



OFFICE FOR STANDARDS
IN EDUCATION

Connexions Partnerships A Framework for Inspection

April 2002

HMI 441

A report from the Office of Her Majesty's Chief Inspector of Schools

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Throughout the framework, the term 'Connexions staff' is used to refer to people who work within the Connexions Partnership and who are employed or are managed directly or indirectly through contracting arrangements by the Connexions Partnership. The term also applies to adults and young people who work as volunteers with the Connexions Partnership.

Introduction

Purposes of inspection

The main purposes of inspection are to:

- give an independent public account of the standards achieved, the quality of the provision and the efficiency and effectiveness with which resources are managed by Connexions partnerships
- help bring about improvement by identifying strengths and weaknesses and proposing key issues for action
- keep the secretary of state informed of the standards, quality and efficiency of Connexions partnerships and whether they provide value for money.

Code of conduct

Inspectors must:

- evaluate the work of the partnership objectively, be impartial and have no previous connection with the partnership which could undermine their objectivity
- report honestly and fairly, ensuring that judgements accurately and reliably reflect what the partnership does and achieves
- carry out their work with integrity, treating all those they meet with courtesy and sensitivity
- do all they can to minimise stress, in particular, by ensuring that no individual is over-inspected
- act with the best interests and well-being of staff and young people as priorities
- maintain purposeful and productive dialogue with staff and communicate judgements on the work of the partnership clearly, frankly and respectfully
- guarantee, where legally permissible, the confidentiality of information about young people and staff, and of judgements made about the work of individuals.

What is evaluated and reported on

All inspections will focus on the experience of young people and will evaluate and report on:

- the quality and effectiveness of the partnership
- the achievement of young people
- the responsiveness of the partnership and the extent to which it is educationally and socially inclusive
- the quality of the provision
- the effectiveness and efficiency with which the provision is managed, quality assured and improved
- the value for money provided.

Quality of judgements and communication

Inspectors must ensure that:

- the evidence gathered is sufficient to sustain secure judgements
- judgements are consistent with the inspection evidence, and that overall findings reflect the balance of evidence and represent the collective view of the inspection team
- the communication of findings, orally and in writing, is clear, well argued and based convincingly on evidence gathered before and during the inspection.

Evaluation Schedule

Part A: Summary

- 1. Basic information about the partnership and the area served**
- 2. Relevant data**
 - 2.1 Performance indicators
 - 2.2 Evidence base of the inspection
- 3. Main findings**
 - 3.1 Strengths and weaknesses of the partnership
 - 3.2 What the partnership should do to improve

Part B: Commentary

The following key questions, set out under five broad headings, will guide the inspection:

Quality and effectiveness of the partnership

1. How successful is the partnership in implementing the aims of the Connexions service?

Achievement

2. How well do the young people within the partnership achieve their goals?

Access and participation

3. How responsive is the partnership to the range and diversity of young people in the area?

Quality of assessment, support, guidance and programmes of learning

4. How effective is Connexions practice – assessment, support, guidance, teaching and learning?
5. How well do the programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of young people and satisfy national requirements?
6. How do resources affect achievement and learning?

Leadership and management

7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting young people in their personal and social development?

Quality and Effectiveness of the Partnership

1. How successful is the partnership in implementing the aims of the Connexions service?

To answer this question, evaluate and report on:

- how well the partnership
 - (i) meets its agreed primary targets for participation and achievement
 - (ii) contributes to cross-government targets relating to particular groups of young people
- how actively the partnership involves young people at every stage of its operation
- how well the partnership takes into account the interests of all young people within its area
- how successfully the partnership works with external agencies to provide an integrated support service for young people.

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

- *demonstrates that both local and national targets are being met*
- *has enabled young people to exert a real influence within its structures*
- *is representative of the main statutory and voluntary agencies involved in working with young people in the area*
- *contributes to the planning decisions of strategic bodies and institutions involved in the provision of education and support services*
- *has mechanisms for ascertaining the quality of those services to which it directs young people*
- *influences and improves the opportunities for learning and development in its area through close liaison with local businesses, educational organisations, training providers, community groups and other relevant bodies.*

Achievement

2. How well do the young people within the partnership achieve their goals?

To answer this question, evaluate and report on:

- the success of young people in achieving:
 - (i) qualifications and individual learning targets
 - (ii) goals for personal and social development
- young people's progress relative to their prior achievement and their potential
- how well young people engage with, and participate in, the services available to them.

In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which young people:

- *acquire the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to raise their aspirations and achievement and to support their social and educational inclusion*
- *have a broad and accurate knowledge and understanding of the world of work and of the education, training and employment opportunities that are available locally, regionally and nationally, including higher education*
- *are well informed about the range of social, voluntary and leisure-based opportunities for learning and development*
- *know their own strengths and weaknesses, personal qualities and preferences*
- *cope with their lives and new roles and situations, such as starting work, moving on to further education or living independently*
- *assume increasing responsibility for their personal development*
- *are effective in making choices in relation to anticipated education, training and employment*
- *set themselves realistic personal goals and develop plans of action to achieve these goals*
- *recognise and overcome potential barriers to learning and social inclusion*
- *view the work of the partnership positively*
- *form and maintain constructive relationships*
- *respect other people's differences, particularly their feelings, values and beliefs.*

Access and Participation

3. How responsive is the partnership to the range and diversity of young people in the area?

To answer this question, evaluate and report on:

- the partnership's assessment of the needs and demands of the young people in the communities it serves
- how well the partnership ensures that young people in its area are aware of the services available to them
- how successfully the partnership provides an inclusive service, tailored to individual requirements.

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

- *has collected comprehensive up to date information about the young people in its area*
- *understands the nature of the area and the communities it serves*
- *consistently involves young people in the identification and assessment of their needs*
- *has effective strategies to enable all young people to gain access to support and provision responsive to their needs*
- *ensures that relevant programmes are provided in a range of locations easily accessible to all young people and at times convenient to them*
- *has a clear and realistic action plan for work with its agreed priority groups, both for the short and the longer term*
- *is sensitive to, and provides for, the diverse needs of young people within the target age group, taking into account such features as sex, ethnicity and disability and ensuring equality and equity*
- *promotes its work actively across the area;*

and the extent to which young people:

- *view the services as being relevant and free from barriers to access*
- *participate fully in the services which respond to their needs.*

Quality of Assessment, Support, Guidance and Programmes of Learning

4. How effective is Connexions practice – assessment, support, guidance, teaching and learning?

To answer this question, evaluate and report on:

- the effectiveness of provision for all young people, referring to:
 - (i) the assessment of young people's needs
 - (ii) support and guidance
 - (iii) the teaching and learning associated with Connexions goals
 - (iv) young people's response to what is provided for them;
- the tracking of young people's progress and its use in developing their learning and support plans.

In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which Connexions staff:

- *have a secure knowledge and understanding of the subject matter and key processes underpinning their work, including how the principles of equality and equity are applied in practice*
- *challenge and inspire young people, and encourage them to make the most of themselves*
- *respect and are receptive to young people's views*
- *plan effectively, setting clear objectives for their work*
- *establish and sustain positive working relationships with young people that help them to identify and achieve their academic and/or vocational and personal goals*
- *assess young people's needs accurately and negotiate with them individual learning and support plans that they understand*
- *use a range of methods to enable all young people to learn effectively*
- *provide impartial information, advice and guidance appropriate to young people's needs*
- *assess young people's progress and work thoroughly and constructively, and use assessments to inform subsequent teaching and learning support*
- *prepare young people for the transition to the next stage of education, training or employment*

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- *support young people in their progress through the learning and support plan and, in consultation with them, evaluate and record their progress*
 - *observe appropriate guidelines on confidentiality*
 - *have up-to-date information about, and links with, a wide range of support structures, specialist services and other opportunities for learning to which they can refer young people when necessary*
 - *work effectively with parents, carers, and all those with a legitimate interest in the progress made by the individual young people;*

and the extent to which young people:

- *engage effectively in learning in informal and formal settings and in employment*
- *have high aspirations and are actively involved in constructing and implementing their learning plans*
- *become self-confident and acquire new knowledge, skills and understanding*
- *understand what they are doing, how well they are progressing, and what further steps they need to take.*

5. How well do programmes and activities meet the needs and interests of young people and satisfy national requirements?

To answer this question, evaluate and report on:

- the breadth and relevance of the available programmes and activities
- the involvement of young people in the planning of provision
- whether programmes fulfil the relevant statutory requirements.

In making judgements, consider, where applicable, the extent to which programmes and activities:

- *support young people to continue in, or return to, education and training, gain appropriate qualifications and obtain employment*
- *contribute effectively to personal and social education, (including behaviour support programmes, health education, sex education and attention to substance misuse), and to careers and citizenship education to meet local and national priorities*
- *offer opportunities for work experience and work-based learning*

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- *enable young people to obtain impartial information, support, guidance and counselling appropriate to their needs, particularly at key points of transition*
 - *are developed in consultation with young people, on the basis of diagnostic assessment and in response to their interests and aptitudes*
 - *include effective systems for referral to specialist information and advice services as required*
 - *are socially inclusive, ensuring equality of access and opportunity for young people.*

6. How do resources affect achievement and learning?

To answer this question, evaluate and report on:

- the adequacy and suitability of designated staff associated with the work of the partnership
- the adequacy, suitability and use of specialist equipment, learning resources and accommodation
- how efficiently and effectively resources are deployed to achieve the partnership's objectives.

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

- *there are sufficient numbers of Connexions staff with the appropriate qualifications, experience and ethnic origin to match the requirements of the programmes and activities, and the needs of young people and communities*
- *all staff are deployed to ensure effective use of their expertise in meeting the priorities of the partnership*
- *accommodation is fit for its purpose, particularly where the work is of a confidential nature, and is accessible to all young people*
- *young people have access to up-to-date and relevant resources that support their individual learning plans, contribute to their achievements and encourage them to accept increasing responsibility for their personal and social development*
- *learning and other resources, including accommodation, allow young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to participate*
- *priorities and agreed outcomes are supported by responsible financial management and the equitable distribution of resources across the partnership.*

Leadership and Management

7. How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting young people in their personal and social development?

To answer this question, evaluate and report on:

- how well the partnership sets a clear direction for the work, in response to the needs of young people, providers and local communities
- how successfully the management of the partnership ensures coherent and effective support for young people in all aspects of the provision
- how actively young people are engaged in developing the Connexions service in their area
- how effectively the partnership monitors and evaluates its success in raising achievement and supporting young people and whether steps are taken to secure improvement
- how well the partnership measures its cost-effectiveness.

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

- *the partnership sets a clear direction for the work through strategic objectives, targets and values that are fully understood and implemented by staff and sub-contractors*
- *there are explicit aims, values and strategies promoting equality and inclusion*
- *management responsibilities and accountabilities are clearly defined and accepted*
- *young people are involved in the governance and management of the partnership, in decisions about its development and in the provision of programmes and activities*
- *inter-agency co-operation is effective and secured by comprehensive and clearly formulated contracts and service level agreements*
- *performance management, appraisal and supervision are successful in improving the quality of provision*
- *the professional development needs of all staff are identified and met and their effectiveness enhanced as a result*

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- *quality assurance arrangements, informed by performance indicators and quality standards, are carried out in conjunction with young people and include direct observation of work*
 - *the partnership collects accurate participation and tracking data and uses the information gathered to ascertain which young people are being reached*
 - *the partnership measures its cost-effectiveness within both the local and the national contexts, taking full account of the principles of Best Value.*
