - 19 year olds not in education, employment or training (NEET) and focuses on personal development. The project has been running for four years and now runs in Burton, three areas of Stoke-on-Trent, and alternates between Stafford and Cannock. The Youth Services in Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent, MV and Princes Trust are involved in the programme and the Partnership is currently establishing another Club 180 with Social Services. Club 180 is financed either from core funding or through SRB.

Young people are involved in planning and delivering much of the Club 180 activity. One young person, Kirsty, who is involved in delivering some peer education for Club 180 commented:

"Connexions has helped me and I now feel that I am giving something back to Connexions by being involved and I can help other young people at the same time. They (Connexions staff) take all our changes on board even if they are little ones. We are always being asked what we think."

Impact:

Young people's involvement in the running of Club 180 has meant that visits to colleges have now become more relevant - being shorter in time and focusing on more suitable subject areas to the young people's interests. Their involvement in the planning is taken seriously. There is a core programme of activity and the young people participating are consulted at the beginning of the programme to decide what visits they want to make, what they would like to have discussions on.

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Employing young people

Greater Merseyside trainee representative - Trainee Young People Representatives (TYPRs) aged between 16 and 23 years of age were recruited on a six month contract to trial the employment of young people within a Connexions Partnership, as part of the Partnership's Youth Engagement Strategy. The TYPRs were recruited from diverse backgrounds including the Connexions 'target group'. One TYPR became involved via the New Deal scheme in Knowsley.

At the end of the contract the TYPRs were required to write final reports on the outcomes of consultations with other young people on what is working well within the Greater Merseyside Service and what could be done differently. They also made recommendations on how young people could be involved in Greater Merseyside Connexions at Partnership Board and LMC levels

Impact:

The evaluation of the TYPR project is being used to inform the local Modern Apprenticeship strategy and the Partnership's overall youth engagement strategy including involving young people within the governance of the Partnership.

Young people have developed a range of personal skills including interviewing and negotiating skills. They have also acquired valuable work experience for their CVs, a much clearer idea of future careers and personal confidence to take into future employment.

South Central Care Leavers - Hampshire Quality Protects Plan have encouraged the employment of young people through advertising posts to Care leavers to act as champions and consult with other young people in care. They are called Youth Senators and are supervised by someone to ensure that they receive the training they need. Their appointments are on a contractual basis. The training ensures that they are not just working as professional young people but that they have skills to ensure they are employable in other areas. Links are being explored within Hampshire Connexions to enable young people to be employed or sponsored to work for Connexions under the Modern Apprenticeship scheme.

Impact:

Employing young people in this way has helped the Partnership access young people that are not likely to be involved in Connexions. It also made communication with young people more effective, as many have found it easier to relate to another person having been through similar experiences.

Marketing

Young people have been involved in the design of a vast amount of Connexions material used for information, advertising and to encourage young people to get involved.

Milton Keynes, Oxfordshire & Bedfordshire Information Card - Young people, recruited from schools and youth clubs across the counties, were involved in

designing the cards through an editorial group. They ensured that the cards were attractive to young people with interesting pictures and font and also that the information and wording was pitched at the correct level.

The information card is the size of a credit card and explains what Connexions is, how to get in touch with a Personal Adviser, information about the Connexions Youth Charter and how young people can have their say. There have been three versions developed, one for each area within the Partnership. All three cards are similar in design but have information relevant to services available in each specific area, which includes the details of their Youth Engagement Officer.

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Impact:

A card that appeals to and is tailored to meet the needs of young people in the area.

Merseyside Website - Young people had considerable involvement in the design of the Greater Merseyside Connexions website. The Partnership used an online questionnaire [<http://www.tell-us.co.uk/old>], developed with young people, to get a large number of young people's views on its main website content, presentation and features.

Three animated characters were created by Chris (17) to help users become "Cyberformers" and navigate the site. The profiles for each of the characters [Benny, Karl and Jess] were developed to suit young people of different ages. By completing the questionnaire young people were able to accumulate text messaging credits and to play a specially developed Connexions game with a range of prizes.

The consultation was for a month from May to June 2002 and resulted in 1522 completed online questionnaires from the young people of Merseyside. To help encourage such a high response rate, posters and leaflets were printed and distributed through careers companies and local schools. In addition, press releases were circulated to the local radio and newspapers.

The Partnership decided to further develop the idea of an online consultation forum following the success of the 'tell-us' website using the 'Cyberformers' format

Impact:

Cyberformers brings together young people with the decision makers who affect their lives via a medium where they can express their views and ideas, discuss issues close to their hearts. This provides Greater Merseyside Connexions with feedback that will allow them to develop and improve the services they provide. It can be used for specific consultations around particular issues and be used by Connexions partners such as schools and drug action teams.

The characters Benny, Karl and Jess have proved so popular with young people that they are now been used to promote Connexions. Chris also attended Website strategy group meetings that and felt that he was always asked his opinion, he had a direct impact on the selection of the web develop used.

Norfolk PIG - *Connexions Norfolk worked closely with a group of young people on promoting and marketing partnership. Rather than developing materials first and then bringing in young people to consult over designs, the Partnership asked four design companies to present their marketing suggestions to a panel of young people.*

The young people interviewed each design company, giving them a real grilling on content, impact, design and imagery. The final decision was based the designers' response to them as young people and, more importantly, the quality of the designs and ideas for promoting Connexions to young people. The decision was confirmed by feedback from other 'older' young people from Norwich City College. Yong people continued to work with the design company in the subsequent stages of production.

The outcome was a credit card sized flip book branded as the PIG (Personal Information Guide) containing various cards with information on the services provided through the partnership. It was also decided that the 'PIG' should contain additional information including the Connexions Norfolk Youth Charter.

Impact:

A number of the young people involved in developing the PIG have been inspired to continue their involvement and have become members of the Connexions Norfolk Users' Council, which meets frequently to discuss various elements of the development of the Norfolk Partnership.

Benefits for the Partnership are that their marketing strategy for Connexions has been extremely successful with the PIG being very popular amongst young people within the area. It has also generated interest from other young people on getting involved in Connexions.