

Understanding the Impact of Connexions on Young People at Risk

Liz Hoggarth and Douglas I Smith
De Montfort University, Universities of Bristol
and Derby

**Research Report
No 607**

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ISBN 1 84478 377 4

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Acknowledgements

This study was carried out on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills by a research team drawn from three universities: De Montfort University, the University of Bristol and the University of Derby.

The study would have failed to deliver any understanding of the nature of Connexions impact without the assistance of all the many young people, who agreed to give their time to be interviewed. Their cooperation and openness is gratefully acknowledged. It has provided a rich seam of evidence, with detailed and moving accounts of their experiences.

Seven Connexions Partnerships generously agreed to take part in this research, despite all the workload pressures and conflicting demands they face. Over four hundred members of staff at various levels in the Connexions Service and its partner agencies have kindly given us time and advice. We hope that this study will reward their trust and contribute to the shared purpose of improving the life-chances of young people, especially those at risk.

Our peer researchers also deserve a special mention. A number of young people were involved over the course of the project. In particular, Naomi Coates, Zoë Dolman, Natasha Easy, Michelle Gooley, Jamie Halpin, Martin Last, Rebbecka Nadralli, Leah Pritchard, Claire Thomas, and Holly Walker continued their involvement to the end of the research period and offered us valuable insights from a young person's perspective.

There are many colleagues, who have given assistance in the research in a myriad of ways: as second interviewers, checking data, researching references, typing transcriptions, arranging interviews, contributing ideas and simply cheering us up. Their support has been indispensable.

We would want to express our warm appreciation for the invaluable expert advice on Realist Evaluation methodology from Ray Pawson, of the University of Leeds and Nick Tilley, of Nottingham Trent University. The Crime Concern Trust supported the study by making time available for the role of the Research Director. We have also been greatly assisted by the continuing encouragement and guidance of members of the project Steering Group, drawn from the Supporting Children and Young People Group and the Analytical Services Division of the Department for Education and Skills.

We owe so many intellectual and practical debts. We can only offer our thanks and hope that we are providing a useful and stimulating read in return.

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Understanding the impact of Connexions on young people at risk

Executive summary

Introduction and background

The Connexions Service was launched in April 2001, with the aim of helping young people make informed choices and so aid a successful transition to adult life. It does this through improved partnership working and a network of Personal Advisers (PAs) – the key instrument in creating impact in young people's lives. A primary target of the Connexions Service is to reduce the proportion of 16-18 year-olds who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) and it also contributes to other crosscutting targets. (1.1.1, 3.3 and Appendix E)

By 2003, Connexions was operating across England in 47 regional Partnerships. Connexions is still a relatively new programme. Its creation entailed fundamental changes to the style and organisation of support for young people and is naturally taking some time to bed in. (1.4.1, 3.4.3, 3.5.5 and 3.5.7.4) Connexions brings together the services offered by the former Careers Service and a wide range of holistic support for young people. It is intended to offer an integrated service for all young people aged 13-19, enabling them to access support according to their needs. It works in partnership with other agencies to raise the levels of educational participation and achievement and to improve the suitability and quality of provision.

This study aimed to enhance the understanding of the impact of the Connexions Service on young people, particularly those at risk of underachievement and disaffection. It examined what brought about impact in what circumstances and how those changes occurred. The starting point was the work carried out by PAs with and for young people and in particular how the young people view that work. Both the direct work with young people and the wider work of PAs, as seen in brokerage or advocacy were considered. The explanations sought covered a broader canvass than the PA role alone and included the relationships to other policies and to contextual factors, such as labour market conditions, which influence the life-chances of young people. (1.1.2 – 1.1.3)

The report contains a wealth of detailed information on how the Connexions programme works well with young people at risk and why, and conversely the factors that inhibit its impact. Such an increase in our understanding of what is going on when successful progress takes place can inform the targeting of the service, the deployment of resources and the style of interaction with young people. It is our hope that in this way, this study will be of use to policy makers, managers and practitioners.

Key findings

- Connexions is still relatively new but it is achieving *positive impact*, of different types, with different groups of young people, including those at risk. The primary mechanism of impact lies in the interaction of PAs and young people. (2.1.5) A trusting relationship is key to impact with young people at risk. (7.4.2, and 4.11.2.1, 6.3.2 – 3, 6.5.4.1, 6.10.4.6)
- It is important to bring young people who need it into the Connexions process as early in their “risk career” as possible with sensitive and well-timed assessment of risk and priority and the time to build up trust. (7.5.2 and 5.2.3.11)
- Many of the young people in the sample faced multiple risks in their lives and needed intensive attention. A holistic and non-stigmatising approach to these problems was most effective and single-stranded interventions had less impact. (7.3.2, 7.3.3, 6.2.2)
- Impact is multi-faceted involving outcomes in different areas of young people’s lives, including personal development and dealing with urgent or underlying risks as well as destination outcomes in education, employment or training. Different types of outcome and stages of the relationship need to be differentiated to understand the nature of Connexions impact. (2.2.5 - 6) For most young people at risk impact is needed in more than one area for real progress to be achieved. (7.4.7 and 2.2, 2.3)
- Both “hard” and “soft” outcomes therefore need to be recognised as necessary. Further work is needed to develop ways of measuring and recording soft outcomes. (7.13.5 and 2.3.11, 5.4.3.12)
- The overall *pattern of impact* appears largely determined by the level of resources available to Connexions and how they are deployed. The current deployment of resources creates a support pattern having two main characteristics (4.11.3.1):
 - a wide but thinly spread pattern of universal provision providing mainly minimal support on post-16 transition needs;
 - a focused pattern of targeted support of an intensive or intermediate nature which addresses much wider needs, but which is concentrated on much smaller numbers of young people judged to be at risk.
- There is a tension between the past and the present that is highly evident in Connexions. This can be seen in the structural tendency of the service to divide along universal and targeted lines, and in the attitudes and working practices of many staff whose training and professional aspirations pre-date the Connexions ethos. Resistances to the holistic approach reduce impact for those at risk. (7.13.4 and 3.5.7)
- Resources overall appeared inadequate to meet the needs. (4.9.10.1, 8.2.5) Universal provision, *as it currently appears to function*, does not effectively achieve impact with young people at risk, link to or support the more targeted work. There is a dilemma over the balance between Connexions as a service targeted on young people at risk, and

- Connexions as a wider service for all young people who wish to use it. (4.11.4.2)
- In some school settings, PAs are not treated as an integral part of the pupil support systems and are often marginalised. (3.5.8, 5.6, 6.11.1.2) The most positive practice identified was where a joint school/Connexions approach was used to devise tailored programmes for young people most at risk. (5.2.7.2, 6.11.4.2) Special schools, where statutory roles include Connexions, offered a more positive example of the benefits of such joint working. (6.4.4.3 – 4) Schools are able to facilitate or frustrate other services in their access to young people but an opportunity for service improvement is lost if the links are not built between universal and targeted provision.
 - Protocols with schools and other partners are essential but the evidence of this study showed they were often not actively used or familiar to operational staff. (5.6 and 7.9)
 - Assessment of risk and priority was not fully effective for the young people in this study. (4.9.3, 4.11.5) While need and support are being matched to some degree, it is not a perfect or consistent match. (4.7 and 7.5) About half the young people in the top two priority groups reported that they were not receiving current support. Even where assessment was working well, there was not always the capacity to respond. There is significant unmet need amongst young people who satisfy the requirements for intermediate or intensive support but do not receive it. (4.11.4.1)
 - *Impact leakage* arises at all stages of the Connexions process. (3.7 and 3.8) The evidence from the risk groups shows typical stages where this loss of impact occurs, including:
 - failures to identify risk early and prioritise prevention (7.5.2 and 5.2.3.11)
 - presentation and branding of the service that does not convey its holistic nature (5.5.2 and 7.2)
 - a failure to deal with urgent presenting needs (7.3.7 and 6.2.6, 6.9.5.7, 6.10.4.10)
 - loss of contact, especially without explanation to the young person (7.7.3 – 6)
 - insensitive, intrusive or too early assessment (7.5.2, 6.5.4.6, 6.9.5.5)
 - a rigid focus on the NEET target and pressure on young people to take up (sometimes unsuitable) EET options (5.4.3.8, 6.12.4, 7.4.4)
 - referral without complementary and continuing support (6.3.12, 6.7.3.4)
 - a failure to follow up interventions (5.4.3.9, 6.3.12)
 - a lack of exit strategies. (5.4.3.6, 6.12.4.1, 7.8.2)
 - Management supervision and support of staff appeared weak. Staff were often isolated in the face of challenging decisions and partner relationships. Greater awareness of referral routes and how to meet the needs of specific risk groups was also needed. (7.8.4 and 5.4.3.11, 6.13.1)

Methodology

A detailed description of the methodology is given in Appendix B. The study used primarily qualitative methods, and its design was based on a “realist perspective” on evaluation, drawing also on “theory of change” models (see Appendix A).

The research was carried out in seven Partnership areas, selected to achieve a mix of regions, urban and rural settings, and population characteristics. Six of the seven were Phase 1 Partnerships, which commenced delivery in 2001 giving a period of implementation that afforded sufficient opportunity for impact on young people to have occurred. (B.1.1)

The first phase of the research concentrated on interviews with young people within the Connexions age range (13-19), mainly focusing on those aged 14-15. The research design included a balanced focus on both P1 and P2 young people (the highest priority risk groups), and enabled movement between P1 and P2 by young people to be examined. (1.2 and B.2.6)

A sample design was created across all seven Partnerships, including samples of young people with education related and other identified risks, some in receipt of EMA and some who were NEET. (B.4 to B.8) A total of 573 young people were interviewed in this phase. (B.3.4 to B.3.8) The definitions of the risk groups and the processes of contacting and interviewing young people are detailed in Appendix B. In addition, senior officers at national level and in the Partnerships, and 65 PAs were interviewed in the first phase, with the purpose of gaining an insight into operational issues affecting the service and practitioner “theories” about “what works.” (B.9.1)

For the second phase, the research design was developed around four factors - the Connexions process; how different groups and sub-groups of young people experience it; and how this is influenced by setting and by staff deployment. This design was specifically focussed around the “realist” concern with “what works, for whom, and under what circumstances,” and it also enabled the analysis of two major concerns emerging from Phase 1, namely continuities and discontinuities in the Connexions process, and the matching of support to need. (B.10.2) The sample allowed for comparison of work with different risk groups (namely young people with learning difficulties and Special Educational Needs; young parents and carers; young people looked after or homeless; asylum seekers and refugees; young offenders; substance misusers; school resisters and truants; and those who were NEET). It also examined provision in different settings (schools, including special schools; colleges and training providers; Connexions centres and shops; outreach settings; statutory and voluntary youth organisations; and specialist agencies).

The second phase interviews included follow up interviews with young people from Phase 1, new or second interviews with young people in different risk groups or those who were NEET, and interviews with different workers involved in the Connexions process. A total of 655 interviews were carried out

in Phase 2, making 1299 in total across both phases, of which 855 were with young people (including 161 follow up interviews). (B.11.1, B.12.2, and Table B3)

The majority of the analysis was a qualitative examination of the recorded interviews. (B.14.1) In addition, each young person interview and the Phase 2 adult interviews were selectively coded to allow analysis using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). (B.14.2 to B.14.4)

In common with all research, there are certain limitations to this study. The sampling was purposive rather than random and strictly, therefore, the sample cannot be seen as representative of a given population. However, it does provide for “practically adequate” explanations about the experience of different groups within Connexions and comparisons between them. (B.15.3)

The main findings and conceptual themes

Key concepts

As the study developed, a number of key conceptual and explanatory themes emerged.

- **The Connexions process** and the main stages in its sequence: pre-contact with young people and how they identify the service; first contact and interaction; second and further contacts including their frequency, regularity, continuity and intensity; assessment, prioritising and action-planning to match need and support; interventions and referrals; follow up and review; and exit strategy and closure. Protocols and service agreements potentially apply to all these stages. There is a need for continuity and coordination throughout the process. (1.2.6 and 3.6)
- The **context** for that process as including the social and structural conditions in the Partnership area, organisational arrangements for delivery, and the personal context the young person brings to their interaction with the service. (1.3.5, 1.3.6, 2.3.16)
- The **interaction between the Personal Adviser and the young person** was identified as the main locus for activating Connexions change mechanisms and the study sought to identify the **triggers**, which activated or de-activated those mechanisms in the programme. For young people at risk a trusting relationship with the PA was usually a key to impact. (1.3.3, 1.3.4, 2.1.5, 7.4)
- The concept of the **orientations** brought by both the young person and the worker to that interaction. A young person’s “orientation” includes both their social background, for example being black, female and unemployed in an area with few employment opportunities, and their attitudes to their circumstances and those who interact with them. Adults, including PAs, also bring their own orientations to the exchange with young people. There are numerous examples from the different risk groups of the need to listen with sensitivity to the orientations of young people and the need to negotiate “congruence” in these

orientations so that there is a shared commitment to action steps. In the relationship with the PA, the accurate response to orientation helped to build up trust. (6.3.3 to 6.3.6)

- **The nature of impact as differentiated and multi-faceted.** Impact was defined as “the difference in outcomes attributable to Connexions”. It is achieved through interventions, directly made by Connexions or through referral that changes the reasoning, resources and behaviour of young people. Positive outcomes can be identified in the awareness of the support Connexions can provide; in post-16 transition; in personal development and in dealing with risk conditions and life circumstances faced by young people. Different interventions are needed to achieve outcomes in these different areas and types of outcomes will occur at different points in time, including immediate, intermediate and final outcomes. Both “hard” and “soft” outcomes were usually needed for the progress of young people at risk. (2.2, 2.3, and 2.5.3)
- The notion of “**impact leakage**”, meaning the ways in which potential impact is lost in the Connexions process for structural, organisational or service quality reasons. (3.7 and 3.8) “Impact leakage” is likely to occur to a greater or lesser degree in all complex social programmes. “Leakage” arises, for example, when there is discontinuity in the Connexions process, when a trusting relationship with the PA relationship is not achieved, when interventions or referrals were ineffective and when follow up was neglected. The research sought to understand why impact did not occur in all circumstances with all young people at risk. It found that the Connexions process is highly complex, with numerous linked stages and the potential for discontinuity and impact leakage at each point. This can arise from stage failure, when a defined stage of the process is not carried out or carried out inadequately or from *linkage failure*, when one stage of the process is not properly linked to a subsequent phase. (7.10.2)

The positive impact of Connexions with young people at risk

There was evidence of the positive impact of Connexions in the lives of young people. The interviewers encountered a number of young people at risk for whom the relationship with their Personal Adviser had been central to their development and progress. Out of 161 young people, who attended follow up interviews, some 103 (64 per cent) reported some positive impact from their contact with Connexions. (6.2.7) Typically, those relationships associated with the most positive impact were characterised by a high level of trust. Many PAs had shown commitment and flexibility and a broad availability in order to reach and work effectively with young people at risk. Positive impact frequently included work on personal development and urgent practical needs as well as on moves into education, training and employment.

Where young people understood the holistic nature of the support available and the service was responding sensitively to their needs in the round, positive impact was evident. One young woman who had been bullied and had once run away from home after conflict with her parents, put it this way,

“Connexions helps young people... Makes life easier to digest, puts things in perspective and generally helps with most other things too.” (2.3.3) Many saw the PA as a trusted adult, almost a friend, saying things like “she makes me laugh, she looks after me”. (2.3.5) For others there had been an impact on risk situations or deep-seated problems. For instance, a young man who had faced school exclusion for behaviour such as setting fire to equipment, whose PA had worked on anger management and problems in the family, acknowledged that, “I can talk to people [now] without losing it and smashing stuff up... [my PA] has changed me a lot. I couldn’t talk to people nice: I used to shout and tell them to shut their mouth and walk off and stuff like that... I’d have been kicked out.” (2.3.15)

The contrasts between “universal” and “targeted” provision

The universal provision in schools forms the major experience of Connexions for most young people. Access to support is largely regulated by the school and seen by young people as compulsory. The relationship with young people tends to be narrow, instrumental and brief, and its scope is highly focused on education, training and employment issues. The role of the PA largely reflects these characteristics. The principal method of work is the offering of information, advice and guidance. The overall support pattern is primarily minimal in nature, often amounting to one individual or group meeting with a PA. (4.9.12.1)

Although the universal service appears to fulfil a particular role, its contribution to the wider purpose and vision of the Connexions Service is more restricted. It does not appear to identify and be able to respond to wider needs and risks itself, and it appears to have difficulty in ensuring consistency of support from the wider service. This is partly because linkages with other parts of Connexions and other provision for more intensive support appear as yet only weakly developed, and the processes of brokerage and referral are not widespread. (4.9.12.2)

Intensive targeted provision is focussed on smaller numbers of young people. Its access form is relatively wide, unregulated by any single institution, and is seen by young people as largely voluntary. The relationship with young people is broad and diffuse, affective rather than instrumental, is extended over time, and its scope is broad, covering a wide range of needs amongst young people. The role of the PA largely reflects these characteristics, with diverse approaches, which cover most or all of the main methods of working with young people, sometimes in conjunction with partners. The overall support pattern is primarily intensive and often long term in the context of enduring relationships between young people and PAs. It is focused on personal development and the meeting of needs to diminish risk in order to enhance educability and employability. (4.9.13.1)

Intensive work contributes fully to the wider role and vision of the Connexions Service, but its contribution is limited by the resources available and the number of young people it can engage. It can identify and respond to wider needs and risks itself but it appears to have difficulty in providing consistent

intervention and support across the wider population of young people who have a need for it. (4.9.13.2)

Some factors that promoted or inhibited impact

Section 6 of the main report provides the more specific findings in relation to the different risk groups in the study. Section 7 summarises the findings of the whole study in relation to the hypotheses and the stages of the Connexions process. The positive impact of the service with young people was very evident in many cases but it was by no means as widespread or consistent as might be expected. The research sought the reasons for these apparent limitations. Some salient factors emerge from this examination of what increases or frustrates impact for Connexions.

The marketing of the service is influential on the perceptions held by young people even before the first direct contact. The overwhelming evidence of the study is that most young people form their impressions chiefly from presentations in school, which in most cases conveyed an understanding that Connexions is primarily concerned with options and careers. The “identifier” of careers advice and guidance appears to be conveyed so strongly that it masks the messages about the wider role of the PA. Young people who might have needed or wished to use the wider range of support did not do so because of this perception. Marketing needs to carry positive messages about a holistic service, not solely concerned with problems, to which young people can turn at any time in their passage to adulthood. (7.3.2 – 3)

Processes in schools to identify young people at risk and link them into Connexions are often weak. Risks are not adequately identified, early prevention work is rare and support is not well matched to priority. Where PAs are not an integral part of pastoral systems this tendency is exacerbated. (7.5 and 4.11.5.4, 5.2.7)

There is evidence of the benefits of flexibility in the means of contacting young people. Outreach work, work through voluntary and youth organisations, and drop-in provision are essential in gaining access to young people at risk. Positive referrals from peers or adult workers are particularly fruitful. (7.3.5 – 6)

Establishing trust and understanding the orientations of the young person are crucial to impact. This is a time intensive process often requiring frequent and regular contact. Breaks in contact are damaging, especially when young people are given no explanation. Typical breaks in contact include young people moving between areas, to new alternative education or leaving custody; and job change, maternity leave or illness occurring for the PA. (7.7.3)

Trust does not happen automatically: it is built up through a chain of listening for the orientation, accurate responses, negotiation of what is possible and delivery of what is promised. Inability or unwillingness to understand a young person’s orientation reduces impact. Over-emphasis of NEET targets is a

common example, where immediate practical needs can be ignored and the effect is counter-productive. Failure to meet expectations is another: common reasons were a lack of response to presenting issues, slowness of response and having insufficient skills to deal with issues raised. (7.4)

Overall, the most negative reactions to the service found in this study were occasioned by a failure to listen to expressed needs; a pressure to take up particular options; a perception that bad advice had been given; or breaks in PA contact. Where young people felt that Connexions had had a significant positive impact in their lives, the most frequent features of their cases were firstly, the high-trust relationship with the PA and secondly, that virtually all these young people had experienced impact in more than one area of their lives, usually involving personal development or work on other problems in their situation. Many had also achieved an EET destination or benefited from advice on options working towards that goal. (See 6.2.7 to 6.2.8.)

Assessment is a crucial process but not yet fully effective. A flexible approach is needed to its timing and style. If it is carried out too early or insensitively, positive progress may be inhibited (7.5.2, and 5.2.3.11, 6.5.4.6 and 6.9.5.5.) There was little evidence of coordinated action plans available but where a young person had a plan, felt that they had been involved in drawing it up and understood it, there was a positive effect on outcomes.

The wider the range of interventions available, the more accurately tailored any action plan can be. PAs need to have well rehearsed referral routes, for instance in the areas of homelessness or drug misuse. PAs mentioned some interventions that were missing in their area or desirable in the overall range, including better supported employment or work placements, adventurous activities, funds for emergency food or clothing, more emergency accommodation, and better links to mental health services and community based support. (7.6.3 – 5)

Skilled PAs will negotiate for particular provision and advocate when opportunities are not readily available or are not working out. There were positive examples of PAs advocating for the needs of individual young people but the broader strategic advocacy role for improved provision and responses to particular risk groups was not strongly evidenced in the study. There is scope for much further development of all aspects of advocacy. (7.6.7)

Significant discontinuities in the Connexions process occurred at the follow up and review stages and there was little evidence of planning for the ending of the PA relationship or handover. Critical points for impact leakage were a lack of contact after placement in training or starting college, leaving or moving school or alternative education, the end of custody or formal court orders, complementary follow up of drug counselling or treatment and the mobility of those who were homeless or leaving care. Discontinuities could be reduced by amendment of the guidance on “currency”; working with community based agencies to maintain contact with vulnerable young people; and encouraging drop-in contact with a message that “you can come back at any time, don’t lose touch”. (7.7)

Management supervision and support for PAs often appeared weak and in some cases, there appeared to be no recognition of its necessity. Traditions of supervision may be stronger in social work and youth work professions than they were in the former Careers Service and this may have had a carry over effect into the ethos of Connexions. There are numerous points where a flexible, supportive style of management supervision could assist PAs and improve outcomes. These include judgements about how and when to undertake assessment, the pressures and risks of outreach work, managing relationships with partner agencies, how to advocate for better provision, when to cease intervention, and planning for exit strategies. (7.8.5 and 5.6.10) It also includes the need to support PAs working to achieve “soft” outcomes necessary for the progress of young people at risk. (See 5.4.3.8.)

A clear understanding of working arrangements with internal and external partners is essential. Work on protocols and service agreements with schools and colleges and agencies such as Drug Action Teams or Youth Offending Teams was improving partnership working. These agreements were most effective when understood and valued by all parties and regularly reviewed but the evidence pointed to a lack of protocols or a lack of awareness of their existence at operational level. (7.9.1, 6.8.2 and 6.7.3.8)

Such arrangements should clarify the key worker role. (7.9.4) Services to young people with multiple risk still tend to be fragmented and uncoordinated and the absence of a clearly defined lead worker frequently contributes to this. Statutory arrangements for SEN young people illustrated how much clarity can improve impact. Internal arrangements can also increase awareness and appropriate referrals to specialist PAs. (7.9.5) Specialists could make a significant contribution but in some cases were not well used or other PAs avoided issues because “experts” could deal with them. (7.9.7)

The importance of recognising intermediate outcomes could be seen for all the risk groups. Some work is being undertaken to devise ways of recording and measuring “distance travelled”. (7.9.9 and 2.3.11.) The contribution of “soft” outcomes to the achievement of “hard” targets points up the need for service wide recognition of their significance and the need for ways of recording them. For the most severely alienated young people, the creation of a trusting relationship and maintenance of contact is itself a significant outcome. (See 6.9.3.)

The wider implications of the study

The report has wide ranging relevance to current debates about the configuration of services to children and young people. (See Section 8.) It also has messages about how alignment of services is created in social programmes and about methodological approaches to the evaluation of complex programmes. (See Appendix A.)

Key functions need to be carried out in any portfolio of provision for young people, including policy formulation, planning and resource allocation,

assessment and prioritisation, the direct work with young people, pro-active outreach to those most at risk, advocacy for improved provision and attention to young people within economic and social regeneration measures. (8.3.4) Resource allocations need to be proportionate to the needs of children and young people or the strain on committed staff working to address risk is untenable and agencies are unfairly blamed for failures.

The study provides detailed insight into how these functions are currently performed, the levels of effectiveness achieved, the variation in practice, and the outcomes that are both positive and negative for young people. The findings deserve close attention so that “what works” can be embedded in provision.

In relation to **“what works” about the manner in which workers carry out their functions with young people**, the study has underlined the significance of holistic approaches, particularly for young people with severe and multiple risks. Within our sample, there were many cases of damaged young people trying to cope with numerous interconnected issues affecting their lives simultaneously. Major impact was very rarely achieved with such young people without a trusting relationship with a worker(s) and sustained interventions addressing a range of risks over a substantial period of time. Single-track interventions that did not take account of the range of needs were less effective. Workers who embrace the holistic philosophy of work with young people can more easily relate to others in the field and position their role in relation to other functions.

An effective holistic approach is made more likely when certain elements are present in the relationship between adult workers and young people. These include taking the time to build trust, ascertain the young person’s standpoint and understand their motivation and readiness for change. Assessment procedures must be sensitive to the young person’s abilities, readiness and situation.

Adolescents will face many dilemmas as they grow up. We have seen the need for dealing with specific questions swiftly and accurately and for conveying the message that it is possible to come back without remark or stigma when any other issue arises. Marketing needs to be aimed at forming positive perceptions in young people’s minds of a wide-ranging service, offering support to which they can turn or “re-turn” at any point. This must assume the availability of specific sets of expertise and well-defined referral routes for typical urgent risk related problems, such as homelessness. The trust is fragile: a quality response needs to be offered.

The report also points up issues about **“what works” in the manner in which services for young people relate to each other**. Whatever the configuration of services to young people, there will be a need for both universal and targeted provision, even if they are contained within integrated services at the interface. Where services are concerned to provide for those at risk, there has to be a relationship with other universal services: sharp divisions and poor communication systems, mean that impact suffers for all

young people. Those in universal roles need to see it as part of the job to identify and understand risk, refer appropriately and cooperate in reintegration as necessary. Those occupying specialist or targeted roles cannot afford to divorce themselves from the issues facing mainstream provision. The dilemmas of service provision are all inter-connected.

If there are not proper linkages between the universal services and the more targeted approaches, an opportunity is lost to improve services. The key role of schools in the inter-connected web of provision needs to be recognised. Schools are the gatekeepers of much of the information on children and young people pre-16. Their work can facilitate the interventions of other services in protection or in addressing risk or it can frustrate them. Pro-active two-way cooperation between schools and other agencies working with young people is needed. Control of the processes either by schools, or by another agency or partnership external to the school, will not of itself address the problem.

A number of other key issues for Connexions apply equally to all other agencies dealing with young people. These include the need to secure the key worker role for young people with complex problems; the need to sustain follow up for young people at risk rather than simply making isolated interventions; the need to avoid creating dependency; the need for work on exit strategies and finally, the need to make working links with other agencies to ensure sustainability and continuation of support.

There was evidence from the research of certain dangers inherent in a target driven organisational culture. With many cases in the sample, it restricted flexibility in reaching young people most at risk and with some individuals, it also proved counterproductive. In cases where young people were severely damaged by their experience, some means is needed of recognising intermediate outcomes and recording “distance travelled” in terms of individual development. In arguing this position, we recognise the need for priorities and targets to guide the work, and the need for accountability in public services. However we do feel that a better balance could be achieved between the need for flexibility and responsiveness, and the potential and actual rigidities, which target driven cultures can create.

Finally, our evidence impressed upon us the importance of support and supervision for staff. We met many highly committed and hard working staff from different agencies, including Connexions. Regular personal support and good managerial supervision are needed to assist the complex judgements they make throughout their work. The length and complexity of the decision making process pertaining to young people at risk mean that it is not amenable to a single-track approach. Good training and supervision are not simply devices for regulation of working practice but routes to service improvement.

Lastly, the examination of the Connexions process has indicated **points where “impact leakage” typically occurs in services for young people and how it could be reduced.**

Loss of impact occurs when the relationships between staff with a “universal” and a “targeted” role, or between those with a holistic role and those with a specialist role, are tense or unclear. Good communication and mutual respect are needed, regardless of the historical traditions of the different contributing services.

Discontinuities were a significant feature of much of the partnership working. Protocols should not be regarded as sterile paper exercises. They can be a means of building trust between professional groups, clarifying roles and improving service delivery.

There are gaps and discontinuities in youth provision at both ends of the age spectrum. We found little preventive work with younger pupils in schools, a real absence of exit strategies or handover for those at the upper end of the range and few effective links to other agencies serving young adults to whom referral could be made for continued support.

Inadequate follow up of young people at risk is also a key point of weakness. In the face of the evident rate of change in their lives and the acute need of many for some stable and trusting relationship, it is clear that greater attention to follow up could pay dividends in improved impact. There are breaks and dislocations in the Connexions process and other provision for young people that exacerbate this situation.

Conclusion

Services to children and young people are on the cusp of further change and development. The implications of this research are germane to the many choices about policy and structure. The Connexions vision includes the holistic approach to young people’s life chances and attention to their learning and employment options, within services for all, differentiated by need. For the sake of young people at risk, whose stories moved us so greatly, we feel strongly that this ethos should not be lost but should remain as a central principle informing the design of services for children and young people.

Section 1 – Aims and Approach

1.1 Introduction and purpose of the study

1.1.1 The Connexions Service aims to help young people make a successful transition to adult life. It was launched in April 2001 on a phased basis and, by 2003, it was operating across England in 47 regional Partnerships.

Connexions brings together the services offered by the former Careers Service and a wide range of holistic support for young people. It is intended to offer an integrated service for all young people aged 13-19, enabling them to access support according to their needs. It works in partnership with other agencies to raise the levels of educational participation and achievement and to improve the suitability and quality of provision. At 2004, it had a budget of approximately £450 million and a staff of 7,700 Personal Advisers and more than 2,400 other front line staff (National Audit Office, 2004). It is a policy measure designed to reduce the social and financial costs of youth unemployment and social exclusion. Its primary target for 2002 –2004 is to reduce by 10 per cent the proportion of 16-18 year-olds who are not in education, employment or training and it also contributes to other crosscutting government targets relating to young people.

1.1.2 This study aims to enhance our understanding of the impact of the Connexions Service on young people, particularly those at risk of underachievement and disaffection. It examines what brings about impact in what circumstances and seeks to explain how the changes occur. The starting point is the work carried out by Personal Advisers (PAs) with and for young people and in particular how the young people view that work. Both the direct work with young people and the wider work of PAs - seen in brokerage roles or in providing access to other specialist support, learning or personal development – are considered. The explanations sought also draw on a broader canvass than the PA role alone and include the relationships to other policies such as the Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) and to the wider contextual factors, such as labour market conditions, which help shape the directions taken by young people.

1.1.3 The contractually agreed purposes of this study are:

- “To provide qualitative data that unpack the complex patterns of causation of particular outcomes, showing how interventions work and identifying the conditions necessary for them to work effectively.
- To establish how outcomes are achieved and to account for the complex inter-relationships between the Connexions Service and other policy initiatives.
- To conduct an intensive component of research designed to provide a deeper understanding of the causal processes underpinning key service impacts, based on an appropriate sample of young people at risk and to offer a multilevel explanatory model that captures the causal significance of Connexions and other related policies – most

notably Education Maintenance Allowance – and other conditions or structural factors that may be causally significant.”

1.1.4 In other words, this study seeks to address some key questions such as:

- Does Connexions have an effect on outcomes for young people?
- If so, what is the nature of that impact in specific instances? What happened to the young person, as an ultimate destination and in development along the way?
- What difference did the work of Connexions actually make to the outcomes for this young person?
- For what kinds of young people and in what situations does Connexions work best?
- Why did Connexions make this difference for this individual? Why did they engage with what was on offer?

1.1.5 The research team has listened carefully to the young people and the staff who work with them, and has undertaken a detailed analysis of the qualitative data collected through the interviews, so as to illuminate the processes of Connexions and shed light on these questions. Such an increase in our understanding of what is going on when successful progress takes place can inform the targeting of the service, the deployment of resources and the style of interaction with young people. It is our hope that in this way, this study will be of use to policy makers, managers and practitioners.

1.2 Methodology and evolution of the design

1.2.1 The study extended over approximately two years from November 2002, when the seven participating Partnerships were identified, to October 2004. Its methodology is outlined here and explained in more detail at Appendix B. The specification for this study, and the research design to meet it, evolved over the tendering process. Firstly, it moved from a study combining quantitative and qualitative approaches to one more fully focussed on qualitative methods within a “realist” approach and design, as summarised below and discussed in more detail at Appendix A. Secondly, several changes were made to the sampling procedures, which are set out at Appendix B together with their implications for the study.

1.2.2 In the first year of the study (Phase 1), interviewing was mainly concentrated on a target sample of young people at risk in each area. A total of 573 young people were interviewed, some of whom were followed up in the second year of the study (Phase 2). This afforded some opportunity of examining the processes of interaction with the service longitudinally as well as with a single snapshot.

1.2.3 The initial sample of young people included young people at risk facing multiple and profound problems, who require intensive support from Connexions (Priority Group 1: P1) and young people with fewer or less acute problems, who are nevertheless at risk (Priority Group 2: P2). It also included

a number in their first year of post compulsory education and a further group who were not in education, employment or training (NEET). The purposive sampling was designed overall to ensure that the young people interviewed showed a range of risks in their life circumstances or behaviour. The spread of the sample and the risk conditions and behaviours reflected in it is set out more fully in the detailed descriptions of the methodology provided at Appendix B.

1.2.4 In the first phase, a number of adult respondents were also interviewed, as stakeholders of the programme, to explore their “theories” or “hunches” about what works and why in order to inform the development of the early hypotheses. For this purpose, interviews were carried out with 65 Personal Advisers and six managers at the Connexions Service National Unit (as it was then titled) as well as several meetings with service managers. This process informed the development of the hypotheses, or working propositions against which the evidence could be examined or tested.

1.2.5 By the end of the first year of research, certain themes had begun to emerge and these are more fully described at Section 4. They concerned continuity and discontinuity in the Connexions process; delivery arrangements and their influence on the Connexions process; and the organisational arrangements for PAs and their influence on the Connexions process and the centrality of the PA relationship with young people. Some refocusing of the methodology was then undertaken for the second part of the study and the hypotheses were further refined, drawing again on the insights of practitioners and exploring the emerging themes.

1.2.6 The “Connexions process” refers to making contact with young people, working together with the young person, and then enabling young people to progress independently. Within this process contact needs to be made, relationships developed, assessments carried out, resources provided for support, progress checked, practice modified, referrals made, and so on, until the young person moves on. This complex process became the core focus of the research. Continuity is needed to ensure that different stages of the process take place as they should in order that effective support reaches the right young people at the right time. Both delivery and organisational arrangements may significantly affect the extent to which this process is followed in practice, the form it takes and the level of continuity and impact it achieves.

1.2.7 The design for Phase 2 therefore allowed for more specific comparisons between organisational arrangements in different settings and between models of practice with different risk groups. Hypotheses were formulated examining how the Connexions process works most effectively in terms of delivery arrangements and ways of reaching at risk young people. The process of refining the hypotheses and the data collected to test or examine them are set out at Appendix D.

1.2.8 In Phase 2, a total of 282 young people were interviewed, whether in follow up or in first-time interviews. In addition, 221 interviews were carried

out with adults involved in the Connexions process (such as PAs, managers, teachers, parents, social workers, youth workers). These were firstly, to develop further ideas about “what works” in different settings and with different groups and secondly, to develop a more rounded picture about how the Connexions process works in practice. 151 further adults were interviewed specifically to gain their perspectives on how the Connexions process was operating for particular young people interviewed in the sample.

1.2.9 Phase 2 interviewing was targeted on a number of different settings and risk groups. Specific settings included schools, special schools, colleges and training providers, multi-agency teams, Connexions centres and shops, outreach settings, statutory and voluntary youth organisations and specialist agencies. Specific risk groups included young people with learning difficulties or Statements of Educational Need, young parents and carers, young people looked after, the homeless, asylum seekers, young offenders, substance misusers, school resisters and truants and those who were NEET, both with and without contacts with Connexions.

1.2.10 The main data collection technique used throughout has been qualitative interviewing. Semi-structured interview schedules were used, normally with two researchers present. Some interviews with PAs and managers of the service and a very few of the interviews with young people have been conducted on a one-to-one basis. Great care has been given to the issue of obtaining the informed consent of the young people involved. Where appropriate other methods of collecting data have also been used such as group interviews, telephone, postal or text contacts.

1.2.11 Some of the data from the interviews were coded to enable trends within the samples to be examined. This identified the characteristics of the sample as a whole and its sub-groups. Such figures are used in this report to describe the characteristics seen across the whole study. These findings cannot be extrapolated to the whole youth population, as the sampling was purposive rather than random or representative.

1.2.12 Interviews were supplemented throughout by examination of administrative data, and by observation, in order to understand further the processes at work and to provide some checks on the patterns emerging from analysis of the qualitative material. Such sources included: Connexions records, service plans, notes of meetings with service managers, inter-agency protocols, partnership agreements, individual action plans, evaluation reports and observation in Connexions outlets or informal settings such as youth projects or voluntary organisations.

1.2.13 A small panel of peer researchers was also formed in each Partnership area to enable young people themselves to contribute their own perspectives to the research. The young people were brought together for training as a united team across the study and were offered accreditation for their participation in the study if they wished to take it up. They helped the research team with their local knowledge of youth issues, offered comment on the

research design and provided especially valuable feed back on Connexions marketing and branding from a young person's perspective.

1.2.14 The study has also gathered a background profile of each Partnership, including its demographic characteristics, in order to look more broadly at the context of the service and the impact of other local policy initiatives.

1.3 The Realist Approach

1.3.1 This research design adopted a Realist Evaluation approach to examine the questions set out above (see Pawson and Tilley, 1997). This approach is summarised here and set out more fully in Appendix A.

1.3.2 Realist evaluations focus on what works, for whom and in what circumstances, rather than only on the net effects of programmes. They are thus concerned with *outcome patterns*. Moreover, in looking at how these outcome patterns are generated, realist evaluations interrogate the *causal mechanisms* at work and the *contexts* for their activation.

1.3.3 According to realists, interventions do not work as simple doses of a programme applied to passive clients. Rather, programmes and clients interact. Through this interaction mechanisms are triggered, working through individuals, encouraging them to change their behaviour. Programmes such as Connexions offer resources to individuals but whether or not they are taken up depends on the reasoning of the client.

1.3.4 This study has formed a view that the relationship with the Personal Adviser is the main locus for activating Connexions change mechanisms. This raised further questions for the research team, such as: *What is it about a PA's intervention that makes the programme work? Why did Connexions make this difference for this person at this time? What made the relationship with the PA effective with this particular young person?*

1.3.5 The activation of programme mechanisms is always contingent on context - a social context and an institutional environment that also contains its own values, beliefs, relationships and constraints. Some contexts will enable mechanisms to work - to be triggered successfully, or "fired", within the operation of the programme. Other contexts may inhibit the activation of a mechanism. A central question for realist evaluation thus lies in identifying what switches on a mechanism under certain circumstances, but not others.

1.3.6 A simple example will help illustrate how this might happen. A PA working with a young person from a social background in which education is highly valued may find that advice about further education opportunities is positively received and influences the choices the young person makes. With another young person from a background where education is not valued, such advice may be resisted, and no difference is made for that young person. The PA has done the same thing but has had a different impact. What has made the impact different is the social context of family background and the way in which it has shaped the young person's values and attitudes.

In effect, the young person brings their social context with them to the meeting with the PA and as a result the programme mechanism is activated or remains ineffective.

1.3.7 Programme outcomes comprise the differences made when mechanisms are activated. For Connexions, outcomes for young people can be seen both in terms of ultimate destinations and in terms of the development they experience along the way. Intermediate outcomes must be recognised as significant in helping towards achieving the ultimate outcomes and lessening the risk of non-achievement.

1.3.8 Impact is identified as the difference in these outcomes that can be attributed to the particular intervention - in this case, of Connexions. Connexions impact will chiefly be achieved through changes in the reasoning, resources and behaviour of young people. The task of this study is to try to identify patterns in which outcomes attributable to Connexions result from the interventions of the service with young people. Impact occurs when outcomes, whether intermediate or ultimate, are changed by the Connexions intervention. In other words, *what difference did the work of Connexions actually make to the outcomes for the young person?* Naturally in practice, it is not always possible to isolate the effect of the work of Connexions from that of its partners and this point is discussed further in later sections.

1.3.9 For this study, specific hypotheses informed the research, drawing on the insights of practitioners and linking these concepts to the empirical work of the evaluation and the analysis of findings. The vision statements and programme guidance of Connexions were also examined to gain an understanding of the thinking on which the service is based.

1.3.10 Realist Evaluation is theory driven, requiring the formulation of testable hypotheses and their investigation through a range of empirical techniques. It is developmental, iteratively seeking to increase the precision of its explanations through cyclical reformulation and the testing of more specific hypotheses.

1.3.11 Realist, theory-based evaluation seeks “enlightenment” (Weiss and Bucuvalas, 1980) rather than summative “pass/fail” verdicts on a programme. In other words, the end product becomes a better understanding of the stages and processes of the programme, which can inform policy makers and managers about the circumstances in which the provision will work most effectively. As Pawson puts it, “Evaluators should be able to proffer the following kind of advice: ‘remember A’, ‘beware of B’, ‘take care of C’, ‘D can result in both E and F’” (Pawson, 2003). Realist evaluation is therefore well suited to “unpacking the complex patterns of causation of particular outcomes” and as a result can offer practical insights about how a programme might be better focused and more effective.

1.4 Complexity

1.4.1 At the time of writing in 2004, Connexions is still a relatively new programme and its vision is extremely ambitious. It aims to provide advice and support to all young people in the age band 13 –19, in a service that is both universal and differentiated by need. It has introduced the role of the Personal Advisers, who are intended not to work in isolation but to demonstrate “joined up working” in relationship to other professionals dealing with young people. Not only do PAs respond to the general advice and guidance needs of all young people in the cohort but they also offer more intensive support to young people assessed as being particularly “at risk”. Moreover they are expected to “broker” additional support where it is needed and to advocate for the particular needs of groups of young people. Connexions aims to improve outcomes for young people in a climate of scarce resources and also to influence how other services respond to them. The judgements about how best to provide the service, how to deploy the staff and how to allocate the limited resources are endlessly complex.

1.4.2 The issues facing the evaluator are equally complex. In a programme as large and intricate as Connexions, operating in a multiplicity of social and institutional contexts, there will be a wide range of effects within and beyond the outcome parameters Connexions has set for itself. It follows that there are sharp choices about where to focus research. It is not possible to explore all facets of a multi-site, multi-agency, multi-objective programme. Some means of providing a focus is required.

1.4.3 The appendices offer detailed accounts of how priorities for this evaluation were determined. The study deals with the impact of the Connexions Service. It has concentrated mainly on the Connexions process, the deployment of Personal Advisers and the nature of their relationships with young people in order to find out how intended impact occurs and how it can be maximised. Given the necessity of selecting priorities for research attention, rather less emphasis was placed on the impact of Connexions on other agencies through advocacy or brokerage. This has naturally left a never ending chain of further questions that might be studied and wider contexts that had to be left unexplored but it has generated substantial insight around what we believe are some of the key areas of operation for Connexions and indeed is of relevance to any other services or groups of agencies wishing to improve life chances and outcomes for young people.

Section 2 - The nature of impact

2.1 A basic realist theory of Connexions impact

2.1.1 The purpose of this section is to define what we mean by “impact”, to describe how Connexions works to achieve impact and to illustrate that process mainly from the point of view of the young people involved. In realist terms, as discussed earlier, the basic theory is that Connexions impact will be achieved through changes in the reasoning and resources of young people, which in turn influence their behaviour in ways that will enhance their educability and employability.

2.1.2 When Connexions makes interventions in the lives of young people the subsequent changes in reasoning, resources or behaviour may be a consequence of the Connexions intervention. If they are, Connexions has achieved impact. Of course, the changes may have happened anyway because of other things affecting the young person and be nothing to do with Connexions, in which case there is no Connexions impact.

2.1.3 To begin to explain Connexions impact, then, we need to do three different things. First, we need to be able to say that there was a change. Second, we need to be able to say that it arose out of the Connexions intervention. Third, we need to be able to say what Connexions did that resulted in the change. This discussion is focused around the question of what Connexions does and how this leads to change.

2.1.4 What Connexions does is intervene in the lives of young people in different ways, both generally in the universal provision in schools and through targeted provision. In making these interventions, Connexions uses what can be called programme components - these include the methods of working with young people, such as individual or group work, and what is offered to the young people, such as information, advice, guidance, activities, counselling, and so on. However, these components in themselves cannot bring about changed outcomes. They need, in some way, to work on the young people. There needs to be a *mechanism* by which change is brought about.

2.1.5 The principal way in which programme components are brought to bear on young people is through the interventions of PAs - this is the approach to operationalising them. However, this still does not constitute a mechanism. PAs and young people have to interact for the programme components to begin to work. *This interaction is the central mechanism of Connexions.* It is through this interaction, and subsequent interactions with the PA or others, that changes in reasoning, resources and behaviour can be generated and Connexions can make a difference for young people. But it is not the programme itself or its components that work, it is the choices and capacities they present which the young people may or may not take up - this is what “working” means for Connexions.

2.1.6 We are looking here primarily at the work of Connexions staff as a source of impact but there are clearly wider structural issues at work as well. The capacities of young people and their own resources, at the input end of the model, will be affected by factors such as social class, academic ability, gender or ethnicity. The pattern of destinations also depends on economic factors and the nature of provision such as the profile of the labour market or the training available. These are inevitably unevenly distributed and affect what young people can achieve. The allocation of grant to the Partnerships is based on formulae, which include some of these factors, and policy guidance demonstrates an expectation that the distribution of resources, such as staff time or activity programmes in Connexions will reflect the needs of priority groups (DfES, 2001a and 2001b).

2.1.7 No social programme always achieves impact. Mechanisms do not always work, they are not always activated. Connexions interventions are no exception. So another important task in explaining impact lies in understanding what activates or prevents the activation of the key mechanism of Connexions and this is where context needs to be considered. Connexions works in different contexts, which facilitate or impede the activation of mechanisms, and those *relevant* contexts, which affect the operation of the mechanisms, need to form part of the model.

2.1.8 This means that even a basic model of impact has several components - PAs, young people, the interaction between them, the programme components and the support they offer, relevant contexts, the passage of time and the outcomes for the young people. It is in relation to these elements that impact will be considered.

2.2 The nature of the impact of Connexions

2.2.1 There is evidence from the national performance figures of the Connexions Service, which suggests that it is meeting its principal aim of reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET. At the end of March 2004, 7.8 per cent of 16 – 18 year-olds known to Connexions were reported to be NEET. The proportion of young people who are NEET is somewhat understated because of the high proportion of young people recorded as “situation not known”. When the figures are adjusted to allow for this, the proportion who were NEET had fallen from 9.2 per cent in March 2003 to 8.8 per cent at the same point in 2004 (SCYPG, March 2004).

2.2.2 This is confirmed by the National Audit Office report on the Connexions Service (NAO, 2004), which concluded that Connexions is on course to meet its quantified objective of reducing the proportion of young people aged 16 – 18 by 10 per cent between November 2002 and November 2004. The average fall in the rate by November 2003 was eight per cent for Phase 1 and 2 Partnerships in that period, and three per cent overall when the Phase 3 Partnerships were included. There were considerable variations between Partnerships but the report points out that the only statistically significant factor found relating to these differences was that Partnerships with higher

numbers of NEET at their launch date achieved greater reductions by November 2003.

2.2.3 Other factors will also have had their effect on this picture, such as changes in the job market, the introduction in 2003 of E2E (Entry to Employment), the “widening participation” agenda in Further Education (DfES, 2004), and the number of young people found to be NEET who were not previously known to Connexions.

2.2.4 The nature of impact and how it comes about is, however, by no means self-evident. Most adult respondents in our study have struggled with the concept. They feel that reductions in the percentage of young people who are NEET only tell part of the story. PAs and managers then go on to list different areas of young people’s lives where Connexions may be making a difference. Very frequently they plead for a recognition of “soft” outcomes as well as “hard” or “final” outcomes and they argue that results are only truly seen from a long-term perspective. Intermediate steps may be required to make the ultimate outcomes possible.

2.2.5 These responses can sound as if impact might not really exist. We have, however, come to the view that this is not the case. Impact does occur: it can be seen but it is complex. Different types of outcome and different stages of the relationship need to be described and differentiated to understand the nature of Connexions impact.

2.2.6 The matrix at Figure 2.1 below represents how impact is achieved by interventions in several different areas of need in young people’s lives. It shows how outcomes may be immediate and very short-term, or intermediate, or differences in even longer-term destinations. For these purposes, outcomes are assumed to be positive and destination outcomes are taken as meaning those that meet the Connexions Service national targets, such as the aim of reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET by November 2004. Other outcomes which address the crosscutting targets shared by Connexions are also shown. This means that we can locate the qualitative accounts of change against these different types of outcome.

2.2.7 Some caveats should be noted in relation to the matrix.

- First, it explains impact in realist terms and constitutes what the research seeks to identify. In reality, such models are necessarily approximate. It is also often hard in practice to isolate precisely the effect that Connexions has had on the outcomes from the work of other agencies. National policy itself acknowledges this by setting crosscutting targets shared between the major partners.
- Second, interventions can include direct work by Connexions PAs but may also encompass interventions arranged through referral or brokerage. Although it can be difficult to identify, Connexions can have indirect impact.
- Third, progress is rarely linear or straightforward. Immediate or intermediate outcomes indicate distance travelled or progress made. Some outcomes may be seen “immediately”. Others may take a while

to show or may be produced over time working with the young person. Time is an important issue. Human relationships are frail, especially with vulnerable young people “at risk”. Impact does not usually come about easily and can be reversed or lost if the impetus is not sustained or there is no continuity of contact. Even so-called “final” destinations do not neatly fit reality either, as progress may be made and then lost. Employment or a place in continuing education also may be gained and subsequently lost for any number of reasons.

- Fourth, while the matrix lists main “areas of need”; this is not intended to imply a deficit model. All young people have these needs for basic awareness of services, good information, opportunities for personal development and support in dealing with the risks they will inevitably encounter. These are a part of the normal transition to adulthood.
- Fifth, the areas of need are not necessarily sequential. Personal development or dealing with immediate risks, for example, may in practice precede dealing with transition needs and arguably should do so. Very often the early work takes place around advice and guidance on options in school but this is not always the case and the ideal sequence will be one that is tailored for each individual.
- Sixth, the matrix portrays the types of outcomes that Connexions achieves with young people. It does not attempt to show the other types of change that Connexions may achieve in partnership work with other agencies, such as improved tracking of destinations, more clearly defined roles in work with particular risk groups or improvements in post-16 provision.

Figure 2.1 Connexions – The nature of impact

“Impact” can be defined as the difference in immediate and intermediate or destination outcomes, attributable to Connexions. Impact is achieved through changes in the reasoning, resources and behaviour of young people.

Area of need	Examples of interventions	Examples of potential immediate/intermediate outcomes	Potential destination outcomes
Awareness of what Connexions provides	Advertising and publicity. Road shows. Presentations in schools. Letters to young people and parents. May be part of first interviews with PAs.	Awareness of what Connexions offers. Changed expectations of what Connexions offers. Awareness of holistic provision. Peer referrals. First contact with PA. Decision to renew or sustain contact.	
Post-16 transition needs	Information, advice and guidance. Identifying alternatives. Providing information to enable informed choices to be made. Giving support and encouragement. Providing experiences to assist choices e.g. work experience. Arranging alternatives and practical support to take them up e.g. EMA or travel costs.	Informed choices made, appropriate to readiness for decision-making, ability and needs. Improved choices made on the basis of sample experiences. Take up of provision due to improved financial or practical support made available.	Take up of: Higher Education place. Further Education place. Placement with Training Provider. First employment. Volunteer work. i.e. EET at school leaving stage.

All interventions may be undertaken directly by Connexions staff or indirectly by referral or brokerage.

Connexions – The nature of impact (cont'd.)

“Impact” can be defined as the difference in immediate and intermediate or destination outcomes, attributable to Connexions. Impact is achieved through changes in the reasoning, resources and behaviour of young people.

Area of need	Examples of interventions	Examples of potential immediate/intermediate outcomes	Potential destination outcomes
Personal development	Establishing and building a trusting relationship. Support, information, advice and guidance. Counselling. Group activities. New or challenging experiences: e.g. residentials, arts programmes, adventurous activities, work experience, volunteering. Team working and problem solving activities. Citizenship, youth empowerment and participation programmes.	Sustained relationship. Increased self-esteem, self-worth, self-confidence and self-awareness. Improved ability to ‘cope’ and start to make post-16 choices. Improvements in self-possession (sense of self, ownership and control of own attributes or capacities.) Increased self-capacity (such as ability to reflect, work with others, handle information, take responsibility, deal with authority or play a part in community life.) Increased employability. Improved attendance, motivation and learning skills. Increased level of decision-making skills.	Take up and continuity of education, training, volunteering or employment. Other outcomes relating to crosscutting targets could include: Improved achievement in education. Increased qualifications: e.g. at GCSE or NVQ Level 2. Truancy decreasing or stopping.

All interventions may be undertaken directly by Connexions staff or indirectly by referral or brokerage.

Connexions – The nature of impact (cont'd.)

“Impact” can be defined as the difference in immediate and intermediate or destination outcomes, attributable to Connexions. Impact is achieved through changes in the reasoning, resources and behaviour of young people.

Area of need	Examples of interventions	Examples of potential immediate/ intermediate outcomes	Potential destination outcomes
Risk conditions and life circumstances	Listening to presenting issues and specific needs. Finding solutions to urgent or crisis needs, e.g. homelessness. Identifying underlying needs, e.g. drug addiction or family conflict. Agreeing action steps to deal with underlying needs, e.g. counselling, treatment. Mediation or advocacy with other adults and agencies. Identifying specialist help and support.	Maintaining stability and avoiding deterioration of circumstances. Immediate containment of safety or child protection issues. Crisis issues solved and basic needs met. Presenting needs resolved and ready to make post-16 choices. Working to an agreed action plan. Take up of help and support. Use of information resources provided. Motivated and working to resolve underlying issues. Using specialist service(s) to aid progress and personal development.	Remaining EET because crisis is resolved. Other outcomes relating to crosscutting targets could include: Being drug free. Avoiding teenage pregnancy. Ceasing offending behaviour.

All interventions may be undertaken directly by Connexions staff or indirectly by referral or brokerage.

2.3 Defining and describing impact types

2.3.1 Connexions intended impact is about making a difference to young people's lives. This section identifies and illustrates four main types of impact which connect to the eventual outcomes Connexions is trying to achieve. For some young people, those with the greatest or most complex needs, impact will be needed across all these areas for the goals of Connexions to be achieved. For other young people, probably the majority, work on personal development and risk factors may not be needed. In these cases, intervention and impact at other levels may be all that is required, though it should be noted that needs may change at any point.

2.3.2 The first type of impact arises very early in the Connexions process. There is **a need for young people to be aware of the service and the full range of what it offers, in order to use it to best advantage.** A positive grasp of its holistic nature will make a real difference to the sorts of issues a young person will raise with the PA and to their readiness to resume contact when problems occur. Young people may also encourage their peers to use the service. Issues about how Connexions is marketed and presented are critical to these outcomes, which form a pre-requisite to a wider impact on other areas of need.

2.3.3 For many young people, awareness is dominated by the careers interview provision and presentations in schools and the perception that Connexions provides *"information about courses and jobs."* For others, however, publicity or a personal encounter brings a changed expectation.

► For one young man in E2E provision, understanding about the service was developing. *"Connexions are there to talk to people about life problems like drugs, alcohol etc. It's also like a job centre. They assess you and give you job applications that suit you. I didn't know what to expect but then saw the building in town. At first I thought it was like Alcoholics Anonymous!"*

► A 17 year-old young woman described how she had not known what to expect. *"Connexions offers support and advice if you need it and help and reassurance. If you have any enquiries or if you need someone to talk to. Before I met them, I didn't know what it would be but I thought it was good what I got. I do find them very helpful."*

► Another young person, who had been bullied at school and had once run away from home after arguments with her parents, had met with the PA in school over a range of needs and her view of the service now reflected this holistic approach. *"Connexions helps young people, it makes things easy to cope with. Makes life easier to digest, puts things in perspective and generally helps with most other things too."*

2.3.4 The very early contacts, even a first meeting, can also determine whether or not the young person will ever voluntarily use the service again. Returning as a service user represents a form of impact, as without it Connexions cannot address any of the other areas of need. In simple terms, if

there is no contact, there can be no impact: the establishment of some form of relationship is a necessary condition for impact. Even a “virtual” relationship where the young person obtains information from Connexions Direct or other web-based service constitutes a certain form of relationship. Trust building is crucial from the earliest stages of the Connexions process and this point is underlined many times in this study.

2.3.5 The decision to sustain contact operates differently for different young people depending on the depth of relationship they want and develop with the PA. For some young people, the PA quite quickly becomes “a friend” and they have used phrases like “I can tell him everything,” or “She makes me laugh, she looks after me,” or even “She’s probably the only person I could ever talk to.” For others, Connexions is seen as a service for young people and not personalised in the same way. The crucial issue is that the early contact needs to bring young people to the point of seeing Connexions as a viable source of support.

► For one young man who self-referred, for instance, there was no perceived need to remain in regular contact as a training placement had been arranged and he was now “sorted”, but Connexions was logged as a source of potential support, “I’ll see them the same as now. I’ll go and see them if I have any problems.”

► Karen was 17 and living in a hostel. She had previously been homeless and misused substances. Due to unstable living conditions, she had left school in Year 11 without sitting her GCSEs. She was not in education, employment or training and currently claimed Jobseeker’s Allowance. She used Connexions to look for jobs and has regular contact with her PA and other Connexions workers. She felt that Connexions had increased her self-confidence and helped her see her future more positively. This can be seen as the first steps in a change in reasoning. It is also clear from her comments that PAs had created a climate of acceptance and trust from the start, which had resulted in regular sustained contact.

I: Looking back over everything you have done with the workers at Connexions, what has made the biggest difference, in terms of how you feel personally in terms of self-confidence?...

R: Going to Connexions has made me feel a lot more confident in myself because you can be yourself in front of them Advisers; you don’t have to put on a posh accent or you don’t have to dress nice; you don’t have to lie to them; you can tell them the truth and they’ll understand; they won’t judge you. They boost your self-confidence. They make you look at your future: they like drill it into your head that your future is important. You can’t just sit around and be lazy and do nothing. Well you can but it won’t get you nowhere in life. Things like that. I’ve found them very, very, very helpful.

2.3.6 The point is, however, more graphically illustrated by those young people who reported their decision not to continue contact because their first encounter had been a bad experience.

► Julie, who was 16, typifies this group. She lived at home with her mother and her 10 month-old daughter. She had only had one meeting with Connexions in Year 11. She was pregnant at the time. Her experience of that contact was that it concentrated on careers advice at the expense of her other needs. After the first interview, Julie had not sought any further contact nor heard anything from Connexions

“It wasn't much help to be honest. They told my friend she could do things at college that she is not going to get the qualifications for. So that doesn't help. They try to get you to have a career, get you into doing something. I thought they'd help me more than what they did. They kept saying they didn't know about this and that so ...people my age can't be bothered.

She wrote down that I was pregnant and said not to make a big deal about it but I said, 'You have to make a big deal about it, my life is going to change'... and she said 'You could still go to sixth form.' but where is my baby going to go... and she didn't have any idea really...”

2.3.7 The second type of impact contributes to meeting **the post-16 transition needs of young people**. The term “transition needs” can be misleading, for it can be argued that all needs are transition needs of one type or another. In this context, the term “transition needs” is being used to identify those areas of need connected with the approach of the end of compulsory schooling and the need for decisions to be made about the next steps in life - mainly post-16 choices about further education, training or employment.

2.3.8 Traditionally, this area has been seen as a need for information, advice and guidance about the various alternatives available and what may be required in relation to each. Essentially, the range of choices available to the young person is identified and help given in deciding which way forward is the best for that young person. In some cases, PAs arrange practical assistance to take up the options, such as Education Maintenance Allowance or travel costs. Although the principal focus is on identifying alternatives, and providing information to enable informed choices to be made, some support and encouragement is available for those young people who need it. The personal touch has always formed part of this work with young people.

2.3.9 Here the immediate and intermediate changes in outcome would usually concern increased ability to make informed decisions and enhanced ability to take up provision. The destination outcomes would include all forms of take up of education, training and employment.

► Phil was 17. He lived with his grandmother until he was seven, after which he moved around a variety of foster homes in different towns, and he now lived in a Housing Association flat. He left school with only two GCSEs, which were not the ones he needed to follow his ambition of being an electrician. He first heard about Connexions in Year 9 at school, and in Year 11 became a Peer Mentor, which he enjoyed. The first time the interviewers spoke to him, he told them that this might be a possible alternative career if his plans did not work out. Through his Connexions PA, he had managed to get a place with a

training provider to take Maths and Physics GCSEs, which he needed for a college place to train to be an electrician. He thought that if he had not had a PA he might have become a labourer. His PA was very helpful in finding the college placement and he thought that Connexions could “*really get things sorted out*” for him because they are a big organisation. He was trying to get a PA for his friend, whom he described as lazy. He said that Connexions would give his friend “*a kick up the arse to get a college placement*”.

When interviewed a few months later, he was still attending his training provider regularly. He was now focusing mainly on youth work but also on gaining some football coaching skills and he had paid part-time coaching work. He had gained an array of certificates, including some for literacy, numeracy, computing and first-aid. In spite of having given up his original idea of becoming an electrician he was engaged and optimistic about his future.

► Leroy undertook three separate placements as part of E2E training arranged by Connexions (construction, working in a gym and working in a garage). He felt most comfortable at the garage, had made friends there and had kept his placement for six months. As a result, he was starting work-based training. He was to spend four days a week at the garage and one at college to work towards NVQ levels 1 to 3 (National Vocational Qualifications). The possibility of trying different work situations and choosing what he was happiest with had helped him to make an improved choice.

► A group of young people at college in one Partnership area were working towards AS and A levels despite previous school exclusions. In their cases, the intervention of their PA had been crucial to keep them motivated to stay at college and also to help them through the applications for income support and emergency benefits to help bridge the gap. In their case, receiving EMA was not only a facilitator to attending college but rather, attending college was what made the difference between living on £44 per week or £74 (taking account of EMA). In their own terms, life would be very difficult without EMA. There was a clear change in their resource position that not only made the destination outcome possible but also made their living conditions sustainable.

R: Yes, he (the Connexions PA) helped me get income support. It took six weeks for it to come through and it was Christmas ... he got some other thing for me to help me survive until it came through....

I: How much is that? [income support]

R: £44 a week. Now I have EMA too. Without the EMA it is a bit of a struggle, like on holidays because I have to pay rent here.

I: How much do you pay?

R: £7 a week for rent, but I also have to pay for the TV licence.

2.3.10 The third type of impact contributes to **personal development**. This area of impact is often seen in terms of feelings of self-esteem, self-worth, and self-confidence, and the contribution these make to how young people see themselves and relate to others. These are affective dimensions to impact. They are important areas, but current thinking about personal

development extends beyond these concerns into the area of self-management (Goleman, 1998), including the development of *self-possession* and *self-capacity*. The former focuses around developing a sense of self, having ownership and control of various attributes and capacities and how they are used. The latter focuses around recognising and extending the capacities themselves. These capacities include such elements as developing the ability to reflect, working in teams, handling information, dealing with authority and contributing to the community. They can connect very closely to the development of reasoning about choices in young people's lives and how those choices are both seen and exercised.

2.3.11 Our interviews have shown that PAs working with those most at risk tend to feel strongly about personal development as being a necessary precursor to the step into employment or continued learning for many young people. As one PA explained about a client, *"He had certain little mini steps he had to achieve before he could get to the main one."* Several Partnerships were exploring ways of recognising and measuring such outcomes, for instance with the Rickter Scale (Stead, 2000 and Hutchinson and Stead, 2003). Others were working on personal development models, enabling "then" and "now" comparisons and the tracing of a biography of a young person, or other locally devised systems based on APIR, and this particular PA was participating in one of these developments. This innovative work based around the APIR system demonstrated that appropriate adaptations can be found to make early assessment more sensitive to the needs of young people at risk.

"Distance travelled is difficult to measure because you can't measure self confidence very easily. You can write on a soft outcome sheet 'I moved my young person on oodles.' but oodles doesn't measure anything. It doesn't equate to anything: you've got to have a baseline to be able to see where the young person is now to see if it's a positive movement forwards or negative movement backwards. So initially you've got to assess the young person to find out where they are now. The other tricky thing about assessment is that it's only a snapshot of a young person at that particular moment in time and you've got levels of bias as well so ... when you reassess on review to measure the difference and distance travelled you've got to use the same questions and approach, so you have got consistency, so you can say that it was done this way then and this way now."

2.3.12 Personal development has never been the responsibility of any single service and it is a prime example of an area where Connexions often works in partnership with other agencies such as the Youth Service. Whether from direct intervention or referral, the different dimensions of personal development are important and legitimate types of impact for Connexions. For some young people they will be *necessary* steps in the process of the work to enhance resources and reasoning capacities. For others, much less will be needed in this area. These types of impact can be seen as desirable for young people in their own right, but they need also to be seen as important aspects of the Connexions process.

► Michelle was 17. She had spent some time with foster parents after arguing with her mother all the time. She hated school and left because she was being bullied, partly because of her weight. She had also suffered from anxiety attacks since primary school. She heard about Connexions via her social worker, and went along with the expectation that they would help her find some work. Her PA put her in touch with a Radio Station, where she undertook work experience, and also arranged activities so that she could meet new people. She now felt much more confident in herself and felt that, had she not had a Personal Adviser she *“would still be stuck in the house, getting fatter and more bored.”* Now she said, *“I know that I’m not the only one that has these problems and stuff.”*

2.3.13 Achieving impact on personal development may often be a response to the *presenting* needs of young people. However, these presenting needs will often have their roots in identifiable underlying personal, social and economic circumstances, which can be found in **the life situations and risk conditions of the young people**. These *underlying* needs are the fourth area to which Connexions may need to respond, and in relation to which it will need to achieve impact.

2.3.14 The idea of the “underlying causes” of youth deprivation and disaffection introduces a large and complicated array of factors that condition the efficacy of the work of Connexions. No attempt will be made to define and delimit all the potential limiting factors, except by pragmatic reference to the risk conditions and living circumstances of the young people in our sample. The pertinent factors include, therefore, such things as family stability, health conditions and disabilities, care responsibilities, and so on. Connexions will frequently respond in these areas in partnership with other statutory and voluntary services and indeed often cannot meet the need without their contribution.

2.3.15 Work at this level may need to extend over lengthy periods of time and be resource intensive. It may also be important to deal with emerging risks to maintain a stable situation so that young people do not drop out education and inadvertently become NEET. This introduces some important considerations for Connexions. To what extent do underlying needs require a response first, or perhaps later, in order to achieve impact of other types? If impact is required, how can interventions best be made – for example, through the brokerage role of PAs or through the intervention of specialist services? What prospect of success might there be if the underlying needs and background conditions are not addressed? These issues can be illustrated by some of the young people interviewed in this study

► At age 17, Cathy was living in a flat shared with two friends, provided by the Foyer. She stopped attending school when she was excluded in Year 9 for taking drugs. At the same time she had other issues – her grandmother died and she had *“personal problems”*. She had had several different PAs from Connexions. With one of these PAs, she had had a particularly good relationship, and together they had made an action plan which involved getting off drugs (crack and heroin) and turning up for college every day. At

the time of our interview in March, she was still clean and remembered that her PA visited her the day after she came off drugs and also used to phone her mother regularly to check on her progress. She quite liked her current PA and planned to ask her about the possibility of moving out of the Foyer, where there were lots of other drug users, making life difficult for her.

I: Can you remember the sort of things that they talked to you about at that time?

R: Lynn was my first PA, 'cos I come off – no it couldn't have been Pat, it was another lady. But when I come off drugs in January, Pat come and see me the day after I come off them and like she was coming to my house every day, like just to see how I was going – stuff like that...

I: If you couldn't see Pat in the future, how would that make you feel, like if you couldn't see her again, if she wasn't there to talk to, would that make a big difference?

R: Yeah, it would . . .

I: Of the things that you've talked to your PAs about, what would you say was the most important thing to you?

R: Drugs.

I: It has been the drugs, has it? And have they been quite helpful with that?

R: Yeah, they have. Pat done a lot for me, when I was coming off drugs making sure I didn't go back on 'em, making sure I was staying away from 'em, making sure I that I made new friends, she got me coming in here...stuff like that.

► Jason was a 15 year-old attending mainstream education. He was taking eleven GCSEs, all predicted A-C grades. He had behavioural problems in school and had had a fixed-term exclusion. He was referred to a school based PA by a teacher in Year 10 to help with these problems. He saw the PA during school time for about an hour per week and it soon emerged that he had problems at home. After discussion, they agreed that the PA would speak with his parents. This led to some kind of resolution of the problems at home. The PA also discussed anger management with him and liaised with teachers to allow him to leave the classroom when he was angry and to go to a separate room to calm down. Jason also said that he had been in trouble with the police for anti-social behaviour, assault and criminal damage but had never been charged.

I: What's made the greatest difference to you, compared to before and now?

R: With school? I can talk to people without losing it and going off on one and smashing stuff up or setting stuff on fire. I've done that before as well in a science lesson ... Actually Paula [my PA] has changed me a lot. I couldn't talk to people nice: I used to shout and tell them to shut their mouth and walk off and stuff like that. She's helped me get all my coursework done She gave me advice on how to do it and stuff like that and really how to get on with people.

I: OK, so you found that all very useful.

R: Yeah...

I: What do you think might have happened if you didn't have Paula as your Connexions worker at all? If you didn't get the help Paula has given you?

R: I'd still be the same. I probably wouldn't be in school now; I'd probably have been sat home doing nothing all day.

I: You say you wouldn't be in school is that because you wouldn't have gone or...

R: I'd have been kicked out.

This example can be seen as addressing both risk conditions and life circumstances. It seems that by addressing the problems at home and the issue of anger management at school and by taking agreed action on them, the PA had been able to help with underlying needs and had played a part in keeping Jason in mainstream education.

► Russell was 12 years old and lived with his mother and stepfather and his much older brother and sister. He had ADHD (Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder) and ODD (Oppositional Defiant Disorder) and took Ritalin for these conditions. Everybody knew that he took medication, he said, and other pupils used to call him names, saying that he had *"a bad brain"*. The bullies had now got bored with this and moved on to somebody else and Russell felt that he had no particular problems at school, though he had played truant a couple of times and once been suspended. When his Mum and Dad *"got on his nerves"*, he used to run away from home but no longer did so because he now had his Connexions PA to talk to. She usually took him to a café to talk about once a fortnight and he felt that he could talk to her about anything. She had made a list of incentives, such as trips to MacDonalds, to help him make a point of taking his Ritalin tablets and to behave at home. He said that if he had not had a PA, *"I would start to get my hair off – chuck stuff – so it is good to have someone to talk to about this."*

2.3.16 We have tried to illustrate in this section some of background conditions that will inevitably blunt the effectiveness of Connexions and some of the initial steps that a PA may take in getting to grips with them. It is beyond the scope of this analysis to consider the full array of problems that confront vulnerable young people but this analysis shows the importance of these halting first and intermediate steps. In the words of Philip et al in relation to mentoring, (Philip et al, 2004: p. 49), "Structural constraints continue to exert a powerful influence on the trajectories of such vulnerable young people: the influence of poverty, early childhood difficulties and inequalities of health ... Such issues cannot be offset solely by good relationships with adults or anyone else. The development of a mentoring relationship, however, may enhance the capacity to reflect on these issues and to better be able to negotiate services and support in certain circumstances."

2.4 Achieving the different types of impact: changing reasoning, resources and behaviour

2.4.1 For Connexions to have impact, changes in any or all of these areas need to converge on changes in the reasoning and resources of the young people. This may be achieved through addressing personal development, and underlying causes, or it may be achieved by more specific interventions with

young people with relatively narrowly defined needs. Whichever way it is approached, changes in the reasoning and resources of young people will represent a key area of impact for Connexions. This is the means by which behaviour changes. Connexions itself, and its partner organisations, can be seen as additional resources for young people in this process.

2.4.2 For Connexions to be said to have impact, the behaviour of young people needs to change in areas of their life related to the aims of Connexions. This might include, for example, a young person deciding to start attending school again after persistent absence, moving away from a truanting peer group, or taking steps to maintain better relationships with teachers. Changes in the behaviour of young people, arising from changes in their reasoning and resources, are the best measure of impact. However, for these changes to be making a contribution to Connexions overall goals they must be seen as related to its agreed aims. This means that Connexions aims in respect of education, training and employment must form part of the impact analysis.

2.5 Strategic aims and their relation to impact

2.5.1 For impact to contribute to the main aims of Connexions it must, at some level, contribute to the educability or employability of young people. The former refers to their relationship with schooling and further education: the latter to their relationship with training and employment. In addition, for those at risk of becoming NEET the impact needs to contribute to them achieving a different destination within education, employment or training. Establishing the link between identified impact at other levels and the contribution to educability or employability needs to be seen, therefore, as part of the task of impact analysis.

2.5.2 Impact can be seen in the context of different strategic intentions, which have been seen to inform the work of Connexions in relation to educability and employability. These can broadly be set out as the purposes of prevention, recovery and re-integration, drawing on the typology offered by Morgan and Hughes in their examination of the New Start programme (Morgan and Hughes, 1999). Similar purposes can be seen for the Connexions Service. It aims to achieve intermediate impact through *prevention* measures. These are aimed at stopping young people from becoming disaffected in the first place by identifying those who are most at risk of “dropping out” and taking action that engages young people, families and communities as a whole. Connexions can also take *recovery* measures aimed at bringing young people back into learning in provision specifically designed to meet their needs. Finally, Connexions can take *re-integration* measures aimed at developing approaches to support young people in the transition into mainstream learning or training. These three different purposes are all addressed to the ultimate destinations of young people, but they may all use development through intermediate outcomes as one of the ways of achieving them. The different types of impact may all be needed for any one of these purposes. Personal development, for example, may need to form

part of a preventive approach, or a recovery approach. The areas of impact are more likely to be related to the type and level of identified risk.

2.5.3 It should be apparent from the preceding discussion that impacts cannot be viewed as isolated and independent outcomes in particular parts of young people's lives. They are more usefully seen in terms of means end relationships. For example, working with an isolated young person can be the means by which sufficient self-confidence is created for the young person to achieve the end of taking part in a youth group. Attending the youth group then becomes the means by which the young person becomes sufficiently confident to achieve the end of re-entering school. The school is then the means by which the young person can move towards post-16 opportunities, and so on. These chains are never complete - young people themselves are eventually able to take more responsibility for managing and directing them. Connexions may need to travel some way with them. It can then step back as the young person becomes more independent and self-directed, though it is important to point out that this also is a matter of judgement – as some of the examples in Section 6 show, if young people are not ready, withdrawal can create a damaging sense of abandonment.

2.5.4 There are difficulties in unpacking how impact comes about, partly because the main source of information for this study has been the young people themselves, who may not be clear about what influenced them or who may not want to concede that they needed help. Notwithstanding these difficulties, it can be seen that we are able to report impact with some confidence. Our findings on the patterns of that impact are described later in the report.

2.5.5 In addition to defining impact and being able to identify its types and patterns, we need also to explain it. One key part of the explanatory process has already been identified earlier as the changes in the reasoning and resources of young people arising from the Connexions intervention. However, identifying these changes is only part of the task. We need also to explain the circumstances and processes by they are promoted or inhibited. These are all very large areas so our focus will be guided by the specific hypotheses developed for investigation within each aspect. These are considered at Section 7 in relation to the stages of the Connexions process, which is described more fully in the next section.

Section 3 – The Connexions process

3.1 A complex process

3.1.1 As outlined in the first section, Connexions is a relatively new service coming into existence in the first areas in 2001. It has ambitious aims to improve direct support to all young people (13 to 19) as well as to broker improved services and advocate for the needs of young people. To achieve the range of interventions needed and to seek to avoid the splintering that has been characteristic of services to young people, it is required to work through a network of partnership relationships on a sub-regional basis. The decisions required on resource allocation are every bit as complicated as the service design problems. Connexions is a complex service thrust into an already complex system of services to young people.

3.1.2 This study has sought to unpack the service process itself and to understand the issues involved in rolling out such a far ranging new provision. These issues are important to the understanding of how impact is generated. This section therefore explores the underlying assumptions of the service, its aims, implementation problems and service issues, and the stages in its process of working with young people in order to create the backcloth for the later more detailed discussion of the findings of this study.

3.2 Underlying assumptions behind the Connexions process

3.2.1 The early vision and policy documents begin to put flesh on the basic assumptions which underlie Connexions and which are reflected in the later implementation. It may be helpful to attempt to spell these out as they illuminate the reasoning behind the process as it now appears. In addition such assumptions go some way towards being “programme theories”, which can help to inform the hypotheses for research.

3.2.2 In our view the early thinking from government put forward certain central arguments and assumptions that:

- In order to create a flourishing economy, a flexible workforce is required and the “skills gap” facing employers must be narrowed by making sure more young people stay on in education and training.
- Too many young people (nine per cent of the age group at the time in 1999) are outside education, training and work for long periods after leaving school.
- Non-participation in education, training or employment at 16 –18 is a major predictor of unemployment in adult life.
- Those least likely to participate in learning and work are also most likely to suffer social exclusion and multiple deprivation.
- There is a considerable social and economic cost to this problem.
- The particular “risks” or predictors of such non-participation can be specified from existing research.

- Many young people progress to higher education or employment successfully but others need more support and structure in the transition.
- Young people, especially those at risk of non-participation, benefit from having an adult whom they can trust, who can build up the rapport to facilitate their development and who is aware of the skills required in the labour market.
- A network of Personal Advisers could provide this role, with a single point of contact for each young person and an overview of all that young person's ambitions and needs.
- Services to young people are fragmented and overlapping: the routes for those who have not achieved well in school by the age of 16 are the most confused.
- A new multi-skill support service could be brought together to work with all young people, giving priority to those most at risk of underachievement and disaffection, and "joining up" the efforts of different youth related services to meet their needs.
- Tracking should be put in place so that fewer young people can drop out of the system without the knowledge of the relevant agencies and so that support can be effectively targeted.
- Flexible funding arrangements and allowances are required to encourage young people to participate in learning and training.

3.2.3 These arguments were voiced mainly in the White Paper "Learning to Succeed" (DfEE, 1999) and in the reports of the Social Exclusion Unit, particularly in *Bridging the Gap* (SEU, 1999) They were embodied in legislation in the Learning and Skills Act 2000, which created a framework to allow the establishment of a support service for all 13 -19 year-olds, including the duty to consult other agencies in a local area about provision for young people, the development of a comprehensive record system on young people's involvement in education and training and arrangements for OFSTED inspection of support services and careers provision. The duties for schools to provide pupils with a programme of careers education and information in Years 9 – 11, embodied in the Education Act 1997, remained unchanged.

3.3 The aims and targets of the Connexions Service

3.3.1 The aims of the Connexions Service which reflect these assumptions form the targets and the desired outcomes against which impact is assessed. They influence the organisational arrangements of Connexions, deployment of resources and monitoring systems. The design of the Connexions process is intended to enable Connexions staff to achieve these aims and meet the overall targets, in partnership with others.

3.3.2 The case for change in the way support services to young people were delivered identified insufficient preparation for post-16 options, a lack of support for 16 to 18 year-olds outside full-time education and a lack of coordination in services, leaving a bewildering range of agencies that might potentially help a young person. The publication *Youth Support Services for*

13-19 year olds: A Vision for 2006 closely reflects this background stating that Connexions “is a radical new approach to guiding and supporting young people through their teenage years... 173,000 young people between 16 and 18 (around nine per cent of the age group) are neither in learning nor in work. Institutional fragmentation, insufficient preparation for post 16 choices and the lack of a comprehensive support service outside full-time education were contributing to this problem. Connexions is designed to end the fragmentation of services for 13-19 year olds. It aims to give all young people the best start in life, helping them to become well-rounded adults who are committed to learning and development and contribute to economic prosperity.” (CSNU, 2002: p.4: figures quoted for NEET relate to 2001.)

3.3.3 The document lists the **key priorities of the service** as reducing the number of 16-18 year olds not in education, training or employment and contributing to reducing youth crime and improving young people’s behaviour; better outcomes for young people from black and minority ethnic groups; improving the effectiveness of services in meeting young people’s needs; and supporting cross-government targets for children and young people.

3.3.4 All these targets are reflected in performance measures for each Partnership and monitored by the Supporting Children and Young People Group (and formerly by the Connexions Service National Unit) at the Department for Education and Skills. The detailed targets for 2004/5 are listed for reference at Appendix E.

3.4 Implementation issues

3.4.1 The approach of the new Connexions Service was set out in *Connexions – The Best Start in Life for Every Young Person* in February 2000 (DfES, 2000). It was implemented in a phased programme, with the first twelve Partnerships “going live” in April 2001 and a further three in September 2001, collectively known as the Phase 1 Partnerships. As from April 2003, all 47 Connexions Partnerships were up and running.

3.4.2 The task of rolling out such a major development brought enormous challenges.

- Connexions originally linked up the work of six central government departments and by November 2001 had a vision statement signed by eight government Ministers.
- It also aspires to “joining up” the work of local agencies, together with the voluntary and private sector to support young people.
- On occasion this can involve setting up multi-agency teams or contributing staff to such work.
- Each sub-region has had to negotiate its model of delivery and align key partners. In some cases, structures have also been changed within this period.
- Legal entities have had to be created or adapted to hold the contract for delivery.

- Staff from the former careers companies have either transferred to the new companies with new roles or taken up modified tasks in sub-contracted companies.
- The new role of a Personal Adviser has been introduced, promising access to a Personal Adviser for all young people with differentiated and integrated support according to need.
- New staff have been recruited for management and Personal Adviser roles. Shortages and turnover still cause difficulties.
- Other partners have contributed resources or seconded staff into the Connexions companies and Connexions Partnerships have also seconded some of their staff to other agencies.
- Training has been designed nationally, with introductory courses through to the Personal Adviser Diploma. The Partnerships are tasked with the upskilling and training of staff, including staff from voluntary and statutory partners, in a continuing process.
- A system for assessment of a young person's needs (APIR – Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review) has been designed and training of staff in its use is taking place on a rolling programme. The use of the APIR became mandatory from April 2004.
- Systems for information technology have required upgrading to process the database for identifying and tracking young people in the age cohort and to deliver the monitoring of targets. A comprehensive information system, the Connexions Customer Information System (CCIS) was progressively introduced from Autumn 2002 onwards. Enabling access for partner organisations or PAs in community settings remains a particular challenge.
- Protocols on partnership working, roles and boundaries and the sharing of information had to be devised.
- Structures and systems have to be created to make the participation of young people in the planning and evaluation of the service a reality.
- Branding and publicity has been needed for the service as a whole and for each new Partnership.
- Connexions Direct, a telephone and web-based service, was launched as a pilot in a limited number of Partnerships in September 2001 and went “live” nationally in July 2004.

3.4.3 Even in Phase 1 Partnerships, these steps are not fully completed. The logistics of implementation are extremely demanding and made infinitely more complex by the necessity of changing attitudes and perceptions both of staff and the young people and communities they serve. Major changes of this type make enormous demands on staff at all levels and it can take several years for satisfactory strategic and operational effectiveness to be achieved. The differential progress on implementation across different areas and issues, and other characteristics associated with the transformation of major public services to create Connexions, will all be influencing the work process discussed below.

3.5 Service issues

3.5.1 The Personal Advisers who were interviewed in the initial stages of the research produced a huge range of relevant factors that could inhibit or enhance impact ranging from micro issues such as the physical arrangements in their offices through to macro level matters such as the lack of suitable employment or transport systems. There were some issues echoed across the whole study. Universally, in different words, the staff stress the importance of the skills of the Personal Advisers in creating the right climate of relationships with young people, involving trust and respect, a steady reference point, a client focus and sufficient time for preventative work. The lack of time and shortage or high turnover of staffing were frequent themes, with several offering examples of extremely high caseloads or lack of sufficient time to get to grips with the young person's priority issues. There is clearly considerable ambivalence in the minds of PAs about the systems of categorising priority need. Many mentioned a lack of clarity over their own role as a PA. They could identify the importance of management in clarifying issues such as team structures and referral systems, publicity for the service and relationships with schools and other partners. Several expressed appreciation of having multi-agency teams from different disciplines, of the potential for "joining up" and of the generic training. Some felt that the understanding of other agencies of Connexions was poor or that it was viewed with suspicion or lacked credibility in the eyes of other professions. The determination to succeed, love of the work and sheer commitment was evident in many of the responses.

3.5.2 In the early months of 2003, the researchers also interviewed the Chief Executive of the (then) Connexions Service National Unit, the Deputy Chief Executive and a number of Divisional Managers or former managers from that senior level. The time afforded from busy schedules was very much appreciated and the interviews offered useful insight into the policy and implementation issues of the new service. CSNU managers stressed the same personal relationship issues as the PAs. They saw the role of the PAs as critical to success, with the most effective staff able to create trust, rapport and empathy, able to advocate for better provision and join up different agency interventions and bringing a range of skills and awareness in their tool box, such as a knowledge of drugs or housing issues. The concept of "*starting where young people are at*" was stressed, implying building from the young person's perspective and motivation, with a flexible and not pre-ordained response to need. Most respondents emphasised the crucial part of leadership and management in implementing the far-reaching changes in service, leading front-line staff and managing the relationships between relevant partners. The move to an integrated team of Personal Advisers, away from "specialist" and "universal" differentiation or other such terms, was largely seen as a function of management commitment to driving through the change to the desired holistic pattern of working.

3.5.3 Other factors perceived as very significant in creating an effective service included the training of staff and enthusiasm for the PA Diploma, the use of proper assessment methods through APIR, the involvement of the

Youth Service and the voluntary sector, the involvement of young people in planning and policy making and good use of outreach methods. These managers argued that Connexions is dependent on a package of appropriate benefits such as EMA being available and on the quality of provision available in the Partnership area, which is largely a Learning and Skills Council responsibility. They also made the point that the service needed time to achieve the huge culture change required.

3.5.4 It is clear that there is a vast range of service issues affecting the delivery of Connexions and the impact it is able to make. A selective summary of the main issues is offered here, drawn from Connexions literature and the interviews with PAs, managers and partner agencies. The issues are seen as typical and were raised in different ways in the majority of the Partnerships but will not be recognisable or applicable everywhere.

3.5.5 The necessity and enormity of culture change

3.5.5.1 As indicated above, the most senior managers at national level are acutely aware of the scale of change involved in rolling out the new service. At all levels of the local structures, this theme is repeated. The most significant elements of that conceptual shift are the moves to better coordination of responses to young people across all agencies, the effort to address the holistic needs of the young person and not simply the needs for careers advice and guidance, and the intention to target resources to those most at risk within a universal but differentiated provision.

3.5.5.2 Improving coordination and joining up responses is a long and difficult process. Structures have to be set up for liaison and negotiation at all levels from the Partnership and Local Management Committees down to individual schools or projects. Protocols have to be worked up. Other agencies have to be persuaded and solutions have to be found to practical problems, in a context where every agency and local authority department is facing multiple demands for partnership activity and joint planning.

3.5.5.3 The Connexions Service incorporated the budgets of the former Careers Services and most members of staff were transferred into the new organisations. The notion of addressing the range of young people's needs in a holistic way was grafted onto professionals with a tradition of expertise in advice and guidance, who had previously had a much narrower role. Other services were not directly incorporated (except in a small minority of Partnerships) but staff were either seconded to Connexions or expected to work cooperatively with the new organisation. The direction away from highly specific professional roles to the broader Personal Adviser role affected all who were involved with the new service directly or indirectly.

3.5.5.4 The Connexions concept is still developing and has already undergone definitional changes. The risk of labelling and stereotyping was recognised and the notion of a service for *all* young people was clearly embraced. The policy imperatives of reducing the NEET population and addressing the needs of those most at risk remained nevertheless. The

solution of a universal service differentiated by need emerged requiring new measures to assess “risk” and plan for the differentiated responses. The difficulties of embedding radical changes of this nature must not be underestimated: they will unavoidably affect the pattern of impact.

3.5.6 The contested understanding of the PA role

3.5.6.1 The Personal Adviser role is also still evolving. Even in the brief history of Connexions, it has been described in different ways in policy statements and it is hardly surprising if PAs themselves or the audiences for their work have several different understandings of their role.

3.5.6.2 Watts has usefully summarised the early development of the service (Watts, 2001) starting from the moves in 1997 to “refocus” the attention of the Careers Service towards social inclusion and targeting those who were “dropping out” of education and employment. This was closely followed by Bridging the Gap (SEU, 1999) indicating the formation of a single national agency to take the lead on youth support and the policy statement on the new Connexions Service that would operate primarily through Personal Advisers. At that stage the “new profession” of Personal Advisers was to be drawn from a range of other services and would provide the three levels of priority: intensive support, in depth guidance for those at risk of disengaging and information on careers, learning or employment at a minimal level of intervention. It was to be both a targeted and universal service, giving all young people access to a Personal Adviser. The concept of “youth broker” was also incorporated in the PA role – “a general practitioner who could access specialist help for young people where necessary” (Peck, 2004).

3.5.6.3 Despite the discussions about merging services, the only agency actually subsumed into Connexions was the Careers Service. Other agencies would contribute staff to a much lesser extent. The notion of a “new profession” was played down. The “refocusing agenda” had already made access to careers interviews more difficult for young people in school but now while the statutory duty to provide careers advice remained, the Careers Service as a visible agency had disappeared (Watts, 2001). Unsurprisingly, therefore, there are different interpretations and disputed territories around the duties of the PA in schools, especially in relation to careers advice and guidance and sensitivities around the relationship of the PA to other services.

3.5.6.4 These debates have been reflected in the consequent pattern of service arrangements. Some see Connexions as a **generalist service**, a first point of reference for all young people regardless of need, where PAs conduct an initial “triage” of young people and refer them to other services better equipped to deal with particular needs. As one PA put it *“Rather than an agency that has a specialism, it’s an agency where their specialism is an awareness of what’s around. An assessment of the individual and of the client’s needs and where best to refer them, where they can best get that kind of support.”*

3.5.6.5 Others take the notion of holistic provision to heart and see Connexions as an **all round service** that should deal with every need presented. Whereas in the past young people had to find their own way through the maze of services, this is now seen as “managed” by a Connexions PA who is best placed– in conjunction with the young person – to explore the whole spectrum of issues affecting this person’s life. As another member of staff expressed it, *“What makes Connexions different is embracing that ethos where Connexions offers advice across the range for anything.”*

3.5.6.6 A third group sees Connexions as providing two distinct types of service, the **professional careers guidance and the generic support** to young people at risk. Thus in one area in this research, the current situation recognises different skills in Connexions in the existence of two different teams. The *“PA-Education”* provides traditional careers advice mainly in schools but also in Connexions centres, while the *“PA-Community”* also has links with other agencies and outreach work and is seen as more adept at offering more intensive support to individuals with multiple needs.

3.5.6.7 These visions of the PA role materialise in different titles and patterns of delivery, with different terms abounding. PAs are divided on these issues and take different positions on “what the service is” and “what the service should be” very often according to a previous professional identity. Despite aspirations and, in some Partnerships, energetic efforts to move towards an integrated PA role, the vast majority of provision seen in this study has been of either a careers adviser role in schools or the generic role, coexisting alongside the careers role in the school or outside the school altogether.

3.5.7 Professional resistance

3.5.7.1 The advent of Connexions has disturbed professional identities and traditional boundaries of operation. Its vision and potential is the strength of Connexions, but also a point of tension, especially in its internal relations. It is unsurprising that the PAs and staff of other agencies contacted in this study expressed widely differing views about the nature of Connexions and its achievements. These were clearly influenced by their previous backgrounds and experiences. Some former careers advisers complained vigorously about their loss of professional identity and specialist knowledge, preventing them as they saw it from offering sound careers advice *“to those who want it”*. Many of those on whom the change of role was imposed found it hard to adjust. Some staff from the Youth Service, education welfare or social work also appeared negative, apparently resenting the intrusion of Connexions into their specialist areas or perceiving it as a waste of their skills or a loss of resources for their own service. Others we have met, of all professional backgrounds, have positively embraced the enlargement of their role and welcomed the chance to work more closely with other youth related agencies. There are enthusiasts and doubters on each side.

3.5.7.2 Data collection, tracking and targets also engender strong ambivalence. Targets are a particularly “hot issue”. Some staff object in principle to sharing information or responding to policy targets, particularly in

the voluntary sector and the Youth Service where the notions of worker “autonomy” and sector “independence” have long been a part of the traditional mix of values. Confidentiality is a major issue for staff who must win the trust of young people. Other staff feel that the target driven approach prevents a flexible response to need, denies a service to the well-adjusted and achieving majority of young people and fails to recognise the achievement of “soft targets” or small steps of achievement.

3.5.7.3 Lastly reorganisation has carried its usual penalties. There has been an enormous diversion from service delivery and the typical fall out in terms of early retirements or staff choosing to leave. The process of competition for posts leaves scars of resentment for some that take time to heal. Connexions is no exception to the rule that some staff will cope with these issues by a path of professional resistance. This study has encountered many forms of this opposition in **role distance** (“*This is not me but I have to do it.*”) or in a **refusal to accept management priorities**. In some cases, for example, APIR meets with resistance, with some staff arguing that it is intrusive or outside of their normal sphere of practice. We have also met cases of **system subversion**. This, for instance, may be a refusal to conform to the priority targets or it may be redefinition, where the PA recategorises the risk level to justify continuing work with the young person or to prove a point that even high achievers need attention. One PA explained to the researchers in informal conversation that many colleagues in the service had a very strong commitment to advice and guidance being available for *all* young people and that therefore, on occasion, they would classify young people into a P2 category so that they could continue to give them a service.

3.5.7.4 Any large organisation would produce similar patterns of behaviour. What is significant as a service issue for Connexions is that the scale of change means that professional recalcitrance will be high at this stage of implementation. It will affect how the service is portrayed to the outside world, how it relates to young people, and the impact it can achieve, though we have no means in this study of assessing the significance of these effects.

3.5.8 The pivotal position of schools

3.5.8.1 Connexions works with young people aged 13 onwards, who with few exceptions, should be at school. Intervention starts at Year 8 or Year 9 in school and the transitions at the point of leaving school are a key focus of the work. It is self-evident that the relationship with schools will be a major factor in the pattern of service but it has not been an easy area to negotiate. The relationship between the school and the specific Connexions office serving that school can have a major influence on the type of provision. This relationship may be determined by a number of factors such as a lack of understanding of the aims of Connexions, personal animosity, an anxiety to preserve the autonomy and reputation of the school, or a fear of “loss of service” for the average pupil in traditional careers guidance. In some cases, there will be a comfortable collusion between PAs who wish to see themselves as still being Careers Advisers and the wish of the school to retain that type of input.

3.5.8.2 The independence of professional advice and guidance may also be unwelcome. Some high-achieving schools for instance do not welcome independent Personal Advisers who might steer young people towards alternative provision and away from the 6th Form – A level path (Foskett et al, 2004). Others fear a negative effect from the interventions of Connexions on the image of the institution.

3.5.8.3 Connexions provision may overlap with other existing roles in school. Some PAs report a highly developed network of learning mentors in school who deal with the pastoral aspects of pupils' lives. In these cases, there is often an expectation that Connexions PAs will deal solely with careers and education decisions. In other schools, joint planning mechanisms have been set up that include the Connexions PA as an integral member of staff.

3.5.8.4 There will be a partnership agreement in place between virtually every school and the Connexions Service but the dynamic is still influenced by power relationships, which weigh in favour of the school. When agencies and institutions are defined by a specific constituency – in this case young people - their identity may require the protection afforded by acting as gatekeepers to this constituency. In many cases, where Connexions operates in a school, it does so on a “guest worker” basis with the school controlling the working conditions and access to young people. The school can open up access to its pupils for Connexions or restrict its influence in a myriad of ways, including the way Connexions is portrayed in school publicity, physical space allocated, or information shared between staff.

3.5.9 Management information and database issues

3.5.9.1 Information issues are touched on above in relation to the need to persuade staff to cooperate in entering up data. The CCIS system, or its local equivalent, may simply not be completed on a regular basis because it is not seen as a priority or because it is perceived as an intrusion into the client/worker relationship.

3.5.9.2 Practical infrastructure problems also affect the completion of database returns. The hardware and software and networking capability may not be fully available even in the former Careers Service offices but it certainly cannot be guaranteed in outlying bases in schools or youth projects. The outreach workers most likely to deal with those most at risk will correspondingly be least likely to have easy access to input data.

3.5.9.3 The very nature of the youth population affects accuracy. Young people are highly mobile and often unreliable in informing bureaucracies. Parents break up, for instance, or move house; telephone numbers change frequently; training and employment change with drop out or seasonal factors. Even the starting point may not be correct as much of the Connexions database will depend on importing school cohort information. Such intrinsic problems will mean that the database will not be as useful a tool for PAs in making contact as it might be. Monitoring information may not be correct and

it will be hard to use the technological route to professional exchange of information about clients. It should be noted that new initiatives to improve the quality of the databases and tracking capabilities are being developed in several of the Partnerships, and targets are now also set for reducing the number of young people recorded as “situation not known” in the national management information.

3.5.10 Assessment and the choice of priorities

3.5.10.1 The Connexions Service model implies a flexible response to need and consequent choices about resource allocation. The main tool for addressing these issues at macro level is the mapping process, where each Partnership maps major indicators of need across its area to inform decisions on priorities for resources. Core indicators such as school attainment or the NEET population are documented in this process and any trends such as a new asylum seeker population, for instance, should also be identified.

3.5.10.2 At individual level, the main instrument is the APIR system for the use of Personal Advisers launched in 2001. This is a comprehensive 18 factor framework, broadly similar to the Framework for Assessment of Children in Need and their Families (Department of Health, 2000) and closely relating to the ASSET model for young offenders (Youth Justice Board, 2000 and 2003). The framework spells out the responsibilities, where other agencies are involved or specific requirements apply such as young people identified as “children in need” under the Children Act 1989 or young people with a statement of SEN.

3.5.10.3 A tiered approach to assessment is suggested with simple progress checking for the vast majority of young people in the “universal” planning process, using the information from other organisations and school Progress Files, with guidance of career/learning/personal development choices. The use of APIR is indicated for one-to-one working with young people with specific problems and for addressing the needs of young people with multiple problems, who will probably require a multi-agency coordinated approach to planning appropriate interventions.

3.5.10.4 The introduction of APIR across the service from 2004 has made assessment somewhat more systematic. Nevertheless the service issues springing from the need for assessment and action planning are legion. The “universal” entry point depends itself on the assessments of other services and the sharing of information. Needs may simply not be spotted or may be disguised. Intervention is more likely to be sought at crisis point. To take one example, bullying in school is likely to be a significant factor in absence or non-achievement but the young person may not feel able to tell anyone, the school may wish to deny the problem or handle it themselves and the Personal Adviser may not be brought into the picture until well after “drop out” has occurred.

3.5.10.5 Within Connexions, the logistics of applying assessment are daunting. Many Personal Advisers have yet to receive the training in APIR.

Training courses may be restricted by resources or constrained by other requirements. Even if staff have the skills, where caseloads are high, the time required to undertake individual assessments does not stretch to cover the full caseload. And if the assessment is completed, the provision to meet the need, such as appropriate housing or drug treatment, is not always available in certain areas.

3.5.10.6 The results of assessment will also be constantly changing. In the very nature of adolescence, young people will move in and out of priority groups according to their changing circumstances and behaviour. Life for the most stable of primary school children becomes noticeably more turbulent in the teenage years. Physical and psychological changes bring risks. Other factors such as family break up or peer group activity will impinge. There may be drop out from learning or training provision. For the PA this means that assessment is not a once and for all activity. Categorisation may not stick. Questions arise about how often to review, how to ensure that progress is sustained and when to withdraw support.

3.5.10.7 To some extent, assessment will result in rationing. There is not an unlimited supply of Connexions resource. The objective of meeting need will always put a strain on a public service with fixed resources, such as social work, health services, education, or the emergency services. Connexions is only one of many such agencies. The specific issue for Connexions at this stage is that its assessment and resource allocation systems are still developing and being tested in practice while at the same time, the demands of branding and publicity are talking up the capacity of the service to deliver to *all* young people. Expectations of both its partners and the public have to be managed.

3.5.11 The power position of Personal Advisers

3.5.11.1 As touched on above, the Personal Adviser is unlikely to be able to meet all emerging needs of the young person themselves. Brokerage of provision and advocacy for the needs of young people are built into the role. The relative power position of Personal Advisers makes this function less straightforward than it might at first appear. Firstly, other agencies are often cynical about the Connexions model or working practice and may take this out on the hapless PA seeking their involvement. Secondly, the PA is often in a low status position in the host organisation, especially in schools. Thirdly, the necessary provision may not exist and the PA is poorly placed to influence the wider negotiations about commissioning. Post-16 provision planning will for instance be the responsibility of the local Learning and Skills Council (LSC). In some instances the working relationship between Connexions and the LSC will still be developing and even where there is constructive joint working, the message from the PA has somehow to reach the highest levels of the organisation.

3.5.11.2 Again these issues in partnership working are not unique, but in a relatively new service consolidation is still required at every level. PAs need good management support, clear protocols with other services and effective

leadership from the highest level of the organisation. Even then they are critically dependent on the range of provision available. The consistent message from practitioners is that *“it takes time.”*

3.5.11.3 This section has outlined some of the issues facing Connexions – the quandaries and obstacles to be faced in the process of consolidation. This is not, however, a paper about managing change in large organisations. The relevance to this study lies in the manner and extent to which the process of implementation and the service issues of such complex partnership arrangements affect the operation of the Connexions process and its impact.

3.6 Describing the Connexions process

3.6.1 Complex programmes such as Connexions involve many players in different roles over time. They are not a single interaction between the service provider and the client. This is especially true for a service such as Connexions, which is intended to offer support to a whole population in an extended age band, both through direct provision and partner agencies. Setting out these relationships as a process model is a useful means of clarifying how the programme is intended to work.

3.6.2 Figure 3.1 below represents an abstract and idealised model of the Connexions process. It is our diagrammatic representation of the stages of the process and how the sequence can be most useful. It does not necessarily represent what actually happens in individual cases.

3.6.3 The arrows follow the progress of a young person through the sequence over time. The sequence would apply whether the young person was a high achiever with no problems, who might return later, or a high-risk young person, who is immediately picked up and needs intensive attention over a long period. The division in how the service responds to the different priority groups is made in the model at stages 4 and 6. The dotted arrows show where functions such as marketing may influence the process or where a variation in sequence may be adopted in response to need.

3.6.4 In reality, we recognise that the sequence is much less linear and stages are more inter-related. It is impossible to represent all dynamics between different stages and the potential criss-crossing arrows as young people are reassessed or referred, without making the diagram just too confusing. For example, trust building probably ideally occurs throughout the process. It might even be described as an energy flow that keeps the whole process moving. For simplicity, however, it is only specifically shown at two stages. Similarly referrals may go back and forth between multiple agencies at several points in the process, as new interventions are negotiated. A model or flow-chart cannot reflect this complexity of practice but it can still be a useful explanatory device.

3.6.5 The diagram has been tested out by our researchers with a number of practitioners in Connexions. The response has been that the sequence is recognisable and that while practice may vary and individuals may experience

the sequence differently, it is a helpful portrayal of the way in which Connexions works with young people.

3.6.6 In understanding the diagram, it is helpful to note that “protocols” or Service Level Agreements may apply at any stage of the sequence. They are used to clarify the responsibilities and division of roles between the different agencies at various stages of the process. “Protocols” are therefore not shown with the sequential arrows but as a “box” or component that is a distinct but integral part of the process that may be applied at any point.

3.6.7 The issue of deciding a key worker has been shown in the protocols “box”, though some would argue that it could equally be shown as a stage in the sequence. This does not occur solely at any one particular stage but may be necessary at any point where several agencies become involved with the young person. It may well form part of a protocol. Wherever it is shown, there is no doubt that it is an essential decision in the Connexions process where a young person has several professionals involved in their case.

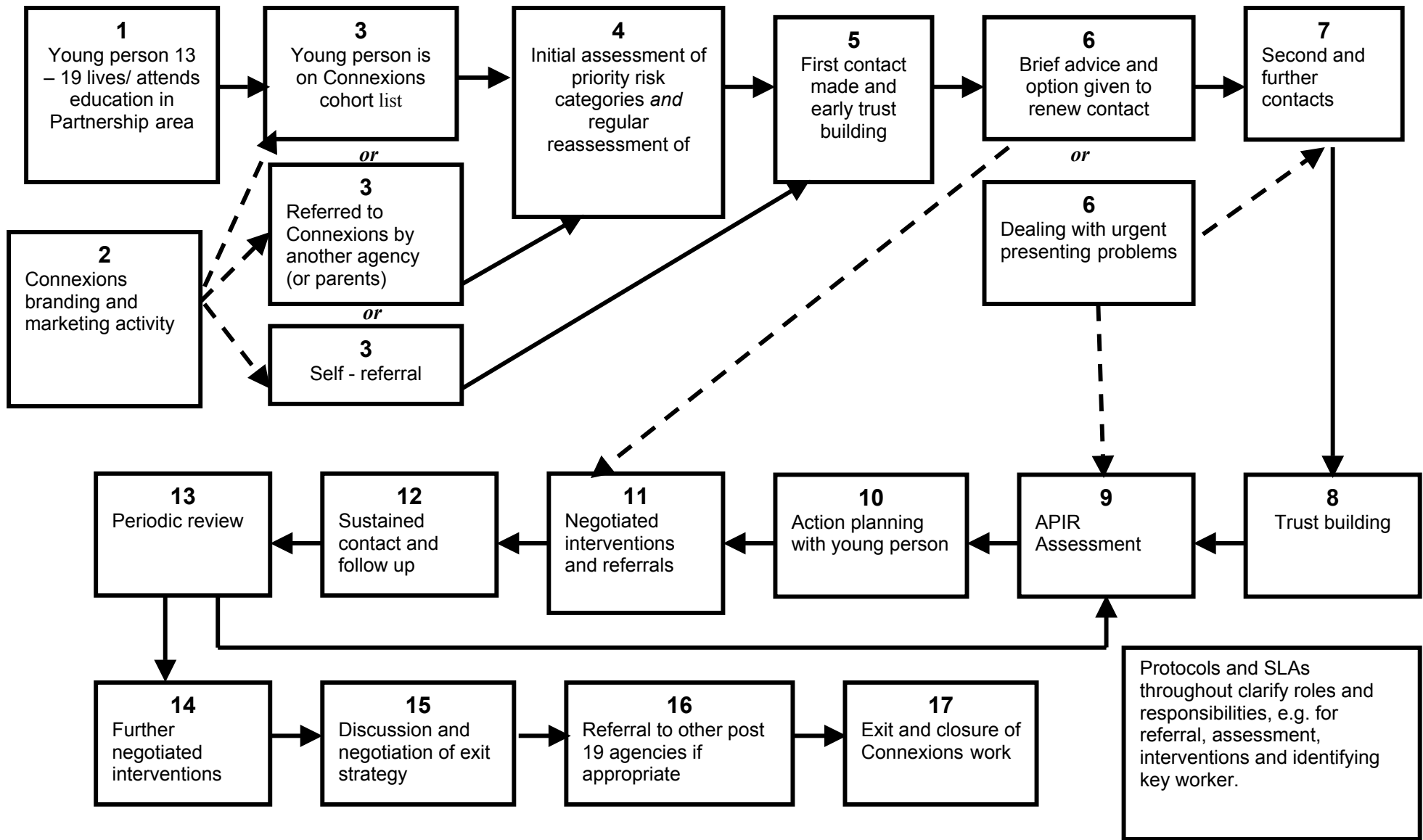
3.6.8 Some of the comments received relate to the practicalities of implementing the process. For instance some PAs classify referrals from parents, carers or friends as “self-referrals”. Others are instructed to use assessment as early as possible in the sequence or prefer to use APIR itself as a tool in trust building (hence the dotted line between stages 6 and 9). Some Connexions Services bring in other assessment devices as a less onerous method of assessing early on. Some would use referral to another agency as soon as possible, say at stage 6, if that meant that the school would allow the young person to remain in school rather than be excluded. Such issues do not invalidate the model but simply demonstrate that an idealised sequence of a programme is brought alive by the actions and understandings of practitioners. The process model can help us to understand what is most effective and what is not working in a programme as operated by the practitioners.

3.6.9 This model also now enables us to list the hypotheses for purposes of clarity and organisation under the main stages of the process. These are:

- Pre-contact and identification (stages 1,2,3, and 4)
- First contact and interaction (stages 5 and 6)
- Second and further contacts, including their frequency, regularity, continuity and intensity (stage 7 onwards)
- Assessment and action-planning (stages 9 and 10)
- Interventions and referrals (stages 11 and 14)
- Follow up and review (stages 4, 12 and 13)
- Exit strategy and closure (stages 15, 16 and 17)
- Protocols and service agreements (potentially applying to any stage)

The hypotheses for the second phase of the study are arranged under these stages in Section 7, which describes the main findings of the research.

Figure 3.1 The Connexions Process – A Model



3.7 The notion of “impact leakage”

3.7.1 It has become clear in this research that at every step of the Connexions sequence, there are leakages and blockages that ultimately reduce the potential impact of the process. This we have termed “impact leakage”. In other words, the sequence designed to produce impact is rather like a leaky pipe, with potential loss of impact at every stage. While all analogies have their limitations, this one has helped to explain what is happening where it is plain that young people have had a less than satisfactory experience of the service.

3.7.2 Some preliminary examples may be helpful here. For instance, at stage 2, the cohort list passed from the school or Local Education Authority (LEA) to Connexions may miss out the names of some young people. They will therefore not be contacted or followed up unless they self-refer or become known through another agency or a parent or other member of the public. Connexions cannot make a difference to their outcomes because there is no contact. Taking another example, the interviews with young people, which are further explored in Section 6, have shown that at the contact stages 5 or 7 if presenting problems are not listened to and responded to, young people will often cease contact or lose confidence in the PA.

3.7.3 Conversely if the sequence is followed thoroughly, outcomes may be enhanced. It should be stressed that while there is often “leakage”, this should not always be assumed. A young person can also benefit from the provision and make a positive exit from Connexions, with no specific current needs and good support networks in place.

3.8 Some examples of “impact leakage”

3.8.1 It would clearly be wrong to underestimate the difficulty of contacting and establishing relationships with young people who face serious and often multiple risks in their lives. By definition, this group will be amongst the hardest to reach and will have needs for intensive attention that are rarely fully matched by resources. However, pointers have emerged from this study about how and why non take up or blockages in service flow occur. A few key issues and illustrations are set out at this stage, while the overall analysis and conclusions about the process are further discussed at Sections 7 and 8.

3.8.2 Firstly, **a failure can occur** (especially at stages 1, 2 and 5 of the process) **to communicate fully the nature of the Connexions Service**. The absorption of the former Careers Service into Connexions and attitudinal issues on the part of staff and agency partners mean that there is still a widespread perception that the Connexions Service simply provides advice about careers and options for school leavers. Young people whose minds are occupied by more immediate practical problems, such as homelessness, pregnancy or substance misuse will not generally have the energy or motivation to deal with such deferred issues. Others, who could solve a current problem given support, simply do not grasp that Connexions could

provide such assistance. The breakdown is not only in the information routes but also in the message itself. The branding of Connexions as a holistic service can be overwhelmed by other identifiers, some deliberately conveyed and others inadvertent.

3.8.3 Many young people are confused about sources of support and different agency roles but the study has encountered some young people who appear genuinely blank about the Connexions Service, maintaining consistently that they have not heard about it before. It is also possible that they have had some information but retained so little that they are inevitably non-users, failing to take up service. Marketing at stage 2 and subsequently has been completely ineffective for them.

► One young woman aged 15 had a history of truanting, general school resistance and significant conflict with the teachers. She said she had heard about Connexions for the first time through being invited for interview. This young person talked to friends and family for support and advice and the school-based Personal Adviser had apparently never contacted her.

I: Can you remember when you first heard about Connexions?

R: Yeah...this morning.

I: And can you tell me what happened this morning?

R: [The teacher] came to me this morning, and he said that I'd be coming here [to be interviewed] now....

I: So, you've never seen a lady called [PA name] who works in here [the Connexions lounge]?

R: No.

I: What do you think it does?

R: To do with careers and what you do after school?

3.8.4 Secondly, **breaks in information flow to young people or to and from other agencies** can arise from problems in systems, structures or partnership working. This may be information directed to young people at risk whose lives are disturbed and chaotic and who will rarely pick up information about service provision of their own accord in advance of crisis or emergency. Mechanisms are needed for the regular and systematic provision of information to those venues and agencies most likely to be in contact with these young people. In our process diagram, this would mainly affect stages 3 and 4, where this type of pro-active outreach can generate referrals of young people who have not been identified on the cohort list or who have not been picked up as at risk.

3.8.5 Breaks in information flow may also occur between partner agencies over issues such as clarifying assessment or referral, interventions available, or key worker roles (such as at stages 9, 11 or 16). This would include, for instance, the information coming in from schools at stage 4, when risk is originally estimated. Often the rule of thumb is to identify any young person unlikely to achieve five GCSE passes at grades A – C as likely to need a check on vocational routes, employment prospects and the ability to fulfil potential. Academic performance is often the arbiter. This may fall short of

picking up young people needing support for some other reason such as bullying or having caring responsibilities outside school. It would also include the information, or lack of it, that comes with a referral, where poor communication often results in repeated assessments on the same young person by different agencies.

3.8.6 Thirdly, **perceptions of quality deficits in the service provision can turn young people away from using the service.** The study has encountered examples of high quality service on the part of Personal Advisers, especially in the most intensive work with at risk young people. There are also examples of perceived lapses in service quality. These experiences fuel not only loss of contact or rejection of service on the part of the individual but can also become a part of other young people's perceptions through the grapevine of the peer group. A single "bad experience" may be elevated to myth status. Such negative experience can cause impact leakage at any point in the Connexions process but it often comes into play where advice is inaccurate (at stage 6) or where promised interventions fail to materialise (at stage 11). With at risk young people, higher intensity interventions, appropriately geared to the particular needs and circumstances of the individuals, will normally be needed. If contact is lost after a poor experience early on, intensive intervention is ruled out. Impact can even move in a negative rather than in a positive direction.

► A young woman with complex social problems was interviewed at an E2E training provider. She was 17. Here a perceived lack of confidentiality and a stereotyping approach were leading to rejection of the Personal Adviser role, despite earlier good experiences and some degree of practical help.

I: Can you remember when you first heard about [Connexions]?

R: Two years ago...my Social Worker told me about it.... Then my ma got in contact with them, and I had a PA [PA 1], I can't remember her name, then I had Val [PA 2], and then she left, and now I've got a new one, Carol [PA 3], but I don't like her.

I: Why don't you like her?

R: 'Cos she's been tellin' people that I've been taking drugs, and I ain't.

I: Oh, she hasn't been keeping things confidential, then?

R: No, no, and she called me an Ethiopian as well. I seen her down town the other day, me and my friend, and I seen her in the street and said, 'Alright, Carol.' and she said, 'Oh, you've lost weight, you look like an Ethiopian.'

I: Oh, so you're not getting on with that lady then?

R: She's alright, she got me £75 when I first moved in to help me start off, and she gets me, like, bus passes. She's alright in that way, like, helping me; but I don't think the confidential bit –she don't keep it to herself...Val, my old PA, I used to like her a lot...she was like, one of me, if you know what I mean.

► Another young woman was interviewed through a carers' support group. She had heard about Connexions in a Year 11 school assembly and had a one-to one interview with a PA shortly afterwards. She was now studying Social Care at college. She rejected Connexions support because she blamed the PA for bad advice and for steering her in one direction.

She described what was said at the assembly. *“Because you will be leaving school soon, you might need some help in deciding where you want to go. ... So because I was a bit confused, I decided Yeah, I’d give the Connexions Adviser a go. To be quite honest with you, it was a waste of time ... I told her the grades I was due to get ... She seemed to push me towards college.”*

The interviewee maintained that the PA had got all the details wrong about the grades expected in GCSEs and ought to have advised her to stay on at sixth form college to do A levels rather than to move to further education. She then said she had refused to go back to Connexions, having thought to herself, *“What’s the point, she’s got it wrong once.”* She told the interviewer that she had expected to be given a number of options but felt that the PA focussed on the college option only. Her view of Connexions was that if a young person asked about one option such as a modern apprenticeship, then that was the advice that was supplied, rather than a considered opinion on a broader scale outlining other potential options available.

3.8.7 Fourthly, it seems likely that a crucial leakage point is at **the follow up stages** (such as 12 and 14), when outcomes are diminished because PAs do not follow up young people in training or college and young people simply drop out or complete the training and then just become NEET once more. There is national evidence of the high percentage of young people dropping out from Further Education (see for example, Crequer, 2002; Davies, 1997; Martinez, 2001 and Hunt, 2004). As further explored in Sections 5 and 6 below, Connexions may be reducing the numbers of young people who are NEET by placing them in training but may be at risk of allowing a cycle of placement and drop out to continue.

3.8.8 The Connexions process is, as we have already argued, highly complex. In historical terms, it is only one year old in full implementation across the whole country. “The pipe” is still “dripping” in several places. It would be dangerous to assume that attention to process will ever make it work perfectly. Some leakage is uncontrollable. Loss of impact can arise from the unpredictable actions of young people for whom risk has become a way of life, adults who are prepared to exploit them and an unforgiving labour market. There are other agencies playing into the process and the responsibilities of parents and the young people themselves should not be ignored. However, close attention to the sequence, how it is intended to work and what actually happens, can be used to effect improvements. This is about the circumstances in which a programme works best and scrutiny of the process and delivery issues that illuminate that question.

3.9 Restating the conceptual framework

3.9.1 In these first three sections, we have described the purpose of the study and its application of a realist approach, the nature of impact and the Connexions process and its implementation.

3.9.2 We have now set out the main concepts of the study:

- **The Connexions process** and the main stages in its sequence;
- The **context** for that process as including the social conditions in the Partnership area, organisational arrangements for delivery and the personal context the young person brings to their interaction with the service;
- The **interaction between the Personal Adviser and the young person** as the main locus for activating Connexions change mechanisms;
- The concept of **triggers** which activate or de-activate the mechanisms of a programme;
- **Impact**, defined as the difference in outcomes brought about by the interventions of Connexions;
- Some **types of outcomes**, including immediate, intermediate and final outcomes in various areas such as personal development, post-16 transition and dealing with immediate crisis or risk conditions;
- The notion of **“impact leakage”**, meaning the ways in which impact is lost in the Connexions process for structural, organisational or service quality reasons.

3.9.3 In the sections that follow, the findings of the study are further explored using these concepts in relation to the perceptions of young people of their contact with the service, the settings in which Connexions works and the models for working with young people at risk.

Section 4 – Findings from the first phase

4.1 Characteristics of the sample

4.1.1 For brevity, the detailed tables on characteristics of the Phase 1 sample are shown at Appendix G. Tables G1 to G3 in that Appendix show the age, gender and ethnicity of the sample. About two-thirds of the sample (379) are of compulsory school age, mainly aged 14 to 16 years. The other third (194) are mainly 17 years old with most of the remainder being 18 to 23. They are roughly evenly split between young men and young women. 87 per cent of the sample (500) describe themselves as either white British or are classified into another white category. The remainder of the sample includes several different ethnic census categories. The sample, therefore, is predominantly of white UK origin young people. It may be noted that sampling was purposive, intended to build samples around particular characteristics such as age, NEET status and risk conditions, and therefore it is not strictly representative of wider populations or sub-populations.

4.1.2 Table G4 at Appendix G shows the sample distribution according to year in education. As the age distribution would suggest, the majority of those still in school are in Years 10 and 11. About 15 per cent of the sample (83) are not in education. From Table G5 the distribution according to EET status can be seen. About 50 per cent (290) are still in school with about 13 per cent in further education and a small number in employment. In addition, about 20 per cent of the sample are in training, and about 13 per cent are NEET.

4.2 Identifying risk in the sample

4.2.1 An examination of the risk conditions in the sample, which this research has been able to identify, was carried out. The identified risk conditions were focussed as far as possible on those aspects of young people's lives known to be positively related to the risk of becoming NEET, or various intermediate risk related outcomes on the way. All are risk conditions to which Connexions is charged with responding in order to help alleviate the risk and diminish the detrimental effect on the lives of the young people.

4.2.2 A broad approach to testing the extent to which the sample is focussed on risk conditions is to consider how far it corresponds to the characteristics which would be expected of a random sample drawn from the same population. The closer it is to a random sample of the whole population, the less the focus on risk. The lists of P1 and P2 young people, and the sample derived from them, should be non-random: they should display higher levels of risk than those found in the population at large. If they do not, then some process is intervening which is diminishing the focus on risk. This general test cannot be applied to these data in any precise way, but it is an informative perspective from which to view the sample. In the following discussion, some risk dimensions are simply summarised and reference is also made in passing to certain sample characteristics but details are not provided if this does not form part of the later analysis.

4.2.3 For example, there are sub-groups within the sample where there is either one adult or no identifiable adult present, or where one or both parents are unemployed or suffering long term sickness. However, these sub-groups are not separately identified for analysis in terms of risk. The risk analysis is focussed on the condition of the young people and this would largely reflect any influence of background or family circumstances.

4.3 Risk and schooling

4.3.1 Table G6 in Appendix G shows the responses to a general question about difficulties at school. About one third of the young people did not identify any major difficulties with school. Behaviour related difficulties were identified by 25 per cent (143), and conflict and relationships each by about 6 per cent (36). If this is seen as a cluster of related difficulties then a total of just over 37 per cent (215) had some difficulties in this area.

4.3.2 There is one other main cluster, which is related to ability and performance in school. About 8 per cent of the sample (48) identified some form of learning difficulty or disability, about 7 per cent (37) identified themselves as having special educational needs (SEN), and a further group of over 10 per cent (58) said they had literacy and/or numeracy difficulties. In total, this cluster amounted to around 25 per cent of the sample (143). In a more specific question, detailed in Table G7, around 15 per cent of the sample (83) had at some time been statemented for SEN. There is, then, a pattern of widespread educational risk apparent in this sample.

4.3.3 Further specific questions were asked about bullying, truancy and suspension or exclusion (see Tables G8 to G10). Excluding those where no information was obtained, about 36 per cent of the sample (174) have experience of being bullied. In this study, bullying has been found to be an important factor in the creation of resistance to attending school. It is a relatively widespread experience and it contributes to the pattern of school difficulties seen above, and to the truancy and suspension patterns seen below.

4.3.4 Tables G9 and G10 provide details about truancy and suspension or exclusion. It can be seen that about 56 per cent of the sample (322) had truanted in some form, and about 20 per cent (112) had engaged in significant truancy which kept them out of school for days or even weeks at a time. Just over 28 per cent had been suspended at some point (161) and about 15 per cent per cent had been permanently excluded (84).

4.3.5 There is clear and compelling evidence of quite widespread difficulties in relation to schooling amongst this sample of young people. These difficulties constitute significant risk factors and they are among the core concerns of the Connexions Service. In this sense the sample appears far from random, and the Connexions lists appear to be correctly identifying young people who would be categorised as either P1 or P2 and in need of

intermediate or intensive support. Later analysis will reveal the extent to which the service was able to respond.

4.4 Assessed risk dimensions

4.4.1 To arrive at an overall assessment of risk in the sample, the level of risk in relation to school and education was supplemented by assessed risk across a number of other dimensions. Some additional detail is given first about substance misuse and offending, and then the proportions of young people assessed as at risk along ten dimensions of risk are summarised in Table 1.

4.4.2 Experience of alcohol is, as might be expected, relatively widespread. A third of the sample (191) say they have used alcohol either by themselves or with friends. About 27 per cent (153) of the sample report experience of using illegal drugs, and a further eight per cent say their friends have used drugs but they have not done so themselves. These results, in themselves, cannot be taken as evidence of enhanced risk. The extent to which they did constitute a risk for some young people is assessed below.

4.4.3 About 22 per cent (128) of the young people have been in trouble with the police, a further 12 per cent (69) have been in trouble along with their friends, making about a third of the sample overall who have been in trouble with the police. In addition, about 10 per cent (53) say their friends have been in trouble but not themselves. In total, over 43 per cent of our sample said they, and/or their friends, have experienced trouble with the police. The extent to which this was assessed as a significant risk factor, which could lead to social exclusion and NEET status on leaving school, is discussed below.

Table 1
Proportion of young people assessed as at risk on ten risk dimensions

	Per cent
At risk of underachieving	30.9
With learning difficulties and disabilities, or assessed as SEN	16.8
With experience of resisting school	29.5
With emotional or behavioural problems	30.5
With experience of substance misuse	14.5
With experience of offending	20.4
With a disability or health problems	11.0
Who are looked after or homeless	11.3
With caring responsibilities	15.9
Who are asylum seekers or refugees	1.6

4.4.4 Looking across the ten dimensions, the highest risk levels can mostly be seen in the dimensions, which reflect the earlier conclusions about risk related to schooling. About 30 per cent of the young people (175) were categorised as having emotional or behavioural problems. This has been a difficult category to define; it includes young people with diagnosed conditions such as Asperger's Syndrome or Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and others who report conditions such as depression with or without

medication or whose behaviour has led to particular measures at school. Around 17 to 30 per cent were seen as having difficulties with learning, likely to underachieve, or resisting school. Other than these school-related risk factors, the general pattern is for all the remaining risk levels bar one to fall within a range between about 11 per cent and 20 per cent. The one exception is a small group of asylum seekers.

4.4.5 Two bands of risk can therefore be seen. One band, which might be called the general risk weighting, affecting perhaps between 11 and 20 per cent of the sample, runs across a fairly diverse range of risk factors. At higher levels, comprising around 30 per cent of the sample, is what might be called the specific or acute risk weighting, highly focussed around the relationship of young people to their schooling and education. The only exception to this higher level of educational risk is the risk dimension relating to learning difficulties, which applied to just under 17 per cent of the sample.

4.4.6 The risk factors have been examined above in terms of their prevalence across the sample as a whole. It is also important to know to what extent they cluster within individual cases within the sample. The risks may be distributed fairly evenly across the individuals in the sample, or there may be a number of very high-risk young people with multiple risks combined with a much wider group with single risk factors, or relatively low risk.

4.5 The distribution of risk within the sample

4.5.1 The following examination of the distribution of risk in the sample is intended to identify the extent to which risk is concentrated or dispersed among the young people. Connexions responses may need to differ according to different risk patterns, for instance if most of the risk is concentrated in one part of the sample, representing a cluster of very high risk young people, rather than spread more evenly over the whole sample, representing a larger group of low to medium risk young people.

4.5.2 There are some limitations to this examination of risk distribution. Risk is simply classified as present or absent, and all risks are weighted equally. Bearing these limitations in mind, four different approaches to assessing the distribution of risk within the sample were made using different combinations of risk conditions. Two are reported below in Tables 2 and 3, and two additional analyses are shown in Tables G11 and G12.

4.5.3 The first approach was to examine the distribution of risks across the ten risk dimensions. This can be seen in Table 2 which shows the proportions of young people with no identifiable risk conditions, one or two conditions and so on. From this table it can be seen that 25 per cent of the sample (143) had no identifiable risk condition on these ten dimensions, and 27.7 per cent had one. A further 30.6 per cent had two or three conditions present, and finally a smaller group of around 17 per cent had four, five, or more.

Table 2
Distribution of risk in sample of young people: ten risk dimensions

Number of risks present	Frequency	Per cent
None	143	25.0
1	159	27.7
2	107	18.7
3	68	11.9
4	47	8.2
5 plus	49	8.6
Total	573	100.0

4.5.4 The second approach then focused on the four of the ten dimensions of risk which are directly education related, namely emotional and behavioural problems; LDD/SEN, underachievement; and school resistance. These are shown in Table 3. On this, the narrowest approach to risk, around 40 per cent of the sample had no assessed risks, around 27 per cent had one risk, and about 30 per cent had two or more.

Table 3
Distribution of risk in sample of young people: four educational risk dimensions

Number of risks present	Frequency	Per cent
None	237	41.4
1	155	27.1
2	100	17.5
3	62	10.8
4	19	3.3
Total	573	100.0

4.5.5 The other two approaches introduced additional risks to the ten assessed risk factors. The details of these can be seen in Tables G11 and G12.

4.5.6 There is no straightforward way of deciding which approach has the greatest validity. However, by looking across all the approaches two general conclusions can be drawn about the distribution of risk in the sample.

4.5.7 The first conclusion is that there appears to be a fairly widespread distribution of risk throughout this sample. The second is that there is some consistency to the patterning of this distribution across all the approaches. There is a cluster of young people having relatively low scores on risk, a cluster with intermediate scores, and a further cluster of higher risk scores. The size of these clusters varies with the different approaches. However, a general characterisation taken from an average of all the measures identifies a low risk score cluster of young people of approximately 40 per cent, a

middle range also accounting for around 40 per cent, and a high score cluster of around 20 per cent.

4.5.8 The extent of risk seen in the sample confirms that it is weighted towards P1 and P2 young people. The DfES estimate is that around 10 per cent of the age cohort (13 to 19) is at risk and very broadly this is the level of risk, which might be expected from a random sample. The risk levels in this sample exceed this by a considerable margin. In this sense the sample appears to be non-random, and there is some indication that the samples provided by the Partnerships were weighted as requested towards the at risk group.

4.5.9 However, although the Connexions lists and other means of contacting young people seem to have weighted the sample towards the at risk young people, whether that weighting is sufficient is more difficult to identify. Within the sample there is a group of young people having apparently low levels of risk. It is also very difficult to identify where the boundaries between P1 and P2 young people might lie. The exact composition of the sample, and the sample lists will be a product of different processes within the Connexions Partnerships, and especially the processes by which young people are assessed.

4.6 Young people and contact with Connexions

4.6.1 From Table 4 below it can be seen that about 40 per cent of the young people (228) identified themselves as currently not having a PA. This does not mean they had never seen a PA, only that they did not currently identify themselves as having one. So, in their terms, they were not currently receiving Connexions support.

Table 4
Proportion of young people reporting current contact with a Personal Adviser

	Frequency	Per cent
Yes	294	51.3
No	228	39.8
Don't know	48	8.4
Not asked	3	0.5
Total	573	100.0

4.6.2 Table 5 below sets out the estimated level of support based on the number of times young people said they had seen a PA. Excluding those young people who did not know or did not reply on this question, about 16 per cent (91) said they had never seen a PA. Almost 40 per cent (207) had seen a PA once or twice, and most of the remainder, approximately another 44 per cent (233) reported regular contact varying between monthly meetings and two to three times a week.

Table 5
Estimated levels of Connexions support received by young people in the sample

	Frequency	Per cent
None	91	15.9
Minimal	207	36.1
Intermediate	109	19.0
Intensive	124	21.6
Don't know	41	7.2
Not asked	1	0.2
Total	573	100.0

Notes to Table 5.

This is the estimated support level based on the number of times a young person has seen a PA.

Minimal is based on one or two PA contacts

Intermediate is based on 'monthly' PA contact

Intensive is based on 'weekly' or more frequent PA contact

This support level may be current, or it may not be current but has occurred in the past.

Support levels may vary significantly over time and simple classification is very difficult.

4.6.3 Table 6 below shows the contacts between the young person and the PA in the preceding month. About 60 per cent of those *for whom the information was available* (324) had had no contact with a PA in the previous month.

Table 6
Pattern of contact between young people and Personal Advisers in the previous month

PA Contact in previous month?	Frequency	Per cent
No	324	56.5
Yes	214	37.3
Don't know	10	1.7
Not asked	25	4.4
Total	573	100.0

4.6.4 Taking the three tables together, three main conclusions can be identified from the results shown. First, there is a broad range of levels of support from apparently none, to quite intensive engagements. However, the balance is very heavily weighted towards a reported minimal engagement with PAs. Second, for a large proportion of the young people there was an absence of a recognised relationship with Connexions through a PA. Third,

and in line with what would be expected, given the results in the two earlier tables, the great majority of young people in the sample had not seen a PA in the previous month, meaning that Connexions was not keeping in regular current contact with them.

4.7 Risk categories and contact patterns

4.7.1 From the tables above, it can be seen that there is an apparent discontinuity between the levels of risk identified in the young people, and the levels of support and engagement provided to them by Connexions and this may not be untypical of current contact patterns. The difficulty is that these young people are some way up the scale of priorities for Connexions, but contact and engagement appear to be less than their priority level would suggest it should be.

4.7.2 It is possible that the Connexions Services have focussed resources, through higher levels of contact and engagement, on the highest priority young people *within* the higher risk categories. If current resources did not allow high levels of support for all those who need it, this would be one way of distributing scarce resources in relation to excess levels of demand, or need. This sample will probably only contain a small proportion of the highest priority cases *within* the P1 and P2 categories.

4.7.3 Alternatively there may be discontinuities between the distribution of need and the allocation of resources resulting from the incomplete introduction of detailed needs assessment through APIR or other systems. As discussed more fully later, there may be further discontinuities if the procedures for allocating resources, in terms of caseloads and the assessment of priorities for individual support, are not yet fully functioning.

4.7.4 The contact patterns seen above may also be shaped by the fact that these are based on the reports of the young people alone. Young people are sometimes confused about who is, and who is not, a PA, and there may be problems of recall.

4.7.5 Although there are a number of possible explanations for the patterns seen above, there is still an apparent disjunction between need and support. This can also be seen if the relationship between Connexions support and risk level is examined.

Table 7
Estimated level of Connexions support in relation to educational risk level

		Educational Risk Level			TOTAL
		None	Risk Level 1 or 2	Risk Level 3 or 4	
Estimated support level	None	42 17.7%	35 13.7%	14 17.3%	91 15.9%
	Minimal	103 43.5%	80 31.4%	24 29.6%	207 36.1%
	Intermediate	33 13.9%	60 23.5%	16 19.8%	109 19.0%
	Intensive	48 20.3%	54 21.2%	22 27.2%	124 21.6%
	Don't know	11 4.6%	25 9.8%	5 6.2%	41 7.2%
	Not asked	0 0%	1 0.4%	0 0%	1 0.2%
TOTAL		237 100%	255 100%	81 100%	573 100%

4.7.6 Table 7 above shows current contact with a PA in relation to risk levels. In each case for ease of presentation, the numbers of young people with one risk and two risks have been combined, as have those with three and four risks. The columns show the proportion of young people at each risk level and the levels of support they were estimated to have received. For example, about 18 per cent of the young people with no apparent risk had not received any support, and a further 43.5 per cent had received minimal support. If risk and support are closely matched we would expect to find a linear relationship between risk and support - the higher the level of risk, the higher the level of support. What can be seen is some relationship between risk level and support level, and that it appears linear to a degree, but the relationship between the two is far from straightforward.

4.7.7 Whilst, amongst those who have received Connexions support, the most intensive support is likely to have gone to the highest risk young people, there is roughly the same proportion of those at high risk outside the support network totally as for those who show no risk factors.

4.7.8 If risk and support were well-matched, we would expect to find that the young people with higher risk levels would be more concentrated in the higher intensity support levels. In fact, young people with risk levels 3 and 4 are roughly equally likely to have received no support or minimal support as they are to have received intermediate or intensive support. If risk and support were consistently matched then it would be expected, for example, that the highest risk young people would be clustered in the intermediate and

intensive support levels rather than the minimal or no support level, but this was not the case.

4.7.9 Three main conclusions can be drawn from this table. The first is that a significant proportion of young people at risk had received no support, and, in fact, those at high risk were no more likely to have received support than those without risk. Second, when distinguishing between young people with no educational risk, and some educational risk there is some matching of risk and support. So the higher risk young people in the sample are more likely to have received intensive Connexions support. Third, though, within this group of higher risk young people there does not appear to be a clear or consistent relationship between risk and support. Indeed, more young people at high risk had received only minimal support than had received the intensive support they would appear to need.

4.7.10 Turning now to Table 8 below, the relationship between risk level and whether or not Connexions is maintaining a presence in the life of the young person through a current contact with a PA can be seen. If need and support were matched it would be expected that a higher proportion of young people at risk would be currently supported by Connexions.

Table 8
Proportion of young people reporting current contact with a Personal Adviser related to educational risk level

Current PA contact?	Educational Risk Level			Total
	None	Risk Level 1 or 2	Risk Level 3 or 4	
Yes	101 42.6%	149 58.4%	44 54.3%	294 51.3%
No	119 50.2%	83 32.5%	26 32.1%	228 39.8%
Don't know	16 6.8%	21 8.2%	11 13.6%	48 8.4%
Not asked	1 0.4%	2 0.8%	0 0%	3 0.5%
Total	237 100.0%	255 100.0%	81 100.0%	573 100.0%

4.7.11 The table reveals some relationship between risk level and current support. Those young people at some risk are more likely to be in receipt of current support than those at no risk. In this respect need and support are being matched. This is not a perfect or consistent match, though, and two concerns must be expressed. First, about half the P1 or P2 young people do not appear to be receiving current support. Second, quite high proportions of the young people more at risk are unsupported.

4.7.12 Looking back over both tables it seems likely that the explanation for these patterns lies in two different characteristics of Connexions - the

processes of assessment, and the *availability of resources*. The relationship seen in Table 8 suggests that PAs are able to distinguish and maintain contact with young people who are at risk with some degree of success. However, there remain around 46 per cent of the high-risk group who either have no current Connexions contact or who do not know whether they have any contact. The figures in Table 7 suggest there may be a difficulty in distinguishing levels of risk within the higher risk group. Although those at high risk are more likely than any other young people to have received intensive support, there are roughly equal numbers of young people in this group who have received no support or only minimal support as who have received either intermediate or intensive support. It could be postulated, then, that the assessment processes may be better at identifying broad risk categories than they are at identifying the more specific needs of young people, which find expression in higher levels of risk *within* those categories. Alongside this, it also appears that Connexions *can* identify risk, and maintain contact with young people at risk (Table 8), but possibly cannot provide them with the level of support they appear to need (Table 7).

4.7.13 Taking into account the broader range of evidence available through this evaluation two specific conclusions can be drawn. First, assessment processes have not been fully effective for this sample. Second, even where assessment is effective, appropriate response through support may not be possible because of capacity limitations.

4.8 The Phase 1 hypotheses

4.8.1 The Phase 1 hypotheses are listed below. The main discussion of the development of the hypotheses and how they were refined for the second stage of the research is contained in Appendix D.

4.8.2 The hypotheses developed below were informed by the early interviews with PAs and others, and also shaped and refined by the early stages of the fieldwork. They cover five areas of Connexions activity in relation to young people.

4.8.3 Young people and Connexions

4.8.3.1 The needs of young people arise from their individual circumstances. Needs differ in type, intensity and significance, and they tend to come in packages. These packages are not stable, though some needs may persist over time. Needs change as young people get older, as they approach and make key life transitions, and as their circumstances change. Critical incidents, such as bereavement or family break up, can immediately and dramatically change needs. It is to these needs, and how they change, that Connexions needs to respond. This leads to the first hypothesis:

- 1. Impact is likely to be facilitated when*
 - the young person has an identified need*
 - the young person has a reference place or person to seek help*
 - the young person wants the help which is available.*

4.8.4 Personal Advisers

4.8.4.1 It is not only young people who have orientations to Connexions. The PAs themselves bring their own ideas and expectations about what Connexions is trying to do and what their role is within it. This leads to the second hypothesis:

2. Impact will be affected by the PA's understanding, interpretation and acceptance of their role within a specific service structure. It is likely to be inhibited where the PA does not fully understand or identify with the ethos and principles of Connexions.

4.8.5 The relationship between Personal Advisers and young people

4.8.5.1 For Connexions to have an impact, PAs need to make and maintain contact with young people. It is at the point where the PA and young person meet that the potential for Connexions to make a difference can be activated. The nature and form of this relationship will influence the extent to which mechanisms are triggered, and the capacity and resources of the young person enhanced and mobilised. This gives the third and fourth hypotheses:

3. The potential for impact will be enhanced if the PA and the young person establish a continuing relationship characterised by trust, mutuality and openness.

4. The potential for impact will be enhanced if the PA and the young person can negotiate a mutual accommodation of priorities about needs and support which leads to an appropriate type of intervention.

4.8.6 The Connexions Service context

4.8.6.1 Needs and support must be matched within the wider context of the Connexions service. Effective assessment and the availability of resources to respond will be important determinants of the extent to which this occurs. This leads to the fifth and sixth hypotheses:

5. The matching of support to need will be more closely aligned when there is effective, continuous, and consistent assessment to assess risk categorisation.

6. Impact will be inhibited if the level of demand arising from the needs of young people exceeds the capacity of the service to supply resources, because young people will not receive the support they need.

4.8.6.2 Different arrangements for delivering Connexions may have significant implications for impact and impact patterns; two further hypotheses are related to this:

7. Different arrangements for delivering Connexions will influence the roles of PAs and the patterns of impact of Connexions.

8. The consequences, which arise from different arrangements for delivery, can be altered by attention to processes within the arrangements.

4.8.7 The wider service context of Connexions

4.8.7.1 The potential for Connexions to influence choices and decision-making by young people will be conditioned by the availability of alternatives from which young people can choose. The final two hypotheses link to this wider context, which surrounds both the Connexions Service and young people.

9. Availability of resources and opportunities for education, employment or training will set limits to the extent to which choices can be activated for the individual young person supported by the Connexions intervention.

10. If services and provision are positively aligned to create opportunities for young people, the potential for Connexions impact to occur will be enhanced.

4.9 Summary of Phase 1 findings and conclusions

4.9.1 Universal Connexions provision made through schools

4.9.1.1 The pivotal position of schools can be seen in the very high proportion of young people whose first contact with Connexions was made in the school setting, usually when they were aged between 13 and 16. Most of these young people experienced the universal service offered by Connexions. A smaller number received more intensive support. It is not always clear how young people moved between the universal and more intensive provision.

4.9.1.2 The individual interviews were mainly focused around post-16 education, training, and employment choices, with the emphasis on education and training although work placements were also arranged for some young people. There did not appear to be a distinct diagnostic phase to the interview, and the identification of needs was largely contained within post-16 education, employment and training parameters.

4.9.1.3 The only clear and widespread picture of Connexions, which emerged in the minds of the young people, was that its main purpose was to help in choosing GCSE and post-16 options, and particular jobs and careers paths for those wishing to leave school. There was uncertainty about who was a PA, difficulty in identifying PAs by name, and at times young people confused PAs, teachers delivering careers advice, and learning mentors.

4.9.2 Impact and issues in universal school based provision

4.9.2.1 The universal service was valued by young people. It expanded their options and influenced their choices about post-16 provision, helped them

think about post-16 opportunities when they would not otherwise have done so, and offered a useful resource to help in decision-making. In doing this it seems very likely that two direct contributions to impact were being made. First, by raising the question of “what next” for young people, it will help diminish the numbers who drift into NEET as a default outcome. Second, by working actively with young people and helping negotiate and shape their preferred choices it will help diminish the chances of “second stage” NEET - when young people unthinkingly follow an option, find it does not suit them, and at that point become NEET.

4.9.2.2 The intervention appeared to work best when the young person had an expectation of the PA, which matched what was available. So, if careers related advice was what was desired, and received, the outcome for the young person was positive. In other cases young people felt that the response was not related to what they were saying. They wanted a job, but were offered training, for example. The main difficulty was in cases where wider needs were introduced into the meeting to which there was no response. In these cases the impact on the young person was likely to be negative.

4.9.2.3 Two main issues emerged in relation to the operation of the universal service in schools: assessment processes, the identification of risk, and the adequacy of response to risk; and the role of PAs in schools and their place in the wider Connexions Service.

4.9.3 Assessment, risk identification and support

4.9.3.1 There did not appear to be a diagnostic episode within most of the individual interviews, and any assessment was focused very largely on the post-16 education, employment or training needs of the young person. The universal provision in schools appeared to have difficulty in identifying, or responding to, the wider needs of the young person. This may be because:

- * young people may choose not to present wider needs;
- * the PA may not recognise wider needs as part of their role - PAs had significant uncertainties about their roles and priorities;
- * the PA may have no way of responding to wider needs - they may not be trained to work on wider issues with young people, and no other resource may be available on which they can call. A shortage of resources was widely identified by PAs and others: a perception that is confirmed by the recent National Audit Office report. (NAO, 2004, pp.27-32)

4.9.3.2 There were also numerous examples where risk was being identified but the response was either not made, was not appropriate, or was made late. Bullying, risk of suspension, exclusion, or becoming NEET are all examples of important risk conditions which received no support through universal interventions, and where other support was not made available. Interventions were made not at the time of the risk, but later when the risk had become an issue. This may be because in some schools it appeared that no preventive work was carried out, although it did appear to be in others. The

intervention, when it took place, had to be re-integrative rather than preventive, and would usually involve PAs based outside the school.

4.9.3.3 Connexions intervention in schools appeared relatively fixed in nature - formulaic rather than responsive to individual and wider needs. It enabled and achieved impact of certain types with certain groups of young people but impact of other types remained inhibited and the needs of other groups remained unrecognised, or not responded to.

4.9.4 The role of the Personal Adviser in schools

4.9.4.1 There is an apparent structural division within Connexions along which various aspects of the organisation and operation of Connexions align. This division distinguishes the schools from most other Connexions provision, and it also appears to separate the service into proponents of specialist or generalist roles for PAs. The former argue for the importance of retaining careers advice and guidance as a professional specialism having a recognised professional role, qualifications, and standing. There is also a concern with the loss of this professional role and the identity, which accompanies it for the practitioners.

4.9.4.2 On the other hand, it is argued that generalist roles for PAs are the most appropriate for the new service. The Connexions emphasis on PAs starting with young people, focusing on those most at risk, identifying and responding to a wide range of needs, and working to combat social exclusion, means that the narrow specialism of careers advice and guidance is no longer appropriate. The service is broader than that, and PAs have to adopt new working practices within a new organisational culture.

4.9.4.3 As outlined in Section 3, there has been some resistance and an unwillingness to accept the new regime of Connexions, most notably amongst the staff inherited by Connexions from the Careers Service, and some other professionals, who also perceive the changes as imposed on them.

4.9.5 Targeted provision and more intensive support

4.9.5.1 There is great diversity to the targeted provision and the more intensive support provided by Connexions. Some of it is made through schools, or is linked to the universal service in schools through systems of referral. There are different arrangements for linking universal and targeted provision and some targeted work is delivered in or through schools. Paired PAs working in schools, where one delivers the universal service and the other the targeted service, serve as one example of school based targeted provision. In other cases the targeted service is delivered through a different team, possibly community based, with no link to individual schools except through a referral system (Roger and Marwood, 2003)

4.9.6 Young people in targeted provision

4.9.6.1 The young people found in targeted provision were drawn from the groups with higher levels of risk and need. However, not all young people with higher levels of risk were receiving support. Put very simply, *all the young people receiving targeted support needed it, but not all the young people who needed it were receiving it*. The current pattern suggests that the greater contribution to lack of impact is probably made by the absence of intervention rather than by interventions that fail to achieve impact - although not all interventions lead to the desired impacts, and young people's needs were not always met.

4.9.6.2 For young people in targeted provision there was a broader view of what Connexions was and what it did - but a view and understanding which originates in the experience of Connexions through the direct contact with the PA. Connexions was not there to provide advice on jobs, training and education, although it still did those things. Connexions was there for the young person. Or more correctly, the PA was there for the young person. The young people saw themselves in a relationship with an individual PA rather than a relationship with a service.

4.9.7 Personal Advisers providing targeted provision

4.9.7.1 There were some sharp contrasts between the typical universal PA and staff in the intensive sector. PAs in intensive provision tend to be new to Connexions, from a variety of professional backgrounds, with a different, holistic, view of working with young people, and having a wider vision of Connexions and how it needs to relate to young people.

4.9.7.2 The operational differences are that the intensive PAs have smaller caseloads, work closely with young people over a period of time, respond to a wider set of needs, use a wider variety of methods of working with young people, and need to work across a larger range of potential impact areas.

4.9.8 Relationships with young people and the patterns of working

4.9.8.1 The relationship between PAs and young people in intensive or targeted work is broad and affective rather than narrow and instrumental - marked by personal regard on the part of the young people, and probably the PAs as well. It is often relatively unstructured, flexible and fluid - needing to respond to fluctuating needs and moods amongst the young people. The work with individual young people was more interpersonally intense, more frequent, continuous over time, and the PA maintained a continuing presence in the life of the young person, accompanying them through transitions and crises, using a wide variety of methods of working.

4.9.9 Patterns of impact in targeted provision

4.9.9.1 In targeted provision with intensive interventions the impact pattern is broad and diverse. The evidence showed:

- * the complexity and multi-faceted nature of the circumstances of the young people;
- * the broad and diverse range of impacts arising from the intensive work, how they relate to each other, and the different types of support and intervention;
- * the need for timeliness in intervention;
- * the limitations of impact which might be achieved, and failures to intervene, or achieve impact.

4.9.10 Issues in targeted provision and intensive support

4.9.10.1 Connexions currently appears to have insufficient resources to meet the demands placed upon it for targeted provision and intensive support. We are confident that current resources cannot meet the need for intensive support among young people at risk in the Connexions age range. This appears to be beyond dispute; no respondent has seriously argued otherwise, and all our relevant available evidence supports this conclusion.

4.9.10.2 Significant numbers of young people at risk do not receive intensive support. Interventions were taking place once a problem had happened rather than before. So rather than being preventive, the work was focused on recovery or re-integration.

4.9.10.3 There is some evidence to suggest that risks are being missed or that intervention is not a priority in the younger age ranges. Substantial proportions of 13 and 14 year olds reported no contact with Connexions, or only minimal contact, out of a sample that was drawn from those designated as P1 or P2. Table G13 at Appendix G shows the proportion of each age group reporting these lower levels of support.

4.9.10.4 There was little to suggest from the Phase 1 work that APIR was consistently applied or that assessment and diagnosis formed an identifiable episode in the intervention with young people. However, it also emerged that assessment is a *necessary* but not a *sufficient* condition for achieving impact. Assessment needs to form part of a wider process which embraces the relationship with the PA and the form the overall intervention takes. Assessment alone, no matter how consistent and accurate, cannot make a difference.

4.9.10.5 Young people in targeted provision may have contact with multiple PAs, for a number of reasons. This breaks the continuity of contact between an individual young person and their access to the service through an identifiable PA. It also restricts the development of relationships between young people and their PAs by breaking the continuity of the working relationship between individuals known to each other. Similarly, young people may be in touch with workers from different services. If the vision of Connexions was as the lead service for young people, standing at the centre, co-ordinating other services and forming a single point of contact through a single PA between young people and the official world, then this vision has yet to be realised - if it is possible at all.

4.9.10.6 Different examples of partnership working were examined. Some appeared to work very well, others less so. Alongside examples of effective joint working were also instances of poor coordination and lack of contact or communication. The full potential of partnership working has yet to be realised.

4.9.11 The contrast between the universal and targeted provision

4.9.11.1 The sharp contrasts between universal and targeted provision can be seen above. This contrast can be illuminated by drawing together the main characteristics of each type of provision and presenting each as a characterisation.

4.9.12 Universal provision

4.9.12.1 Universal provision is widespread. It forms the major point of contact and experience of Connexions for the young people. Its access form is narrow, largely regulated by the school and seen by young people as compulsory. The relationship with young people is narrow rather than diffuse, instrumental rather than affective, is restricted in time, and its scope is highly focused on education, training and employment issues. The role of the PA largely reflects these characteristics. The principal method of work is the offering of information, advice and guidance. The overall support pattern is primarily minimal in nature, often amounting to one individual or group meeting with a PA.

4.9.12.2 Although the universal service appears to fulfil its own role, its contribution to the wider role and vision of the Connexions Service as a whole is more restricted. It does not appear to identify and be able to respond to wider needs and risks itself, and it appears to have difficulty in ensuring consistency in providing support from the wider service. This is partly because linkages with other parts of Connexions and other wider provision for more intensive support appear only weakly developed, and the processes of brokerage and referral are not characteristic.

4.9.13 Targeted provision and intensive support

4.9.13.1 Targeted provision and intensive support are focussed on relatively small numbers of young people. It forms a minority point of contact and experience of Connexions for the young people. Its access form is relatively wide, unregulated by any single institution, and is seen by young people as largely voluntary. The relationship with young people is broad and diffuse, affective rather than instrumental, is extended over time, and its scope is broad covering a wide range of needs amongst young people. The role of the PA largely reflects these characteristics. The methods of work are diverse and cover most or all of the main methods of working with young people. The overall support pattern is primarily intensive in nature, often extending over long periods of time in the context of enduring relationships between young people and PAs. It is focused on personal development and the meeting of needs to diminish risk in order to enhance educability and employability.

4.9.13.2 Intensive work contributes fully to the wider role and vision of the Connexions Service, but its contribution is limited by the resources available to it, and the number and proportion of young people it can engage. It can identify and respond to wider needs and risks itself but it appears to have difficulty in providing consistent intervention and support across the wider population of young people who have a need for it.

4.10 Main conclusions from Phase 1

4.10.1 This part of the summary of Phase 1 will cover two different sets of conclusions. First, it will outline very briefly the conclusions about the initial hypotheses. This is both brief and partial because not all the initial hypotheses were testable in the first phase. However, this does not diminish their value. They served to guide the initial research to focus on important areas of the work of Connexions, and they were an essential stage leading to the formulation of the second stage hypotheses. The second set of conclusions concerns the wider findings about Connexions which it was possible to identify from the initial analysis. These also served to guide the focus of the second phase, and they also gave important indications about the effectiveness and impact of Connexions at an important stage of its development.

4.10.2 Conclusions about the initial hypotheses

4.10.2.1 Hypotheses 1, 3 and 4 are concerned with the orientation of the young people, what is available to them, and the relationship with the PA. This group of hypotheses is best considered separately for the two main types of provision.

4.10.2.2 The overall conclusion about these hypotheses is that they mostly have little relevance within universal provision. The only one which appeared supported, but not strongly, was the first one concerned with the orientations of the young person. In sharp contrast, within targeted provision there appeared to be strong support for all three hypotheses. The earlier discussions identified the significance within targeted provision of the areas covered by the hypotheses. The mechanism appeared to be activated by a combination of young people's needs and orientations, in the context of relatively intense and extended relationships, marked by particular characteristics such as trust, with interventions matched to need in an appropriate manner.

4.10.2.3 Hypothesis 5 was concerned with assessments processes. This is not a hypothesis which could be tested in the context of universal provision. The way this provision functions does not provide for effective, continuous or consistent assessment. Within targeted provision, it was found that the effective assessment of *need* (rather than risk or risk category), linked to a plan of action, which was then implemented, and reviewed, *did* appear to contribute to impact. If there was a break in this chain, then impact was compromised.

4.10.2.4 Hypothesis 6 was concerned with resource levels related to the need for support. Although it was found that there were many reasons why young people may not receive the level and type of support they need, it was quite clear that the need for support exceeded that which could be made available by Connexions resources, by a considerable margin, in both the universal and the targeted provision. This can be seen in the patterns of risk related to support described earlier, and could also be seen through the interviews with both PAs and young people. Even if the analysis is restricted to the adequacy of resources to meet Connexions priorities and targets there still appeared to be a considerable shortfall.

4.10.2.5 Hypotheses 2, 7, and 8 were concerned with service arrangements and PA roles. It was found that the level of understanding and acceptance of the PA role, and the differing arrangements for delivering Connexions, did lead to particular patterns of impact on young people. Similarly, initial enquiries suggested that change in the processes by which delivery arrangements function could alter impact and impact patterns but that different stakeholders will hold different views of its desirability.

4.10.2.6 Finally, hypotheses 9 and 10 were concerned with the wider context of opportunities and service arrangements within which Connexions is located. It was not possible to test these in any specific way in the first phase, but it was quite clear that both the availability of opportunities and the effective arrangement of wider services would have a significant influence on the ability of Connexions to achieve impact with young people.

4.10.2.7 In addition to guiding the first phase of the research, the value of the initial hypotheses lay in the new understandings about how Connexions works and how it can achieve impact, from which new hypotheses could then be developed to focus the second phase more closely on the critical issues. This can be seen in detail in Appendix D.

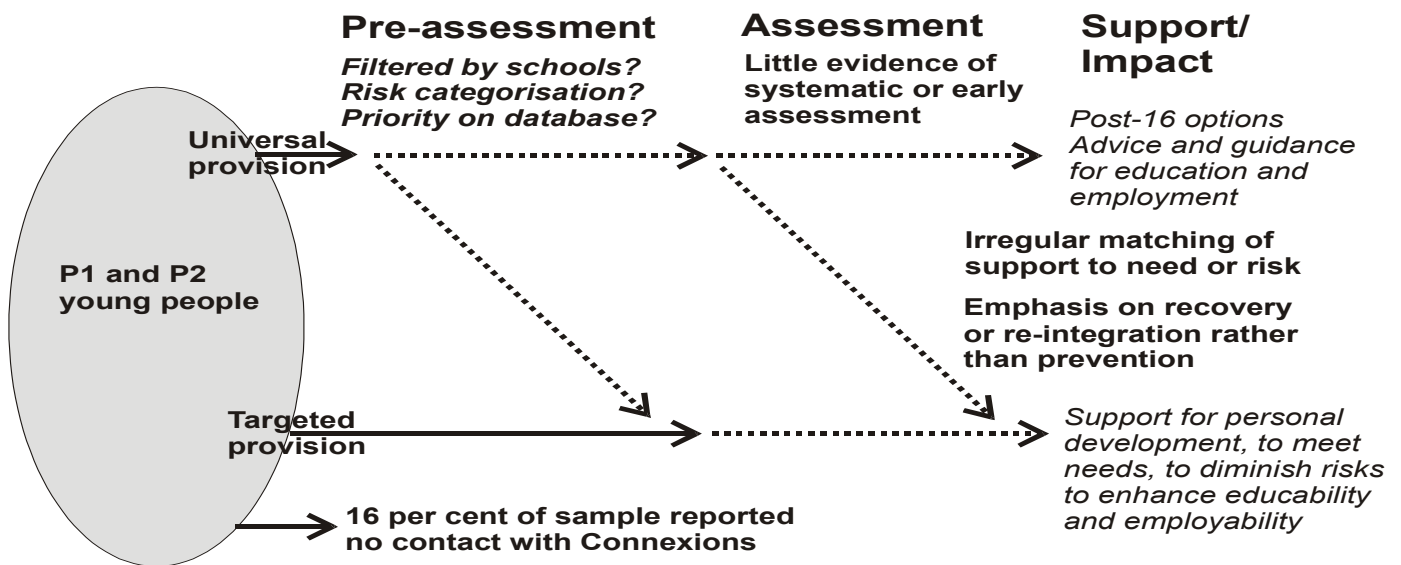
4.11 Wider conclusions about Connexions

4.11.1 Continuity, discontinuity and impact in the Connexions process

4.11.1.1 Figure 4.1 below provides an outline of the assessment and support processes within universal and targeted provision, and the types of impact, and the impact pattern that Connexions is currently achieving. The dotted lines indicate actual or potential discontinuities in the Connexions process. Continuity is achieved when the different parts of the Connexions process link together. Discontinuities arise when these linkages are not achieved.

Figure 4.1

The Connexions Process Continuity and Discontinuity



4.11.2 Impact

4.11.2.1 Connexions is achieving impact, of different types with different groups of young people, under different circumstances. The main types of impact associated with different types of provision can be seen in the diagram above. In doing this, Connexions is contributing to meeting the needs of young people and helping them make their journeys through schooling and beyond in both universal and targeted provision. Both sectors can contribute to the avoidance of NEET outcomes and the better matching of young people to EET outcomes. But they do it in different ways for different groups of young people. The primary mechanism of impact lies in the interaction of PAs and young people. It is chiefly through this mechanism that the reasoning and resources of young people are changed, and subsequent mechanisms activated. One group on which there will be no impact are the non-users of the service. About 16 per cent of the sample appeared not to have entered any Connexions provision, and reported no contact with Connexions.

4.11.3 The pattern of impact

4.11.3.1 The overall *pattern* of impact appears largely determined by the level of resources available to Connexions and how they are deployed. The level of resourcing sets limits on the numbers of young people Connexions can support, and the type of support that can be provided to them. The deployment of resources determines the support pattern that emerges, within the limits set by the resource levels. Despite a will and intention to integrate in many quarters, the major deployment characteristic of the service is the structural division into universal provision and targeted provision. The current deployment of resources within that structure is leading to a support pattern having two main characteristics:

- * a wide but thinly spread pattern of universal but minimal support on post-16 transition needs;
- * a focused pattern of support of an intensive or intermediate nature which addresses much wider needs, but which is concentrated on much smaller numbers of young people judged to be at risk.

4.11.4 The determinants of the impact pattern

4.11.4.1 The overall pattern of impact achieved by Connexions is created by this pattern of support, which arises from the resource balance between the two types of provision. The evidence shows there is significant unmet need amongst young people who satisfy the requirements for intermediate or intensive support but do not receive it.

4.11.4.2 If the policy priority is supporting and achieving impact with at risk young people the evidence suggests that this cannot be achieved through the universal provision *as it currently appears to function*. Impact with these young people requires targeted intervention. The dilemma for Connexions concerns the balance between the extent to which it is intended as a service targeted on problem young people, and the extent to which it aims to provide a wider service for all young people who wish to use it.

4.11.5 Matching need and support

4.11.5.1 The first level of matching need and support can be seen in the discussion above about the balance of resources allocated to the two types of provision. Within this allocation are various forms of delivery arrangement, which are associated with organisational structures and processes and which work in two different ways. First, they influence the relationships of the different parts and processes to be found *within* each type of provision. Second, they influence the relationships and functioning *between* the two types of provision.

4.11.5.2 *Within* the two types of provision it was difficult to identify systematic or early assessment, or a specific diagnostic stage in the Connexions process. It was not clear how young people became classified as P1 or P2, nor how that priority was entered on the database. For those in the more intensive support, assessment appeared to be an on-going process, which followed rather than preceded the support relationship. These discontinuities are identified by the horizontal dotted lines in the diagram above.

4.11.5.3 *Between* the two types of provision the links between the universal and targeted provision did not appear to be sufficiently developed to ensure that young people needing support would receive it. The arrangements by which, for example, young people would be referred from the universal to the targeted provision remained unclear, were undeveloped, or varied according to particular arrangement for delivery. It is not clear how the two types of provision related to each other and how their respective functions interlocked. It was often difficult to see effective linkages connecting the two together. Risk might not be identified in the universal provision, but it was not clear

whether the universal practitioners saw this as their function. Risk might be identified, but there may be no effective linkage to ensure there was a response in terms of targeted provision. Referral mechanisms, if they existed, worked more effectively in some arrangements than in others. The two types of provision often appeared to be working independently of each other.

4.11.5 4 The discontinuities within and between the types of provision were a primary factor leading towards the targeted support being more directed towards recovery or re-integration rather than prevention. The discontinuities could arise from the particular delivery arrangements, from the form of the organisational structures and processes, and from the lack of resources to respond. The resource limitations were identified earlier.

4.11.5 5 The general picture emerging from this was of a relatively loose relationship between needs and interventions. There was little to suggest that needs were assessed or resources allocated accordingly within the context of a set of clearly defined priorities. There appeared to be rigidities in resource allocations, which arose from the structure of the service and customs and practices pre-dating Connexions. As a service, Connexions currently falls short of its aspiration to be young person centred and needs led. Shortcomings in matching interventions to needs will be significantly affecting the extent to which Connexions achieves impact for young people at risk.

4.11.6 An overview of Connexions

4.11.6.1 Connexions as it is currently configured still looks more like two services than one. That is an impression we formed, and we have shown it is an impression shared by many of the young people, and of the PAs. Much of Connexions provision appears little different from the former Careers Service provision. The practitioners appear to see it that way, the schools see it that way, and the young people see it that way. Alongside this provision a new part or a new service is developing - a form of youth support service, based on parts of Connexions and trying to form links with and work in tandem with other service providers. However, the two types of provision within Connexions exist in an uneasy relationship with each other. The extent of the differences can be seen in the earlier discussion of the patterns of provision. In this sense, Connexions looks less like a new service, and more like an old service with some new parts attached to it.

4.12 Developing Phase 2 of the research

4.12.1 Phase 2 of the research has been closely linked to, and developed from, the main conclusions of Phase 1. The central theme lies in explaining impact, and identifying the factors which inhibit impact, particularly through the existence of continuities and discontinuities in the Connexions process. It has been seen that many different factors contribute to the creation of discontinuity. Among the key factors identified so far are: resource deployment within and between types of provision; the relationship between universal and targeted provision; the processes of identifying risk conditions, categorising risk, and providing support; resistance to the PA role; the mode

of deployment of PAs; the existence of effective linkages between teams; the arrangement in practice settings, particularly in schools; the quality of Partnership delivery; and working relationships between partners.

4.12.2 This is not intended as an exhaustive list, and the key factors and their relative importance will be clarified further in later sections. The different factors identified above, and others identified later, were brought together to form the central concerns of Phase 2 - explaining Connexions impact and the influence of different delivery arrangements and different organisational structures and processes in creating continuity or discontinuity in the Connexions process.

Section 5 – Settings and delivery arrangements

5.1 Introduction

5.1.1 Connexions staff work within a huge variety of organisational contexts and cooperate with an even greater number of partner agencies, which also assist young people. As outlined in Sections 3 and 4 above, the settings where Connexions staff operate, the arrangements under which Personal Advisers are deployed in them, and the nature of the partnerships concerned have all emerged as key influences on the Connexions process and the outcomes it achieves. Over the course of the whole study, the researchers have visited over 170 such settings and interviewed members of staff and/or young people about their relationship to the work of Connexions. This section explores in more detail the ways in which settings and delivery arrangements can affect the impact of the service. In particular, the arrangements in schools, colleges and work-based learning are examined alongside the work of Connexions shops and centres, and its outreach work and contact with young people through youth organisations and specialist agencies.

5.1.2 As a result of the initial findings, and after discussions with young people, questions began to emerge about models of delivery, due in part to young people's apparent lack of knowledge about how Connexions worked. This led to a more thorough exploration of the ways in which settings were impacting on young people. In Phase 2, a smaller sample of 161 interviews with young people was conducted to provide the study with a longitudinal picture of their experiences and a better understanding of the processes involved in transition within and between settings. A total of 222 adults, from various roles, were interviewed in the second phase focusing on staff deployment, assessment practice, partnership working and other such issues relevant to the working methods in the different settings. In a sample of contrasting settings, a further 151 interviews also took place with adults concerned with specific young people to ensure that the research team explored not only the young person's perceptions but also the experience of working with them from the points of view of the Connexions Service and of the staff of the specific setting. This helped to fill gaps in the young person's understanding of interventions received and to check that the young person's account of the process could be confirmed by the adults' description of the systems and methods used.

5.2 Schools, colleges and work-based learning

5.2.1 The context of the research in education settings

5.2.1.1 The Connexions Service operates within a wide range of differing settings in educational organisations throughout England. From our research, it is clear that its delivery arrangements within compulsory and post-compulsory learning institutions vary considerably depending on (i) local management structures, (ii) partnership arrangements and (iii) established working relationships between Personal Advisers and other professionals. Our research findings indicate that, in general terms, the service continues to

redefine and reposition itself within school, college and work-based learning agendas. Recently, there has been growing interest from policy-makers in the potential role of Connexions within schools and colleges. The government's new Green Paper, due to be published late 2004, will highlight the future positioning of Connexions taking into account the role of Local Education Authorities, Children's Trusts and local Learning & Skills Councils.

5.2.1.2 This section provides a brief overview of findings from our research activities in schools, colleges and work-based learning settings. The research team had certain limitations on its access to schools and colleges mainly due to government policy directives aimed at reducing the high levels of research demand on educational institutions. However, with the support of all involved, the team was able to negotiate access to both mainstream schools and special schools in order to meet the core sample targets.

5.2.1.3 Across the whole study in both phases, a total of 24 secondary schools, seven special schools, seven further education colleges, 10 alternative education units and 15 work-based learning providers were visited and/or contacted by telephone. In addition, more than 70 staff, working for Connexions and/or other agencies, were interviewed specifically about arrangements in these educational settings. This included those employed in roles such as learning mentors, tutors and trainers, support staff, heads of year and head teachers. Connexions managers with responsibilities for specific "risk groups", age groups or provision in specific educational settings also participated. Our findings are also based on administrative data provided by the Connexions Partnerships. This mainly comprises data on individual young people such as Connexions profiles and/or guidance interview notes that provided more in-depth information.

5.2.1.4 This discussion outlines the distinctive characteristics of the settings visited and provides an overview of Connexions models as they currently operate. It also highlights the factors that support and/or constrain the potential impact of Connexions services on young people. However, it should be noted that findings from these various settings cannot necessarily be taken as wholly representative of all schools, colleges and work-based learning providers within the overall network of the Connexions Service.

5.2.2 Key features of the schools, colleges and work-based learning programmes participating

5.2.2.1 The key distinctive features of the *schools*, which participated in the study, were as follows:

- (i) They were mainly located in **urban settings** with the exception of **one rural school** in the North-West region.

- (ii) They all had academic **results at or below the national average**¹ in terms of young people's achievement at GCSE level.
- (iii) They were all situated within **geographical areas of high social deprivation**.
- (iv) Their pupil cohorts were **diverse in terms of gender, ethnicity and culture**.
- (iv) They **did not include school sixth forms**.

5.2.2.2 The *colleges* in the study shared the following characteristics:

- (i) They were all located in **urban settings** with catchments drawn from the surrounding **urban and rural districts**.
- (ii) They all had **multi-site locations**.
- (iii) They nearly all targeted young people for the Connexions Service from **E2E programmes** or those **enrolled on entry and/or foundation level programmes**.
- (iv) They **referred young people to Personal Advisers mainly through student services and/or teaching staff**. In most cases, young people had already been identified by college staff as **"under-achievers or in need of Connexions support"**² using their school reports.
- (v) They had, in some instances, newly identified young people in the **P1 category at the post-16 stage**.

5.2.2.3 Key features of the *work-based learning settings*, which participated in the study were as follows: -

- (i) They were based mainly in **community settings** either co-located or in close proximity to Connexions Services.
- (ii) They attracted a **wide range of young people** from a variety of at risk categories.
- (iii) They had a mixture of young people (**those aged 14-16 on alternative curriculum provision and those aged 16-19 on E2E and other apprenticeship programmes**) who had been referred by schools and Connexions Services or self-referred.
- (iv) They had **very differing levels of contact** with their local Connexions Service.

¹ <http://www.dfes.gov.uk/rsgateway/DB/SFR/s000474/SFR23-2004v2.pdf>

Department for Education and Skills (2004) *GCSE/GNVQ results and key stage 3 to GCSE/GNVQ value added measures for young people in England 2002/03 (final): National Statistics first release*. London, Department for Education and Skills. At least one of the schools was cited in the National Office of Statistics report (2004) as covering one of the most deprived areas in England according to the National Index of Multiple Deprivation.

² However, within one college, young people targeted by Connexions included **high, medium and low 'academic' achievers**. In this context, all were experiencing difficulties in relation to finding accommodation and/or they were dealing with difficult challenges in relation to their personal and social needs.

5.2.3 Delivery arrangements for Connexions in schools and colleges

5.2.3.1 Our findings from the seven geographical areas indicate that Connexions delivery arrangements in schools and colleges depended largely on local management arrangements between individual institutions and their local Connexions Service. The following mission statements encapsulated how the Connexions Service National Unit viewed the implementation of the new service in schools and colleges:

“[Connexions is] working with schools to help all young people to increase participation and attainment in formal and informal learning.” (DfES, 2001: p.1.)

“[Connexions is] working with colleges to support and develop young people - the Connexions Service will support colleges to provide this through the contribution of personal advisers as part of, or alongside, existing student support teams.” (DfES, 2001: p.4.)

5.2.3.2 These main aims are further elaborated upon as local Connexions Services seek to work in partnership with each school and college in order to:

- provide all young people with the help and support they need to make progress to further stages in education, work and adult life;
- offer information, advice and guidance on learning and career options as well as access to broader personal development opportunities;
- raise aspirations and motivation to retain students and promote achievements;
- identify and address potential problems before they become major barriers to learning and entry to work; and
- help young people overcome existing barriers to participation in learning and work.

5.2.3.3 The Connexions Service acknowledges that there is no single blueprint to delivery arrangements. Therefore, each service in schools and colleges operates differently according to the level of resources available, the ethos of the institution and local organisational arrangements. Many schools and colleges have made substantial efforts to reconsider how young people can best benefit from youth support services. Our findings indicate that, in a majority of cases, Personal Advisers working in these settings were seeking to construct new approaches designed to meet need. Previous research studies (Jones & Mortimer, 2004; Joyce et al, 2004, p.84) confirm that roles, responsibilities and levels of resource vary considerably between and across organisations. As a result, broad generalisations cannot be made; however, from the analysis of our research data, at least *three* contrasting models, with different working arrangements, appeared to operate between local Connexions Services and schools visited in the second phase of the study.

5.2.3.4 **Model 1** - *Connexions as an “integrated agency” in schools and colleges with information freedom to locate and identify young people at risk.*

5.2.3.5 In this setting, Connexions managers and PAs have full and open access to students' progress, pastoral and social inclusion information. Professionals jointly decide who is best placed to inform and support students. Connexions goals are articulated and understood by everyone concerned with active involvement in selecting and targeting young people who may benefit from the service.

5.2.3.6 **Model 2** - *Connexions as a "neutral agency" with restricted access to student information.*

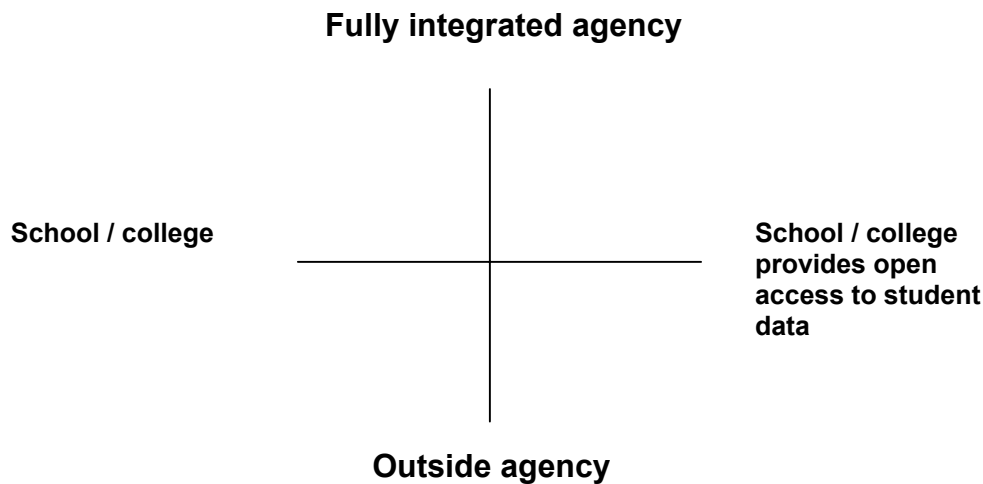
5.2.3.7 In this setting, Connexions managers and PAs have limited access to student information. The school and/or college acts as "gatekeeper" with student information provided by the institution only on a "need to know" basis. Professionals and support staff working in the school/college are ambivalent towards Connexions policy and practice. School/college staff feel the need to set their own criteria and control over those being referred to the service. Connexions may well deliver a holistic package but the boundaries of practice are blurred by attitudinal and organisational constraints.

5.2.3.8 **Model 3** - *Connexions as an "outside agency" within the school or college with highly controlled access to student information and specific networks.*

5.2.3.9 In this setting, Connexions Managers and PAs are not part of specific networks involved in the design and delivery of social inclusion and curriculum agendas within the school/college. Here, although pastoral support systems operate the role of the PAs is not central to these arrangements. The Connexions PA is often marginalized and isolated. Successful working with young people at risk therefore depends largely on the PA's personality and ability to penetrate and influence the system. In some cases, the image of the institution dominates, with the potential attendant worry that Connexions may tarnish its reputation. The attitudes within the institution towards the work of Connexions with young people in certain risk categories have a major impact on the way in which PAs can operate.

5.2.3.10 From this typology emerged two key concepts: firstly, the degree of flexibility and power afforded to the Connexions Service working in the school or college setting with young people at risk; and secondly, the degree to which Connexions is absorbed within the school's own provision. This latter concept is the question of whether Connexions is an outside service looking in, or an inside service looking out for new opportunities to provide added value to existing provision. The schools and colleges visited reflected very differing levels of Connexions access to and engagement in young people's learning and development needs. These two concepts form the axes of Figure 5.1, which portrays these variations diagrammatically.

Figure 5.1 Dimensions of the Connexions/school or college relationship



5.2.3.11 Our research findings showed evidence that some schools and colleges simply did not share student and curriculum development information with their Connexions partners. This would also include attendance records, pastoral care notes, details of agencies actively involved in the young person's life or more sensitive information related to risk factors and barriers that were having a significant negative impact on the young person. For example, strained relationships with a family or certain patterns of behaviour (such as bullying or drug taking) might not be shared as they were sometimes seen to put the institution's reputation at risk. The relative newness of the Connexions Service may be another contributory factor. In certain cases, this apparent lack of willingness to provide information could have negative consequences for young people, who were withdrawing or not engaging in the curriculum, because it was likely to inhibit the involvement and intervention of Connexions. In this scenario, PAs might be working with young people without any prior knowledge of the underlying reasons for certain attitudes and behaviours such as non-attendance, or the school might not have been involving them at all. For example, in our interviews young people reported high levels of bullying and other related reasons for non-attendance. Where the PA was unaware of this and was seeking to improve attendance without knowledge of the actual circumstances, unless the young person chose to disclose them, then the chances of positive impact were significantly reduced. In essence, the effectiveness of the PA's interventions was being constrained by other adults withholding valuable information. The unequal power relationship between the school and the Connexions Service can have serious implications for the ability of the service to reach and impact upon young people at risk.

5.2.3.12 In many schools, Connexions Services were carrying out their own diagnostic assessments and allocation of provision for different groups based on incomplete information. In some cases, this led to duplication of effort, distorted communication and weakened delivery patterns for young people most at risk. Special Educational Need (SEN) Schools, on the other hand, have a strong tradition of collaborative working links with professional

agencies facilitated by legislative requirements, which necessitate co-operation. There is also a tradition of holistic approaches to teaching and learning, and of working with parents and other professionals. Our findings from the seven special schools visited indicate that in these settings the sharing of information between the school and Connexions Service is not a major issue, mainly because they are so well rehearsed in the transfer of information and equality of differing professional roles between agencies. Multi-agency teams within and beyond the school setting are well established. For example, a head teacher from a SEN School explained: *“Connexions is a welcome development because it is mainstreaming that which we have undertaken for many years. Our holistic approach to working with young people and other professionals is central to everything we do!”*

5.2.3.13 In contrast to schools, our findings indicated that in the colleges, the structures and systems designed to monitor young people’s attendance appeared to act as “central drivers” to support retention and progression in education and training. Because all further education colleges have specific targets for student enrolment and retention, most staff were acutely aware of the link between student support, the college financial targets and the sustainability of specific programmes. This is further reinforced by the inspection regime of the Further Education Funding Council.

5.2.3.14 Drawing on the three contrasting models outlined earlier, we found that the work of Personal Advisers in the schools and colleges in this study was greatly influenced by the culture of the individual organisation, including the management structure, systems and procedures.

5.2.3.15 In contrast, many young people indicated that they appreciated and greatly valued the existence of a confidential and external service that does not “judge” them and that is not part of the school’s authority structure or systems of sanctions for non-conformist behaviour.

5.2.3.16 Both PAs and young people reported that work in schools often limits the scope for developing more individualised and “person centred” approaches to work with young people at risk.

“If you ask them things in school they don’t always tell you. Often it is easier to find out when the barriers come down like when we [young people and Connexions PA] meet in the youth club or even when we are sitting on the bus. You have to build trust otherwise it is very difficult.”

5.2.3.17 However, we also found examples of flexible and highly innovative approaches being used by PAs and school/college staff to motivate and inspire young people. We saw examples of schools that were working closely with Connexions by providing opportunities for PAs to work with selected groups of pupils for extended periods (thus, offering continuity and flexibility in delivery for these young people). A combination of personal development and individualised learning programmes were made available and the young people at risk were still considered part of the mainstream school.

5.2.3.18 Positive elements in the colleges visited, however, included clearly set out policies for improving retention and achievement with specific responsibilities for Connexions in this area. So whereas the previous careers education and guidance provision continued to exist, student support had been enhanced with new resources and specialist PAs, who could offer one-to-one support that was flexible to meet individual need and could deal with a range of social barriers to learning such as housing, finance, family, drug and health issues. This extra provision for young people also included group work with selected courses that showed behavioural and attendance issues, low achievement and high levels of dropout.

5.2.4 Partnership agreements

5.2.4.1 The research findings showed that school and/or college partnership agreements were integral to the work of Connexions in such settings. Most Connexions practitioners and managers viewed them positively.

5.2.4.2 However, it was also reported that this “institutional artefact” only supports young people's progress when it is understood and valued by all parties. It needs to be a working document shared between the Connexions manager, PA and senior school staff member(s) and referred to on a frequent rather than an ad hoc basis. Connexions practitioners reported that the local Connexions Services mainly determined the overall structure of the partnership agreements, including management delivery arrangements. The ways in which stated objectives were established and met depended largely on the degree of responsiveness from the school/college.

5.2.4.3 We found evidence of three main types of practice emerging in school and college settings using partnership agreements. The institutional response towards the partnership agreement can be:

- *explicit* in terms of accountability, roles and responsibilities. Plans are sufficiently detailed and delivery arrangements clearly described; or
- *specific* on partnership linkages but lacking in clarity and vision in relation to key responsibilities and roles; or
- *lacking in detail* on the contact arrangements and sharing of information between agencies, specifically confining Connexions practice to a minimalist approach.

5.2.4.4 These findings were further supported through observed practice and discussions with staff during our visits. In summary, the partnership agreements are being used but their efficacy depends on each setting and its institutional commitment to partnership links. In turn this affects Connexions ability to deliver services to those most at risk.

5.2.5 Patterns of PA deployment in differing settings

5.2.5.1 Within the school and college settings, PAs were performing differing roles in each of the three models of delivery outlined above. Some PAs

worked as specialists, others performed a more generic role. Sometimes PAs were paired in a school, covering either universal or targeted work. Certainly such a division of roles was displayed in some way across all of the school settings visited. Deployment and roles of PAs in colleges were also diverse. Some PAs worked across pre- and post -16 settings, others worked mainly inside a particular college or with local voluntary and community organisations. In most cases, the PAs' work in colleges was primarily targeted on those most at risk (as previously identified by schools).

5.2.5.2 Within the further education colleges visited, PAs also provided tutorial support and they delivered career advice and guidance sessions on a regular basis. Overall, in colleges we found higher levels of self-referral to Connexions by those most "at risk" than in schools. However, we also found evidence of young people, who had been identified by their schools as "medium to high academic achievers", making self-referrals to Connexions. In nearly all cases, this somewhat higher level of self-referral was "need driven" in terms of young people independently seeking out practical help and support. This is unsurprising given the age and generally greater maturity of the students. This pattern was also reflected in pastoral arrangements that shared a more "flexible" model than appeared to be the case in schools.

5.2.5.3 The pattern of PA deployment in schools and colleges is largely the result of inherited skills within the Connexions workforce. Many of the newer PA recruits in this study tended to see no contradiction between "generic" and "targeted" work, whereas other PAs were more reluctant to adopt a holistic approach outside of careers work. These are fairly polarised viewpoints and naturally there are significant numbers of PAs whose views and experiences lie somewhere between these differing positions. As discussed previously, in SEN schools, the inherited pattern of working has long been more closely aligned to a holistic approach towards service delivery.

5.2.5.4 Our findings from the full range of interviews also indicated that PAs working in school and colleges settings needed to have high levels of competence, knowledge and skills in relation to young people and organisational practice. They needed an ability to respond both to the needs of young people and to the needs of the institution, in order to be able to effect change in the lives of their clients.

5.2.5.5 Two crucial characteristics of the relationship between the institution, the PA and the young person are *regularity* and *consistency*. This very central tenet is often "under threat" either because of the withholding of sensitive information, whether formal or informal, or from inadvertent actions such as timetabling that can disrupt accurate assessment processes or the continuity or frequency of contact. The efforts of all the services working within each educational establishment need to be aligned to create this consistency and continuity of approach.

One teacher expressed these issues very graphically: "*Somehow education and health and other services need to work together under one umbrella and if Santa Claus could do it, I think I would have a row of shops come surgeries*"

that would be the front of the school where Connexions made sure all those things were connected. You need people with the resources and the time to make sure that Mrs Bloggs who has never set foot in the school, does so... and I think more outreach is part of it. You need someone who goes to Mrs Bloggs's house to involve her and make sure her children in the school don't go the same way she went. ... What happened to Victoria [Climbie] happened because all the services are split and divided. ... We have kids who come to school dirty and unfed because their parents have been picked up by the police in a raid... there is too much disconnected stuff ... it's crazy."

5.2.5.6 Finally, deployment and partnership arrangements meant that many of the young people at risk we met were exposed to constant diagnosis and reassessment from new PAs, key workers and adults from different agencies. Young people reported frustration and, to some extent, distrust in having constantly to restart the process of sharing their life stories with other adults. This also appeared to reinforce the fear of being let down. This issue of multiple professional interventions is further illustrated in Section 6.

5.2.6 Work-based learning settings

5.2.6.1 A total of 15 work-based learning providers were visited as part of the study. These were predominantly E2E providers, each with varying levels of established contact with their local Connexions Service. In some cases, we found close working links between the provider and the local Connexions Service. Some were co-located on shared premises; others were situated close to local Connexions offices.

5.2.6.2 Some of the young people interviewed appeared to be making contact with Connexions through other providers (such as E2E) rather than the other way around. In some of these cases, it appeared that Connexions maintained the role of overseeing young people's progress but often without close contact, perhaps because E2E was viewed by many PAs as a successful post-16 outcome in itself. Our findings suggest that there was hardly any perceived need on the part of the Connexions Service to follow-up and track the young person's progress while on E2E or afterwards despite "risk factors" still in existence. This resonates with Connexions management information, which shows that significant numbers of young people are leaving E2E to enter jobs without training, or to become NEET (SCYPG, 2004a).

5.2.6.3 This suggests that the P1 priority status no longer has the same impact post-16 once the transition has taken place. As a result, some E2E providers reported that they often had to undertake the PA role themselves. The issue of on-going support for young people from Connexions is still unclear particularly in relation to the transition from key stage 4 to 5.

5.2.6.4 Another significant issue highlighted from the findings relates to the extent to which E2E providers are being diverted from their main focus on teaching and learning. In many cases, it was reported that they are often diverted from skills development activities with young people because they

are having to meet immediate presenting needs for dealing with crisis situations, without support from a Connexions PA.

5.2.6.5 We found that where the PA was proactively working with young people on E2E (either on an intensive and regular basis or within a complementary arrangement to help address certain risk factors through brokerage or advocacy), there were some good examples of positive impact, which helped address the everyday barriers to progression.

5.2.7 Interview findings related to different perspectives on specific cases

5.2.7.1 From the triangulation interviews conducted specifically in educational settings, we were able to examine in more detail the impact of Connexions on young people's lives, not only from the standpoint of the particular young person but also from the perspective of adults who worked with them. Whilst most of the research data re-affirmed the young people's accounts of Connexions, we also found additional insights: -

- There was often a lack of clarity as to who was the young person's actual nominated PA. In one particular case, three different PAs had records on a young person's file but all three told us that they were not the young person's current PA.
- There were variable standards in the quality of PAs' note taking. From our observations, this often took the form of a diary and many PAs acknowledged that they did not record "sensitive" client information in the local Connexions Service database.
- The research team observed resistance on the part of some PAs to using the APIR process and the accompanying assessment tools. Reasons for this were varied and included justifications such as the time-consuming nature of these assessments, the degree of intrusion they were deemed to represent and the practicality of carrying out such assessments with some young people who were unable to engage with the process.
- There were information technology problems associated with the work of some PAs in schools, colleges and work-based settings. Those who did not have online access to Connexions electronic filing systems in their setting were having to maintain a paper-based system of note taking and transfer the information manually on to the computer separately at the Connexions base. This hampered their ability to carry out their work effectively.
- There was evidence of young people who were clearly at risk, who were being missed by Connexions, due to a lack of joined up information, or of limited time and resources. (See also 4.7, 4.9.3.2 and 6.11.3.)
- From the evidence of our interviews, Connexions staff seldom had information available on the progress of young people on programmes to which they had been referred (such as E2E). Instead, the day-to-day work in these programmes on Connexions related issues (including careers advice and guidance) was being

carried out by key workers or tutors with different backgrounds and levels of training. In these cases, young people were often unable to identify their Connexions PA or they considered the staff with whom they had the most contact as their PA.

5.2.7.2 In two specific schools, the researchers had the opportunity to interview staff and observe work that provided a contrast to such problems. Here Connexions had staff who were able to provide the whole range of Connexions services in situ, including, long term one to one and/or group work help for young people requiring intensive support as well as careers advice and guidance. This does not mean that every PA must necessarily be able to provide all forms of support; rather, that each setting (a school, in this case) should have access to one person who can offer all forms of support or a team of PAs with different “specialisms”. There were the resources available and the flexibility to choose targeted groups of young people at risk of exclusion, and preventative approaches were jointly identified with the school throughout the course of Year 9. A planned two-year programme of work followed, with a joint school/Connexions approach to providing individualised programmes that included a combination of personal development (through, for example, the Prince’s Trust), vocational training (through motivational placements) and an alternative curriculum programme (such as ASDAN youth achievement awards). This shows that exemplary work within a universal approach is manageable and achievable within schools, as part of an inclusive model that addresses the full spectrum of social inclusion.

5.2.7.3 This provision, aiming to target issues such as low levels of attendance, bad behaviour in the classroom, general disaffection with school and anger management was credited with having a positive effect on young people. Among other things, young people and adult workers alike spoke of positive outcomes stemming from this type of work such as increased confidence, the removal of barriers to education, raised awareness of future training and employment opportunities and most importantly, the avoidance of permanent exclusion from school. A number of elements appeared necessary for this type of provision to prove effective, including a school with a strong pastoral and community ethos, true partnership working with Connexions and a level and quality of Connexions provision to match the need. The rewards were high when all these conditions were in place. According to the head of the pupil support unit at one of the schools visited:

“She [the Connexions PA] has about ten or twelve young people on the alternative curriculum. These are people who otherwise would be permanently excluded from school so this system has saved them.”

5.2.7.4 In summary:

- The relationship between schools and Connexions is not a relationship of equals. Schools maintain a relationship of power over a Connexions Service that is a relatively new arrival on the scene. The school’s control of the relationship can manifest itself in

the degree to which it acts as the gatekeeper of access to young people through control of information about pupils.

- Connexions is a service that relies on meaningful contact and rapport between the young person and the PA to have an impact. However, the way in which the Connexions process is organised in educational settings still shows many opportunities for breaks and gaps to occur in the continuity of this relationship. These are particularly common on referral to E2E or when a new PA is allocated to a young person.
- Statutory duties imposed on the Connexions Service when dealing with certain risk categories (i.e. SEN/LDD) appear to be observed in such a way as to ensure general minimum standards of service. Other risk categories might benefit from these standards.
- In general there is a smaller support service for young people in colleges and they are expected to be more proactive in seeking help. However, the research evidence suggests that Connexions can work well as part of student retention and progression strategies within further education.

5.3 Connexions shops and centres

5.3.1 The nature of the provision and its delivery patterns

5.3.1.1 The Connexions shops and centres occupy an intermediate position between the services based in formal educational provision and the outreach activity in the wider community. They provide venues where PAs and sometimes other agencies can make appointments to see young people or where young people can call in to seek information or help with a problem.

5.3.1.2 As far as we could ascertain, the terms “shop” or “centre” were used loosely and interchangeably and there were no exact definitions of such outlets. Within the provision directly managed by the Connexions Service, it was possible to identify four main types of outlet, though local development strategies, differences in the nature of the property portfolio and variable capital resources mean that there is substantial variation and these are not watertight categories.

- The Connexions centre - where reception staff would meet visitors, information and sometimes computer access is available, PAs can interview young people, workers from other agencies may sometimes make appointments with young people and very often, Connexions staff have office accommodation. Many of these centres are former Careers Service premises. In the most radical approaches, they may house staff of other agencies so that there can be a multi-agency response to a young person’s needs and even a one-stop-shop approach to dealing with any query.
- The Connexions shop may have many of the same features. Some are high street venues, converted for the purpose. They may be smaller, somewhat more informal and are less likely to provide office

accommodation for large numbers of staff. Some of these shops have modern cyber café facilities.

- A Connexions point – where PAs create an identifiable space in a library, school, youth centre or other such venue and staff it at particular times. These may be termed “centres” in some areas or “pods” in others. They are usually implemented in partnership with the host agency and in some cases, Connexions does not manage the facility directly. Sometimes, the provision is minimal, consisting mainly of notice boards and leaflets in a small designated space.
- Mobile provision - where a bus or van is used to take staff out, with information and sometimes activities, to attract young people’s attention to the service, or to provide an outlet in a rural area or an urban setting where access to central venues is difficult.

5.3.1.4 Ancillary staff often operate in front line roles in such outlets, with titles such as “receptionist”, “information adviser” or “young person adviser”, usually helping with initial enquiries. Even if young people see a PA, it is usually not possible to know that they will see the same Personal Adviser on consecutive appointments.

5.3.1.5 All such provision is branded with the prescribed Connexions colours and formats. Corporate identity guidelines were issued early in the course of implementation and sub-contractors and other Connexions delivery agencies, are also required to follow them. Guidance was also provided on marketing, media contact and the promotion of the new service (DfES, Oct. 2001, p.117).

5.3.2 The role and impact of shops and centres

5.3.2.1 Our comments in this discussion are drawn from three main sources: the interviews with managers and PAs; the observations of the peer researchers; and direct observation within the settings. The researchers visited 33 Connexions shops and centres and a few of the peer researchers undertook their own observational research visits.

5.3.2.2 National figures supplied by the Department for Education and Skills show that there are over 400 one-stop shops, which bring together a range of local services under one roof, and 1,400 community access points for young people are open or planned by Connexions Partnerships. On average, there are 40,000 visits to one-stop shops and community based access points each week or two million a year. Many one-stop shops open evenings and weekends.

5.3.2.3 It has not been possible to obtain specific usage data on shops and centres in our Partnership areas, nor data on the proportion of fixed appointments to drop in callers. Our view based on the interviews with young people and the perceptions of the peer researchers is that young people rarely make an unsolicited visit to a shop or centre to make initial contact with Connexions. First contact is almost always made elsewhere, and most young people only seemed to go into these venues for appointments, for a leaflet or

minor piece of information, or to ask for specific things if they already have had some PA contact (and this latter was also relatively uncommon).

5.3.2.3 It is not easy for an adolescent with few social or academic skills to walk into an unfamiliar building and tell a receptionist what their problem is, ask to see an adviser, or search in a library or on a computer for information. Many commented that they disliked the feeling of being observable; that there were insufficient numbers of young people to create privacy and anonymity. As one young person put it, the shop was *“like a doctor’s waiting room.”* Others perceive them as in the same family of services as Jobcentres. Other inhibiting factors included the poor geographical location of many of these facilities, away from main shopping streets, or far from residential areas or the places where young people generally spend their time. Access can be problematic for those with mobility or communication difficulties or those with young children. Despite the efforts of some Partnerships, opening times were also a source of complaint. Whilst some shops and centres run evening sessions, sometimes for particular groups, many only open between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. This was seen as unsatisfactory, as most young people will be in school for most of this time; nor were Saturday mornings from 9 a.m. given much welcome as Friday night is the traditional late night out.

“There are four workers in the office, there’s two desks right as you come in... you feel they know exactly what you’re doing... if you’re looking at sexual health brochures and that.”

“The staff in the Connexions shop are very friendly and efficient, but are not genuine in the way that they deal with young people; it is apparent that they have been trained to work like this. We would prefer to talk to Personal Advisers, instead of highly trained receptionists!”

“You can sometimes feel that you are rushed in the Connexions shop when you ask for information. You get the impression that you are just a number and that all the staff want to do, is get you on a course or get you a job. When I asked about going to university, they gave me some information, then kicked me out the door! I wouldn’t go back there for advice; I would talk to the staff at college instead...if you have a bad experience of using the Connexions shop to find out information about education and careers, then you are unlikely to go back... if you have a more personal problem.”

“The Connexions shops are always closed! The opening times clash with the times that young people are at school; this needs to be changed if young people are going to use the Connexions shops.”

“It has a ‘scary’ office feel.”

“It gives me a bad memory about signing on.”

5.3.2.4 Overall, the young people questioned observed key differences between older Connexions shops, which are often refurbished careers offices, and newer ones. The older shops were said to be uninviting and not engaging

or attractive, “professional” in style, and looking “like a careers shop... because they are the old careers shops rebranded.” The newer Connexions shops, however, were said to be “more funky, more modern, brighter;” and some young people appreciated that they seemed “lively” with “people coming up to you, asking how you are”, rather than leaving them to initiate contact.

5.3.2.5 Young people who were aware of all of the resources that can be accessed in Connexions shops and centres were generally impressed with them. Such resources included Internet access, job files, and information about drugs, housing, sexual health and the police. Not all young people we spoke to on this subject were aware of all that these Connexions outlets could offer. One young person was aware that shops and centres held job files but not how much else was available, commenting, *“I wouldn’t have known they [the resources] were there. I just thought you went in for your interview.”*

5.3.2.6 Despite these observations, there is some evidence within this study that Connexions shops and centres can play a positive role in the repertoire of provision. Firstly, for young people who want factual information and can ask for it or seek it out, these outlets provide an additional resource often on a larger scale than the available school or college information on options. Secondly, where the multi-agency philosophy was operating in practice, we were given examples of mutual benefits, such as more accessible sexual health or contraception information. Thirdly, and perhaps most importantly, there is a residual but necessary role, when other sources of contact have failed or been unsatisfactory. In our interviews with young people in the risk groups, detailed in the next section, there are several instances of young people in severe difficulty calling into a Connexions centre to ask for help. In some cases, friends who had been helped by Connexions had recommended the service. In all cases, it was clear that the response received could vary, with extremes that were either empathetic, efficient in dealing with the problems quickly and accurately, and signposting appropriately; or very inadequate, leaving the young person angry and disenchanted because of a lack of the relevant information, a perceived failure to deliver, and maybe yet further suggestions of other agencies to visit.

5.4 Outreach, youth organisations, and specialist agencies

5.4.1 The context of outreach

5.4.1.1 Beyond placing PAs in educational establishments and managing delivery in Connexions shops and centres, the Connexions Service also works with and through a very large range of other organisations. These include outreach projects; both statutory Youth Service provision and voluntary sector youth organisations; specialist agencies such as sexual health services, drug treatment and counselling projects; accommodation and emergency shelter services; and a range of support projects for particular groups. These settings can play a crucial complementary role in enhancing the impact that the service has on young people. As the *Working Together* document on voluntary and community organisations puts it, such groups

“have a wealth of expertise, knowledge and information on working with young people” (DfES, 2002: p.3). Partnerships also have to “demonstrate that they have involved voluntary and community organisations in their work” (DfES, 2002: p.26). This provision has a wide-ranging potential influence, from helping to shape positive expectations of what services are available, to discouraging young people from sustaining contact. More than 40 of these voluntary, community or specialist agencies were visited in the course of the study. This section considers some examples of outreach, youth and specialist organisations and draws principally on interviews with Connexions PAs and other workers in these settings. Many of the issues they raised are echoed in the young people’s comments in the next section. A broad range of the research hypotheses are addressed in this section, but in general, this material is relevant to, and supports, the hypothesis that; “Successful contact can be enhanced by outreach to young people at risk. “

5.4.1.2 Delivery arrangements are as varied as the organisations themselves. The main patterns of delivery include:

- Secondment of PAs to a voluntary or specialist agency.
- Secondments of voluntary sector or Youth Service staff into Connexions.
- Arrangements to designate an existing member of staff in such an organisation as a PA on a full-time or part-time basis, sometimes funded in full or in part by Connexions. This pattern is sometimes referred to as the “absorbed” model.
- Grants from Connexions to another agency for delivery in outreach, or activities, or specialist advice.

5.4.1.3 The extent of these secondment and funding mechanisms can be considerable in some Partnerships. Almost invariably such arrangements would be covered by sub-contracts, Service Level Agreements (SLAs) or grant-aid conditions, which would include the requirements for branding of the delivery and for monitoring of Connexions outputs.

5.4.2 Examples of voluntary sector and outreach work in conjunction with Connexions

5.4.2.1 The first example of these settings is a registered charity and **drop-in centre** for young people aged 13-25 in a small market town. Its mission statement is to “provide a free, confidential and impartial counselling, advice and information service for young people.” It covers most of the issues and risks that Connexions deals with: housing, homelessness, sexual health, general health, employment and training, as well as providing its own counselling service, free condom distribution and a needle exchange. Its SLA with the Connexions Partnership in the sub-region describes its purpose as to “purchase the delivery of advice, information, support and counselling,” especially for “young people who may be at risk.” The drop in centre receives a moderately substantial annual grant for these services. In addition, the centre is expected to host weekly surgeries for a visiting Connexions PA.

5.4.2.2 An interview with the “Outreach and Advice Worker” worker at the centre revealed that dealings with Connexions were conducted largely by telephone, despite their geographical proximity. This was often a consequence of wanting to cooperate and at the same time avoid the appearance of multiple interventions where the services were working together on the needs; *“What we’re not trying to do is confuse young people and say you’re accessing our service now go up the road as well.”* In general, the worker felt that the relationship with Connexions was complementary, and worked well. *“We do things like food parcels that they can’t do for people and they do things, like they’ve done things like the bus vouchers and if our clients need that then we can go to them.”* The financial input from Connexions was also welcomed as *“a lifesaver”*.

5.4.2.3 This particular centre had been established for 20 years. The worker saw clear advantages in its knowledge of the area, its relative informality and the viable relationship with local young people. *“I think the most effective way it [Connexions] can work is with places like the voluntary sector that are established in the local area and I think that is a way that they’re going to benefit and get the client group on board... anyone can open up a shop and say come in and see me but you have to build a reputation where young people are concerned.”*

5.4.2.4 The centre provides an interesting comparison with a nearby Connexions shop, bearing out some of the earlier comments about informality. The two premises are located at opposite ends of the main high street, and their appearance is very different. The Connexions shop is of course branded in the familiar orange and purple livery, and has a layout of uniformly blue comfortable chairs, shelves of information in purple folders, and a reception desk. It looks tidy and professional, but not necessarily young person friendly. The drop in centre by contrast feels far more welcoming. It is slightly more chaotic and disorganised, with dilapidated comfortable sofas and coffee tables scattered with leaflets and local newspapers; *“We sort of go with the whole teenager’s bedroom feel,”* the worker explained. There is also no conspicuous reception area. The staff are situated in an open plan back room, with a glass partition from the main public room. A young person can therefore wander in and browse without feeling that a receptionist is expecting them to approach, but the layout also allows staff members to notice and respond if a young person appears to want help. The worker told us this was a conscious strategy, and something that Connexions could learn from; *“I think they’re [Connexions] struggling to reach the hard to reach clients. Partly the environment they’ve set up, we’ve always believed in it looking, like when you walk through the door, very informal, not having a desk and a receptionist behind the desk and the feeling of ‘I’m accessing a clinical service.’”*

5.4.2.5 One wall of the main room of the centre is a branded Connexions space, probably most akin to the Connexions point described above. However, this too was noticeably less formal than a Connexions shop and information from a range of other agencies is also on display.

5.4.2.6 Another aspect of the informality of the setting was the relative unobtrusiveness of paperwork and tracking for young people. The worker stressed the advantage of anonymity at the drop-in centre; *“I love it when a young person can just come in, be helped, you don’t even need to necessarily take their first name.”* This has obvious advantages in a centre that provides sexual health advice, access to contraception, and needle exchange. It is also seen by some, including the worker at this centre, as avoiding the risks of a PA or other workers adopting a view of a young person coloured by prior biographical records. *“We believe in not having any kind of information about that person that would make us make up our minds... and to let them tell their story from scratch.”* This issue goes beyond the risks of labelling young people, and points to a cultural difference between Connexions and the some voluntary sector or youth organisations. Based on feedback received from her clients, the worker suggested that, *“It’s [the Connexions shop] all around papers and computers and filling in forms, and it’s almost like the young person feels that takes over from them. So whereas we say, ‘right just sit down and tell us your story, sit on the sofa with us’... it might be half an hour before you even grab a bit of paper and a pen, because we don’t need that information.”* By contrast, the worker felt that Connexions could be overly bureaucratic, with the result that *“young people... don’t feel that listened to and it kind of scares them a little bit.... It’s really crucial what they do with young people because once a young person decides that service is bad you will almost never get them to decide it’s good.”*

5.4.2.7 Our second example is also a registered charity but is 100 per cent funded by the local Social Services Department to be responsible for **the provision of support to care leavers** under the Leaving Care Act (2000). As a minimum service, this project provides 6-monthly pathway plans for all care leavers at the scheme. It offers its own PAs, who have experience of housing, education, social work, prisons and domestic violence work. It has the welcoming atmosphere of a home rather than an office or a typical drop-in centre. It has a pool table, kitchen, a computer room with Internet facilities, a TV and stereo for young people to use, washing and laundry facilities for rough sleepers, and a small garden where young people can smoke cigarettes if they wish. The TV room doubles as a branded Connexions space, with a large notice board covered in Connexions posters.

5.4.2.8 We interviewed several staff at this project including one worker with the title of Personal Adviser, whose role was not only to provide practical support in terms of advice on housing and education and other such issues, but also to offer pastoral care; *“giving the general support that a parent would.”* The PAs at this scheme, as Leaving Care Advisers, are legally obliged to be the key workers for young people, but the work of providing advice on education and training has largely been taken over by Connexions. The project PA felt that this had *“caused a bit of confusion”*, and has introduced a lacuna into the holistic approach that the organisation takes to young people. She also pointed out the confusion around the title of “PA”. A young person at the project may have as many as 3 PAs; one from the scheme itself, one from Connexions, and one from the Teenage Pregnancy Unit, which clearly conflicts with the APIR aspiration that “a young person

should have only one plan, to which different professionals contribute, rather than a multitude of plans put in place by different agencies.” (DfES, 2002:p. 23) The worker informed us that the project used to host a drop-in Connexions PA, but that they had left and not been replaced. She had herself taken young people to job interviews.

5.4.2.9 This worker also stressed that the key to working successfully with young people was an understanding that they are all individuals and an avoidance of a blueprinted strategy for working with particular “types” of young people. She believed that flagging up education or employment only once young people have had a chance to settle down ensures that they are more likely to continue with their choice and that EET orientated interventions could prove ineffectual if appropriate practical assistance and pastoral support had not been provided first. In her opinion, the target-driven culture of Connexions compounded the potential problem of applying inappropriate interventions. The proportion of care-leavers in this borough who were EET was currently 30 per cent as at 2003/4. This worker felt that the Connexions target for raising this proportion substantially was unmanageable.

5.4.2.10 The third example is of a **specialist housing provider with expertise in the area of homelessness**. We interviewed two Connexions PAs deployed within this organisation. The first PA works under arrangements closest to the “absorbed” PA model in that she is part funded by Connexions and employed and managed by the agency, with quarterly meetings with a Connexions manager. *“I am the only PA in (the city) who works specifically with housing, that is my role as a PA, that is my speciality...Anyone that I work with who is under 19... I am a Connexions PA to them... For over 19 year-olds I am more of a training, education and employment worker.”* Her caseload is also unusually small, about six to eight homeless young people at any one time. Although based at the housing agency office, this PA does little of her work with young people there. *“Outreach is pretty much the nature of my job...Most of what I do is home visits, I spend a lot of time at home, a lot of time in cafés, more neutral venues.”* This theme was echoed by the second PA from this agency, whose post is also half funded by Connexions, who is based elsewhere but *“not sort of stuck in an office.”* The informality of outreach work was underlined to us: *“The more troublesome ones need people that are definitely street people as opposed to suits and people that are necessarily coming from a fixed teaching background where everything goes in that order at a specific time.”*

5.4.2.11 One of these workers differed from many of the shop or school based PAs that we spoke to in her avoidance of APIR. Her agency had its own assessment process and she felt that APIR was inappropriate for her caseload; *“The young people I work with are so disengaged and marginalised that as soon as you pull any paper work out, they are just like, there is no understanding or comprehension...It brings back bad memories for them with social services.”* She summed up the problem as one of distance between policy makers and practitioners: *“I think it is just the age old problem, people in offices somewhere deciding that is really good...I would fight it if they tried to make me [use APIR]...Each young person is different and each PA is*

different, how they work with young people. I can see why they want to do it because it's easier for targets and evaluation but I think if Connexions is meant to be all about the young people, is it?"

5.4.2.12 This worker advanced clear views that outreach is the best strategy for working with her client group. One issue for her was the difficulty for some young people of getting to the principal Connexions shops. *"I hardly ever go into the Connexions office in town just because the young people don't go there... They know vaguely about it but they wouldn't think to go there if they were in a crisis."* A community based office, she felt, would be better used. Her work involved little office contact and much more home visiting with frequent contact. *"It is intense because it's lots of phone calls, lots of personal contact... I will see them a couple of times a week, speaking to them pretty much every other day to see them through it really."* One key to the success of the outreach strategy was in her view this demonstration of consistent availability and patience for the moment of readiness. *"Sometimes they don't want to engage... so they will say, well actually I can't be arsed at the moment and I kind of respect that really."* In her mind this was an important way to keep young people having some control of their own destinies, and contrasted with settings that imply or demand compulsion. Flexibility and autonomy to use time responsively rather than in heavily programmed schedules and to be able to use a young person's interests to build up trust and communication were also features as she saw it of the work style.

5.4.2.13 Our fourth example is of **PAs using outreach or detached strategies**. Some of the PAs about whom we received the most glowing testimony from young people do much of their work outside institutional settings, meeting young people in public venues, in their homes or simply on the streets. Such staff may be directly employed by Connexions or may be employed and managed in another agency. This style of outreach is a feature of both voluntary and statutory youth services and is sometimes seen as a particular strength of the voluntary sector youth work style: "outreach work aimed at working with young people on their own territory" (DfES, 2002:p.9).

5.4.2.14 One such worker was a PA officially designated as the "intensive" PA in a paired working arrangement for two schools that catered for young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties. She had a caseload of 40 young men, with a further 15 pending from Year 9. Although the school determined her caseload, and first contacts were obviously dependent on that process, this worker did much of her work outside this formal environment, meeting young people in local cafés or public spaces. Another PA in a similar paired arrangement attached to a school told us that very little of her work was actually done at the school, and that she worked autonomously, and with very little structured support or direction from Connexions. This worker had a caseload of 40, with 25 young people she saw very intensively.

5.4.2.15 These workers stressed the key importance of consistency of support, being available to young people over time and communicating that commitment. *"I would never, ever give up on a young person... and I think they know that."* They also saw it as important to be meeting young people in their own context and on their own terms. *"You're catering to what they need,*

it's not prescriptive, and therefore you'll be seeing young people as individuals." Although this style of working can be time consuming, the payoff was seen as more relaxed young people who were more disposed to discuss difficult issues.

5.4.2.16 One of the workers also described how the contact with parents and families in the community setting aided her understanding of her clients; *"When you start to talk to them, you realise that they're just products of their own... circumstances... It does help going round there, because you do kind of see the situations they're in."* Most important of all though, is the way that the intensive outreach strategy helps to build up a trusting relationship with young people who have had especially difficult lives so far.

5.4.3 Issues for these community settings and outreach styles of work

5.4.3.1 The PAs interviewed in these situations shared a number of common perspectives on the role of Connexions and similar dilemmas in their work.

5.4.3.2 The PAs and other workers discussed in this section shared a general commitment to the values of Connexions, and lauded its aim to be young person centred, *"The mission statements of Connexions I think are commendable."* There is little doubt that they shared in these values, whether they were Connexions PAs or working in partner organisations. The Connexions ethos has given it a good start in the eyes of many workers.

5.4.3.3 Outreach strategies have a demonstrable advantage in engaging disaffected young people. This is facilitated where the Connexions Partnership concerned has strengths in networking specialists and different fields of expertise, and picking up or sharing work where young people are initially engaged by youth organisations, or community based agencies.

5.4.3.4 The experience of being let down in the past, although not of course necessarily by Connexions itself, shapes the orientations of young people so that they are not comfortable in the more formal environment of a Connexions shop or a school Connexions office. The hardest to reach, we were repeatedly told, want informality, confidentiality and anonymity, and are often mistrustful of any statutory or "professional" organisation.

5.4.3.5 Local projects or targeted schemes for particular groups can also offer higher levels of sub-cultural understanding. This may apply to work with many black and minority ethnic groups, other particular identities or specific risk groups. Workers from community settings suggested that Connexions did not have a sufficient diversity within its staff, as one of the PAs in these projects explained, *"One of my small complaints about Connexions is the composition of the staff. I sometimes feel it's not necessarily geared to the clientele they deal with. For instance, I would say that Connexions is probably 80% female whereas the client is probably 80% male."* This perception is confirmed by a survey of the profile of Connexions staffing in 2003, which found that three quarters were female and one in ten Personal Advisers were from ethnic minorities (National Audit Office, 2004, p.31).

5.4.3.6 Most of these workers and some of their managers were concerned and frustrated about the issue of what happens to young people after 19, especially those most disaffected. The likelihood of loss of contact post-19 appears to spring from the target to reduce the numbers of 16-18 year-olds who are NEET, which in turn derives mainly from early Connexions policy and its relationship to the New Deal programme. One of these workers reported the remark of a girl who had felt close to her school PA; *“The day I finished school she didn’t care about me anymore.”* A few of these settings had good links to post-19 services such as Information Advice and Guidance (IAG). Others had no such onward reference points and all felt strongly about the discontinuity in service delivery.

“What I don’t like about Connexions is that... they’re here to service 16 to 19s. However, when I try and access things like youth activities, summer programmes, it tends to be aimed at the 16 to 17 year olds, probably because they’ve got a longer shelf life.”

“19 year-olds have been turned away, I know from the local office.”

5.4.3.7 Several workers in these settings felt that the demands of tracking systems were over-bureaucratic or even in some cases that they could compromise the effectiveness of an outreach strategy. In at least one situation, Connexions funding had been reduced and the worker's perception was that this had been almost entirely due to a failure to produce complete statistical returns. Mail shots and APIR systems were criticised as unsuitable for some clients who had literacy problems. Follow up of highly mobile young people from unstable situations for recording purposes was also extremely time consuming.

“I guess she just wasn’t one of those workers, she just went out and about all the time and she did work quite a lot with young people as well, so she just didn’t have the time or the administrative support to type in all the sheets.”

“Quite a lot of them [young people] have literacy issues and I try and avoid writing down stuff unless it’s absolutely necessary and it’s really going to help them because quite a lot of them feel awkward about actually admitting that”.

“Some of them won’t engage. Normally it is like stupid stuff, they sell their mobile phones and don’t give me their number but then I have got their parents or their best friends so I just track them down.”

5.4.3.8 Most workers we spoke to in these contexts shared an ambivalence or even a resistance towards the dominance of destination targets. Some had developed their own avoidance or coping strategies. A cultural divide between the intensive outreach approach and the institutional priorities of Connexions appeared to create a pivotal tension for many such staff.

“This target thing is going to be a real problem... it’s going to really deflect from the support... what I value about the service at the moment is going to be severely challenged.”

“I think the main factor that comes into play is actually going at the pace of the young person... I don’t think they [the government] realise that a lot of young people are not even ready for that [EET]... building up a relationship with a young person is an achievement as well. But the thing is, those things aren’t recognised, it’s the hard outcomes that are recognised.”

“We’re supposed to be mainly for the hardest to reach. I think all of that has been lost in the whole ethos of Connexions because I think it’s turned out to be more about the quantity of young people we see as opposed to quality. So we’re not really reaching the young people that we’re supposed to be targeting but unfortunately, the managers will tell you differently.”

“Connexions are saying ‘how many young people have you got into training, education, employment?’ Training; education, employment; training, education, employment... everything in me resists against the kind of market approach to young people because I think they are not a commodity, they are a human being”.

5.4.3.9 Several of the PAs were disparaging about superficial and temporary changes in a young person’s NEET status and a perceived lack of consistent follow up. They acknowledged that their own efforts at follow up were always likely to prove inadequate without greater support from other partners.

“Anyone can get anyone on a college course”.

“In four years... I have only ever had one young person successfully complete the (X college) course.”

“There is nothing like... a support system who in the first couple of weeks of college makes sure that young person is alright.”

5.4.3.10 There are issues arising from the intensiveness in the relationships with young people, not least its emotional drain on PAs. The judgements around keeping appropriate boundaries and avoiding dependency are particularly subtle.

“There are professional boundaries but it’s hard sometimes, you have got to be careful of the dependency thing.”

“Some people will want to milk it and I do have one or two clients that have milked it for quite a long time and I make it quite clear.”

“I just think he’s become dependent and sometimes I think the young people that have been in care have as well.”

5.4.3.11 Patterns of support and supervision are not always adequate for such a demanding role with clients. Several of these workers reported a lack of management support. This is sometimes compounded by the complexities of secondment or part-funded roles. One worker we spoke to said she had only had three meetings with her line managers in three years as a PA and that those discussions had centred around setting NEET reduction targets. Several workers in outreach roles left during the course of the study, mainly because of this perceived target focus and lack of support.

5.4.3.12 These findings echo the conclusions of reports from both the Joseph Rowntree Foundation and the Institute of Public Policy Research. (Crimmens et al, 2004; Edwards and Hatch, 2003). These studies highlight the importance of outreach approaches to reach the most socially excluded and argue that there is scope for further development of roles, where the skills of youth workers and other professionals in gaining the trust and confidence of young people are married to a range of options available for support, rather than simply either youth activities or advice and guidance. They show that the distribution of such projects is very variable – for street-based work with the Connexions age group, provision ranged from one street-based youth project per 3,000 young people in Devon and Cornwall to one per 55,000 in Northampton. They argue that for successful work with the most excluded young people open-ended and flexible, medium to long-term interventions are required and that quantifiable results may not be evident for some considerable time. They both suggest that new approaches to target setting and accountability are needed to reflect the notion of meeting young people's needs as a whole rather than prioritising education, training and work to the exclusion of other positive outcomes, and, as we have also suggested in Section 2, that there is a need to explore alternative ways of recognising “soft” outcomes.

5.5 Branding and marketing

5.5.1 All the settings described in this section affect and in turn are affected by the branding and image of Connexions. Throughout this study we have listened carefully for the perceptions of young people and those who work with them on this issue and explored it further with our peer researchers.

5.5.2 As we have already pointed out in the description of the Connexions process in Section 3, branding and marketing processes start to affect impact before a young person ever comes into direct contact with the service. A very small step further on in the process, the vast majority of young people form their early impressions from presentations about Connexions or small group sessions in school. The overwhelming evidence of this study is that in most cases those presentations convey an understanding that Connexions is primarily concerned with options around jobs and careers. The quotations below show a range of these impressions from several young people from different areas and different schools. We spell out the “impact leakage” that results from this in Section 3 and in further examples in Section 6. Young people who might need or wish to use a wider range of support do not do so

because of such perceptions. Where any degree of success was reported, it was in relation to work with individual classes or year groups.

“If your first contact with Connexions is at school, then you tend to think of the service in terms of careers advice.”

“I probably wouldn’t go there [the Connexions shop] because of the first impression I got of Connexions in a presentation they did in my school assembly.”

“This was not a good way to advertise Connexions, because young people do not pay any attention in school assemblies and they are first thing in the morning so young people are not awake!”

“I had a good experience of Connexions in my school. The PAs did go into form classes to speak to the young people and they also held sessions with parents to explain the services that they offer as well.”

5.5.3 Young people conveyed to us that they wished to see a positive message about their potential and their ability to come through any problems. For some in our study, the advertising and presentation of Connexions has formed a view that the service is for young people with problems - a stigmatising effect that most wish to avoid.

“The image of Connexions is that they can resolve all of your problems – this is not realistic. They need to show that this can’t be done overnight. They should show the step-by-step way of resolving issues in their advertising.”

“At my college, Connexions is seen as somewhere for people to go with ‘serious problems’. It needs to be made more accessible to ALL young people.”

“They focus on negative things like bullying. The adverts should be more positive.”

5.5.4 Our peer researchers expressed appreciation of the web-based advice service from Connexions Direct. In their view it was clear, attractive and accessible but they felt that it could be improved by better marketing and by signposting for parents or young people, for whom English is not a first language or for whom disability created a barrier. They welcomed the interactive facilities but cautioned strongly against a belief that all young people had IT access or could handle the technology to meet their information needs.

“The Connexions Direct website has a chat line facility where you can e-mail advisers with questions. This is good, but you have to remember that not everyone has access to the Internet.”

“It’s like being in a chat-room...amazing... I’d use it for everything.”

5.5.5 There was wide variation between Partnerships in the use of promotional items or events and we could find no evidence of significant usage or impact from the Connexions Card.

“In my area, Connexions give out loads of promotional goodies - pens, stress balls, frisbees... really cool.”

“In our area, we don’t get any promotional stuff.”

“We get a Connexions card. We get points if we attend school or college and then can use these for discounted items in shops, cinemas, on the bus etc. It is also an ID card. I’ve never really used the card and have now lost it.”

“We don’t get the Connexions card in [our area]; we’ve never even heard of it!”

5.5.6 Other strong messages were around the need for informality and accessibility, which also reinforced our findings on the shops and centres described above. Some young people felt that PAs who shared identity or life experience with them would be more accessible and effective.

“In my school presentation, the Connexions workers wore suits... They are more likely to engage the young person if they dress down to their level.”

“I went to a Connexions talk by the Chief Executive and one little girl stood up and said, “Can you stop using long words, please!”

“It would feel much better talking to a PA who has been through the same problems as you – you would respect them more for this. Young people don’t want to talk to PAs who have had a perfect life.”

5.5.7 All of our work around marketing and branding can best be summarised by the comment of one of our peer researchers, who said, “Connexions should be an ‘inspiration zone’.” This remark seemed to us to sum up very well what young people were telling us about the ethos most likely to foster their progress.

5.6 Comparing the settings

5.6.1 All these varied situations and the arrangements for PA deployment within them are highly complex. In the course of the study, researchers saw dozens of permutations in the way Connexions Services are working within and in partnership with other agencies. However, it is possible to draw out from the examples described in this section a number of key issues that applied across the board.

- The Connexions Service never has full independent control of the process of gaining information about young people or access to work with them. Indeed, this would not be expected in a multi-agency environment. The “gatekeeping” role, however, which is played by

many partner agencies, most especially the schools, constrains the potential interventions of the service. The Connexions Service has an aspiration to deliver holistic support to young people but its ability to provide the full range of service is crucially dependent on the attitudes and organisational arrangements of its partners.

- Key to this matter of access is the issue of how the PAs, especially those that are deployed within external organisations, are perceived and treated by other agencies. The PA can be marginalized and isolated or treated as integral to the team. They can be an “outsider” or an “insider” in relation to work place networks. This clearly affects impact and moreover, is to a large degree controllable through the arrangements made between the service and host organisations.
- There is evidence of separate and unshared assessments and judgements about priorities being made by different organisations. In some circumstances, this can lead to distorted communication and/or weakened delivery. In some instances, there were several Connexions PAs involved with one case or staff also designated as “Personal Advisers” by other agencies, all too often without a clear lead being established. The example of shared assessment and detailed protocols in the special schools visited shows the opposite and positive image of what can be achieved through well-understood joint working practices.
- Partnership agreements had been produced by Connexions for many of the settings visited but few were truly operational documents. For maximum usefulness, they need to be explicit and specific on roles and responsibilities, understood by front line staff, and regularly revisited. The absence of clear agreements has the effect of disempowering the PA. Their advocacy role can also be constrained by other agencies. There is a role for managers in clarifying arrangements and supporting PAs in translating them into working practice in the host agency or with other partners. However, it should be noted that while protocols and SLAs will assist in maximising the effectiveness of the PA role, there remain deep-seated structural problems in the relationships and power differentials between agencies working with young people. This evidence aligns very closely to the findings of the independent Joseph Rowntree Foundation study on the inter-agency relationships of the Connexions Service (Coles et al, 2004).
- Some key discontinuities occur. Chiefly these concern the lack of follow up after a referral or a placement; the mechanisms for referral on to another agency *and* for handing back the referral to Connexions at a later stage; and the arrangements at the upper and lower extremes of the Connexions age band.
- There was some resistance to the use of APIR especially in the more informal settings and in some cases, there were particular reservations to do with the nature of the client group. There was virtually no evidence of action plans being actively used.
- The settings varied in the nature of their “permeability” and “accessibility”. There is a range from the closed institution to the most open of outreach arrangements. Connexions shops and centres occupy an intermediate position in this range, with an important

residual function as the place where young people can turn for emergency needs when they cannot otherwise find support. The hardest to reach young people wanted a style of work that was informal, confidential, accessible and anonymous. There are practical devices for increasing such approachability, including attention to such issues as opening times, physical arrangements, and drop-in or telephone access to PAs. Youth organisations and the voluntary sector have a particular contribution to outreach and the more flexible methods for contacting young people at risk.

- A mix of skills and professional background is required for the service to operate effectively across all these settings. Ideally, staff from different disciplines need to work closely together, even if they are not co-located. The professional background of the PAs interviewed in Phase 2 of our study is set out at Table 36 in Appendix G in relation to the type of setting in which they worked. PAs with a background in careers guidance and those with a teaching background tended to be clustered in schools and to some extent in Connexions shops and centres. Youth workers tended to work in more varied contexts including schools, Connexions shops, alternative education, colleges, specialist agencies and across multiple settings, including outreach. There is not, however, a clear division along professional lines (e.g. some careers advisers were operating in YOTs or across multiple settings etc.) and a range of other disciplines was also represented.
- Support and managerial supervision are important for all these staff. In an institutional setting, there will be pressures and dilemmas arising from the structural relationships as well as client contact. In the outreach setting, in addition to those factors, the staff are particularly exposed and isolated.
- There has been considerable impetus behind the effort to market the new Connexions Service and make its branding consistent. The comments of young people suggest that some of the subliminal messages of the settings are less than helpful and that further attention to the issues of accessibility, approachability, and an ethos of “inspiration” would pay dividends. The service does not, however, have total control over its own marketing. There are numerous ways in which the informal attitudes and formal presentations of other agencies, most especially the schools, are influencing its image. If these cultivate a picture of Connexions as dealing with a narrow range of service, such as simply employment and education options or provision solely for those with acute problems, then impact is lost as young people who need the service do not naturally turn to it for help.

5.6.2 Many of these issues are reflected again in the comments of young people at risk and the staff working with them, which are examined in the next section in relation to methods of reaching and helping those most at risk. They are further developed in the summary at Section 7 of the evidence in relation to our hypotheses and the overall themes of the study.

Section 6 – Working with young people at risk

6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 As detailed in Appendix B, the initial sample included young people in priority groups P1 and P2, together with a number in post compulsory education and a further group who were not in education, employment or training. In the second phase of the study, working practices for reaching and working with particular groups of young people at risk were examined in more detail, through interviews with young people, PAs and other adults and by examination of supporting documentation. The main groups whose needs and circumstances were investigated in this way were:

- young people with learning difficulties or special educational needs;
- young parents;
- young carers;
- substance misusers;
- young offenders;
- homeless young people and young people leaving care;
- asylum seekers and refugees;
- young people at risk of underachieving in mainstream education because of truancy, resistance or school refusal;
- young people who were NEET, both in contact with Connexions and with no contact.

6.1.2 All these groups of young people were contacted either from the database lists provided by the Partnerships or by referral from a PA or through other agencies working with the client group. Agencies, which were particularly helpful in providing access to these groups, are highlighted in the text below. Certain risk groups were particularly difficult to contact, for instance because Connexions teams did not have the information about the risk category (such as whether or not a client misused drugs), or had insufficient contacts with the group (such as asylum seekers) or because there were sensitivities around confidentiality.

6.1.3 For each risk category, evidence was examined both from the coded interview data and from detailed examination of a smaller number of qualitative interviews, both with the young people and with adults who worked with them. Figures on the characteristics of the risk groups in the sample are drawn from the total of all young people in each group, from *both* Phase 1 and Phase 2. It should be noted that the totals do not therefore correspond with those set out in Section 4, which deals only with the first phase findings.

6.1.4 There were many particular difficulties of categorisation and definition in relation to the risk groups. These are discussed in detail at Appendix B in the account of the study's methodology but it should be noted that all the coded figures in relation to risk categories should be treated with an element of caution. Most of the information is based on self-reporting at interview; and in relation to some risks, the categorisation involved a judgement on the part of the researcher about the information they were given. In any case the study

did not use a random or representative sample and there is no claim that these figures show trends for the wider youth population.

6.1.5 The principal aim of this section is to outline some of the main issues involved for Connexions in reaching and working with these risk groups, drawing out what worked well and why. The evidence emerging is then assessed in relation to the hypotheses in the next section.

6.2 Evidence from the overall sample

6.2.1 From the coded data on the characteristics of the sample it is possible to highlight some common features that affect these risk groups. The data from the follow up sample yielded considerable evidence of **changing risk situations in young people's lives**. Within the period of months, or at most a year, between the first and second interviews, the situations of many of the young people had changed. For instance, a young person who had been homeless might have gained accommodation, or a young woman might now have a baby. Table 9 shows the movement over the follow up period in relation to education, employment and training, where almost four times as many young people in our sample became NEET than moved into an EET situation between the first and second interviews. The salient point of this, and the tables on other changes in risk status set out at Appendix G, Tables G14 to G20, is the essentially fluid and rapidly changing nature of young people's lives.

Table 9
Changes in education, employment and training status over the follow up period

	Frequency	Per cent
Was EET, still EET	115	71.4
Was EET, now NEET	27	16.8
Was NEET, still NEET	12	7.5
Was NEET, now EET	7	4.3
Total	161	100.0

6.2.2 Many of the young people had **multiple or inter-related risk conditions** or behaviours. This is a major feature of the sample and has implications for the complexity of achieving impact and for process issues, such as the need for coordination where more than one agency is involved. Table 10 below shows this pattern across the study in relation to each risk group. Most risk groups showed a pronounced tendency to multiple risk, with particularly high numbers with five or more risks amongst those who misused drugs, young offenders, those with emotional and behavioural difficulties, and those categorised as underachieving. There are some issues around the definitions of categories, as outlined in Appendix B, but the clear overall trend was for high numbers of the young people interviewed to be demonstrating more than one risk.

Table 10
The pattern of multiple risk in the sample

Risk Factor	Number of risk factors					Total
	1	2	3	4	5 plus	
Parent/Carer	28 25.7%	28 25.7%	22 20.2%	11 10.1%	20 18.3%	109 100%
Looked after/homeless	15 16.1%	20 21.5%	14 15.1%	13 14.0%	31 33.3%	93 100%
Disability/health problems	14 17.1%	21 25.6%	14 17.1%	11 13.4%	22 26.8%	82 100%
Asylum seeker/refugee	7 43.8%	3 18.8%	3 18.8%	3 18.8%	0 0%	16 100%
Substance misuse	0 0%	11 9.8%	11 9.8%	11 9.8%	79 70.5%	112 100%
Offending	12 8.0%	16 10.7%	27 18.0%	21 14.0%	74 49.3%	150 100%
Emotional/behavioural problems	25 12.3%	40 19.6%	47 23.0%	24 11.8%	68 33.3%	204 100%
Underachiever	23 10.5%	36 16.4%	50 22.7%	31 14.1%	80 36.4%	220 100%
LDD/SEN	24 20.7%	26 22.4%	16 13.8%	13 11.2%	37 31.9%	116 100%
School resisting	17 8.1%	40 19.1%	49 23.4%	31 14.8%	72 34.4%	209 100%

6.2.3 The research team was concerned to examine the relationship of risk to **ethnicity** in the sample, in view of the national evidence of underachievement amongst certain black and minority ethnic groups, especially black young men (Majors, 2001). The numbers in our sample were too small to yield any clear evidence of trends though they do show some limited similarities to the national picture. The detailed comparisons by risk and ethnicity within our sample are shown at Appendix G in Tables G23 to G32. The pattern of multiple risks and educational risks is also set out at Tables G34 to G35. These show higher proportions of black and “mixed race” and “white other” displaying multiple risks, with the exception of a high proportion of white British young people who had five or more risks. (The “white other” group is small and will reflect a number of interviewees who were asylum seekers or refugees from Eastern Europe.) The “mixed race” group shows a higher number of educational risks but otherwise there is no discernible pattern on education related risk. There is no particular trend in relation to Connexions support other than a high proportion of “mixed race” young people receiving intensive support – a figure that may relate to the frequency of educational and multiple risks in this group. (Census categories were used for classification, including “mixed race”. It should be noted that “dual heritage” is the more commonly accepted term.)

6.2.4 In accordance with the research specification, young people were asked about the **Education Maintenance Allowance**. Such financial support appeared to have some effect on impact in terms of education destinations but this was not marked. We were able to ask young people in the Phase 1 cohort about EMA. Out of the Phase 1 sample of 573, approximately one

quarter did not have EMA available in their area. Slightly less than one quarter said the availability of EMA had affected their decision to continue in study or would affect such a decision if it were available. (See Tables G21 and G22 at Appendix G.) Our limited evidence is that the positive effect of EMA occurs chiefly where family poverty or the pressures of setting up home independently are pushing young people into early low paid employment but that low income is not the only factor at work. The national evidence shows that EMA has raised participation in full time education but that in addition to the barriers of low income, both parental education and local unemployment levels influence the propensity to stay on after 16. Post-16 participation, especially amongst young men, was negatively correlated to local employment levels. In other words, in addition to financial considerations, local unemployment rates have an impact on the participation decision (HM Treasury, 2004: p.5 and p.46).

6.2.5 Finally in relation to the overall patterns discernible in the study, Table 11 shows the responses in the follow up sample to an interview question, which explored **how the young people perceived the impact of Connexions in their lives**. Young people were asked to rate how much difference Connexions had made to their situation and discussed their perceptions with the interviewers. 30 per cent reported a major positive impact, and around two-thirds reported some positive impact, either minor or major.

6.2.6 The cases of those at the extremes, who rated the impact of Connexions as either negative or as having a major positive impact, were examined in more detail. For those who perceived Connexions interventions as having a negative impact, a majority felt that their needs had not been listened to, usually commenting that they had been pushed towards particular options and/or had received bad advice. Another cluster had suffered from breaks in PA contact, often unexplained, and in some cases with what were perceived as broken promises. In one example, a young woman who had recently been linked up with a new PA explained her disappointment, *“It’s weird now having [him]...one time I walked all the way to see [him] in the Connexions office and found out he’d cancelled when I got there. I got no phone call. Made another appointment and he cancelled that as well.”* For several with complex problems, this loss of contact had proved a severe blow. A PA who had ceased contact with a client because of a growing dependence and over-attachment felt that the intervention of Connexions had been *“more negative than positive: it’s just created another adult that she trusted and got close to that just severed their life with her just like that.”*

6.2.7 Where young people felt that there had been a significant positive impact in their lives, the most frequent features discernible in their cases were firstly, the relationship with the PA and the trust involved and secondly, that virtually all these young people had experienced impact in more than one area of their lives. A high proportion had also seen positive benefit either in achieving their EET destination or from advice on options working towards that goal. Three other features were strongly in evidence: similarly large numbers in each case had been helped on broader issues such as family

conflict, drug misuse or school absence; and/or on personal development issues, especially anger management and self-confidence; and/or on practical matters such as accommodation or constructive activities. These factors are evident in much of the qualitative material on how impact is generated and they are further explored below in relation to the evidence on individual risk groups. It is possible to underestimate the effect of first rung responses and holistic support but our evidence is that they have a marked effect on impact. As one young woman, originally homeless at 16, put it, “*I came to Connexions crying my heart out and they put me in the staff room and gave me a cup of tea.*” Not only were her accommodation problems later solved but in time she completed her GCSEs, gained a college place and undertook volunteer work.

Table 11
The impact of Connexions as rated by young people in the follow up sample

Perception of impact	Frequency	Per cent
Negative impact	12	7.5
No impact	41	25.5
Some (minor) positive impact	55	34.2
Considerable (major) positive impact	48	29.8
Not known	5	3.1
Total	161	100.0

6.3 Some common issues in the work with young people at risk

6.3.1 Here we highlight five issues that thread through our findings on young people at risk. They do not arise in exactly the same way or with the same intensity in every group but they have a commonality that forms a core to our views about what works with these young people. These issues are:

- **trust and orientation**
- **making contact and identifying needs**
- **the need to recognise “soft” outcomes**
- **referral routes and inter-agency communication**
- **the need for follow up**

6.3.2 Perhaps the largest body of evidence in this section concerns the vital importance of building trust and rapport with young people at risk. There is no doubt that those who had received such support appreciated it greatly, and a few regarded it almost literally as a “lifesaver”, which echoes the broader findings of the Connexions Customer Satisfaction Survey (DfES, 2003a). The need for trust was a key argument as far back as the publication of *Bridging the Gap* (SEU, 1999, p.115), which includes in its list of “what works” in engaging the disengaged, “staff with the ability to build up a rapport with often

quite difficult individuals, to facilitate the developmental process.” Our findings on the central significance of trust have resonance in research on trust in the lives of adults and in the workplace. Reina and Reina (1999) suggest that in high trust environments, people are more willing to keep agreements, share information, admit and learn from mistakes, and take on greater responsibility. Trust can be fractured by relatively minor incidents as well as major betrayals. A crucial challenge for Connexions PAs is therefore to find ways of building up sufficient trust with their clients.

6.3.3 While we regard **trust** as the lifeblood of the relationship between the PA and the young person, we would also argue that the concept of “**orientation**” may take us further in understanding what happens in the interaction between the PA and their client. The ability to read and understand orientation is a major factor in the creation of trust. This concept became steadily more significant as the research proceeded.

6.3.4 A young person’s “orientation” includes both their social background, such as being black, female and unemployed in an area with few employment opportunities, and their attitudes to their circumstances and those who interact with them. Adults, including PAs, obviously also bring their own orientations to the exchange with young people. A few, but by no means exhaustive, *hypothetical examples* of such orientations that young people might bring to their contact with Connexions are set out below. These are illustrative only and are not quotations from actual interviews.

- **Those who want specific information on careers and options.**
I want some information about how I could get on a Modern Apprenticeship in vehicle maintenance.
- **Those who want specific information about some other issue.**
I heard cannabis is now legal. Is that right?
- **Those whose problems at transition from school are chiefly financial.**
I'd like to go to college but I can't afford it. I'll have to get a job even if it's rubbish. I need to pay the rent.
- **Those who have a pre-conceived notion of what Connexions does, as simply dealing with serious problems.**
I've heard of Connexions. They helped that mess of a girl in Year 10. That's nothing to do with me: I'm hoping to get to university.
- **Those who have a pre-conceived notion of what Connexions does, as just dealing with jobs and careers.**
Connexions tells you about jobs and what courses to do. I couldn't talk to them about the shoplifting charge.
- **Those who are unclear what they want.**
I don't know what all this is about but anyway this session is better than class. I suppose I ought to think about what happens when I leave school. But there aren't any jobs anyway: I'll just be unemployed. I'm bored. Wish there was something more interesting to do.
- **Those who are simply bewildered.**
I don't know why I'm here. And who is this woman? And why does she keep going on about 'connections'?

- **Those who are suspicious.**
Why is this bloke asking all these questions? I dare not tell him anything much or he might find out that I do drugs and report me.
- **Those who have an urgent and defined need and want it addressed.**
I've got nowhere to sleep tonight. I'm dead frightened. It's impossible to think about anything else but sorting that out.
- **Those who know they have multiple problems and want help.**
Things have got on top of me: must sort myself out. I've been doing too much E and stuff. Got arrested for nicking stuff as a result. Don't know what the drugs do to the baby. My boyfriend wants me to have an abortion anyway.
- **Those who have problems, which have been identified by a worker (PA, ESW etc.), but are "in denial" or not ready to acknowledge it.**
Can't see why they're making a fuss. I'm OK. Don't want to discuss it anymore.

6.3.5 Clearly such categorisations verge on caricatures and could be indefinitely continued. They are in essence arbitrary and overlapping and very variable over time. They may however be a useful device for analysing the needs of the client group and how responses may be most effective.

6.3.6 The orientations that the PA may bring are equally complex and varied. An infinite list could be built up to parallel the orientations of young people.

- *I really love seeing people make positive moves. I'm pleased that he has got a place on the E2E scheme but I will drop in quite regularly to follow up how he's getting on. I hope we can sustain the progress.*
- *It's 4 o'clock and it's Friday and I just hope this one is not homeless.*
- *I came into this work as a Careers Adviser. That's what I do best and I'm not happy with all this "holistic" stuff.*
- *This girl has had a really rough time. I know it will take a really long time to get her to trust me at all.*
- *We've been told to improve our targets around NEET. Must get this lad into some training at all costs.*

6.3.7 There are numerous examples throughout this section of both sensitivity and insensitivity to the orientations of young people; of specialisms that enable PAs to reach a better understanding of particular client groups; and of patient work in negotiating starting points for progress with specific young people. The need to meet half way, to negotiate "congruence" in these orientations is explored. This key theme runs through the findings from all the at risk groups in this study. It finds resonance in recent work on the characteristics of effective advice and guidance, where Bimrose and Hughes (2004) suggest that effective guidance includes the effort to build a working alliance and understand the client's orientation to the process, including dimensions of their background, present circumstances and preferences.

6.3.8 Many of these young people cannot or will not approach Connexions on their own initiative. Pro-active outreach is needed to contact such clients and

make known the assistance available. Many will not be picked up by routine systems because of mobility or school absence, fearfulness or mistrust of official agencies, or the general turbulence of their lives. Flexible **methods of making contact and identifying need** are required.

6.3.9 For these risk groups, impact on EET destinations was rarely achieved and sustained without prior intervention to address their urgent practical needs and personal development issues. All these risk groups seemed to have “antennae” that were particularly sensitive to attempts to push them towards destinations, for which they were not ready. In the vast majority of our interviews, there was no sign that this was simply obstinacy. Rather it appeared to be an instinctive knowledge that there was necessary business to be dealt with first. This means that a rigid focus on destination targets can be self-defeating: a point that mirrors the views of many Personal Advisers, as described in Section 5. The evidence underlines **the need to recognise “soft” target outcomes** and intermediate steps as essential to real progress for those with complex problems.

6.3.10 The presenting needs of the risk groups demanded well-developed **referral routes and inter-agency communication**. Clarity is needed on the responsibilities and contributions of the different players. For instance, the issues of multiple risk arose frequently and some of the links are well known, such as the correlation of homelessness and leaving care, or of substance misuse with offending. Multiple risks bring multiple workers and to address the needs, some additional or specialist input is normally necessary. Agreements on how the key worker is designated and the full explanation to the young person of how that works is a major part of the solution to this inter-agency problem.

6.3.11 Certain of these groups also appeared to occasion a particular confidence gap for PAs and referral routes were not well known or well used. For very different reasons, substance misusers, to some extent young offenders, and asylum seekers and refugees are often either poorly served or regarded as the province of the specialist. Given, on the one hand, the prevalence of drug abuse and its links to offending, and, on the other, the dispersal of asylum seekers and refugees to most major urban areas, this has serious implications. Homelessness also caused particular difficulties where referral paths to emergency accommodation were often not well rehearsed. Training, awareness raising, close working with specialist and community agencies, the recognition on the part of the PA of his or her complementary role, and supportive managerial supervision, in our view, offer the routes to improvement.

6.3.12 Some of the most common discontinuities and leakage points in the Connexions process for all risk groups concern **the need for follow up** and/or a lack of handover and/or a lack of complementary support. Handover involves not simply Connexions referring onwards but the reverse handing back of the case to Connexions once another agency’s particular intervention is complete. Our evidence suggests, moreover, that referrals or placements are more likely to avoid such discontinuities if they are diligently followed up,

and if complementary support is provided on the wider issues of a young person's life. Persistence is also crucial: the ability to "stick with" a client despite setbacks. To take an analogy, referrals should be regarded less as like dropping a letter into the box and leaving it to the vagaries of the postal system, and more like tracing an Internet communication to ensure it reaches the inbox and then ringing up to ensure that the message has been read, understood and acted upon. Wastage of impact occurs when young people who have made progress are not followed up to ensure that they sustain it.

6.4 Young people with Special Educational Needs and Learning Difficulties

6.4.1 Defining the terms

6.4.1.1 The Connexions Service has special responsibilities for young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, originating in the DfES SEN Code of Practice and the Learning and Skills Act of 2000. The terms "Special Education Needs" and "Learning Difficulties" are often used interchangeably but refer, in fact, to different characteristics.

6.4.1.2 A young person is deemed to have a learning difficulty and/or disability if: a) he/she has a significantly greater difficulty in learning than the majority of persons of his/her age, or b) he/she has a disability which prevents or hinders him/her from making use of facilities of a kind generally provided by institutions offering education or training for young persons of his/her age (Connexions GM, 2002). In practice, these learning difficulties or disabilities (LDD) can emerge from specific problems (e.g. dyslexia, dyspraxia, autism), sensory impairments (e.g. blindness), physical disabilities (e.g. cerebral palsy), mental illness (e.g. schizophrenia), other health conditions (e.g. cystic fibrosis) or even social and emotional problems (e.g. having difficulties relating appropriately to peers and adults).

6.4.1.3 The term Special Educational Needs refers on the other hand to the specific situation where a young person is recognised by the school as having special needs or subsequently has a formal statement of their needs for special teaching under the legislation in the Learning and Skills Act 2000.

6.4.1.4 The term "SEN/LDD" therefore encompasses a very wide range of needs but it is not synonymous with low ability or low achievement. Sensory impairment, for instance, such as blindness or deafness need not present any greater barrier to achievement than social disaffection. The remarks of one SEN teacher emphasised the interconnected nature of such factors.

"In school we've got children that range from Downs Syndrome and severe learning difficulties, we've got individual children with fragile bone syndrome...this one is in and out of school in hospital all the time, we've got children with cerebral palsy, children with specific learning difficulties, like dyslexia with numbers or writing as well, ... with speech and coordination difficulties, with behaviour problems who may or may not be in the autistic spectrum, we've got ADHD children who might or might not take Ritalin... and

then we go into the social needs as well so we have a lot of children who come from broken homes, some with parents who have drugs and alcohol issues, where some are carers themselves, and then the edge becomes very very blurred altogether.”

6.4.1.5 There was substantial agreement amongst respondents that many of these young people present no issues of social disaffection. Professionals from two separate special schools for SLD (severe learning disabilities) agreed that, on the whole, their student constituency was extremely interested in people, curious, trusting and keen to be in school and to learn. As one member of staff put it, “...*the one thing our kids are not is disaffected. They will crawl into school with broken legs because they want to learn.*”

6.4.1.6 Unrecognised learning difficulties, however, can lead to behavioural deterioration and disaffection from school and during the research, we encountered significant numbers of individuals, who recognised such reasons for their poor behaviour. One such case concerned a young woman, who had eventually been excluded. Although she probably had special needs, she was not stated and her needs had gone unrecognised.

“I didn’t really do well at school. I got chucked out. I can’t read or write or spell so instead of raising my hand, I used to be naughty and I’d get chucked out so I didn’t have to face the work.”

6.4.1.7 Numerous other young people had not achieved in mainstream education or had been excluded before the age of 16 but their learning difficulties appeared not to have been clearly identified and their needs had remained unmet. One interviewee did not know if he had a statement. He did know, however, that his writing had always been poor and that he took a test to establish whether he was dyslexic at age 14. However, he was excluded from school the same year. Another was a school resister with no statement who admitted to her writing being “...*all mixed up*” and having dyslexia, who left school before the age of 16 without any qualifications.

6.4.1.8 The Connexions Service has statutory responsibilities stemming from the Learning and Skills Act 2000 - Section 140 to make an assessment of under-19s who have SEN statements and are likely to continue in education or training. The assessment must take place in the last year of compulsory education and must set out the young person’s learning needs and the provision required to meet them. The Connexions Service is responsible for gathering evidence to fulfil the requirements of these Section 140 assessments through a series of annual reviews from Year 9 onwards with each young person, his/her parents or carers, the school and any other relevant professionals, for providing advice on appropriate post-16 provision and overseeing the delivery of the transition plan.

6.4.2 How the risk group of LDD/SEN was researched

6.4.2.1 A total of 116 young people with SEN/LDD were identified across the whole study. (This excludes literacy/numeracy problems.) Researchers visited

seven special schools and interviewed adults, who had special responsibilities for SEN (SEN Coordinators or SENCOs, teachers or other adult workers in special schools, head teachers etc.) and a range of Connexions personnel with particular responsibilities for SEN/LDD. The research team has also been able to draw on client activity records for young people in a special school and partnership agreements between Connexions and a number of schools, including a special school. Methodological considerations relating to the SEN/LDD risk group are set out in Appendix B.

6.4.3 How young people with SEN/LDD come into contact with Connexions

6.4.3.1 For the young people interviewed in this study, the only route to contact with Connexions was through school. Indeed, certain SEN conditions can place severe limitations on the ability of the young person to seek contact with Connexions for themselves.

6.4.3.2 Where we conducted interviews, we found that the official definition of SEN and the protocols around Connexions statutory obligations towards statemented young people were well known to the members of staff involved in the process - and interviews with young people confirmed that these processes took place. The statutory responsibilities appeared to aid clarity and reinforce the role of Connexions. However, numerous respondents throughout the study pointed out the mismatch between the Local Educational Authorities' provision of statements of Special Educational Need and the schools' recognition of particular learning needs. The numbers of formal statements appear to vary around the country more on the basis of resources to carry out the diagnostic tests than on the basis of need.

6.4.3.3 In our sample, 102 young people were aware that they had received a statement of SEN, though some 161 young people stated that either LDD or literacy or numeracy problems constituted the greatest difficulty with their lives at school. In other words, the awareness of having difficulties in learning is not the same as the existence of a formal statement that recognises them. Figures provided by three of the mainstream schools visited also appeared to confirm this position. In each case, the numbers of statemented pupils were between 10 and 20 per cent of the numbers identified by the school as requiring extra help, which might be included in their Individual Learning Plans (ILP) through School Action or School Action Plus. In the words of one SEN teacher, *"the waiting list for the educational psychologist is huge and ...there is never going to be enough funding to deal with all the needs."* or of a Special Education Needs Coordinator (SENCO) in a different school *"...Other parents who don't necessarily know their rights, don't follow it up, their kids are not statemented despite the fact that their need dictates that they should be... Those in the individual needs register, are equally as important and their needs are being recognised and being provided by the school."*

6.4.3.4 LEAs do provide delegated funding for schools to provide for all the pupils the schools deem to have particular learning needs. So, whereas this does not mean to say that the LEAs or schools are relinquishing their

responsibilities towards the non-statemented young people, it does have an effect on the level of service they receive from Connexions and, crucially, on the ability of Connexions to make contact with them. Statemented pupils go immediately into the maximum need category and have clearly required levels of provision, and documentation. Non-statemented pupils do not necessarily receive this level of service although some individual PAs and schools are working towards making the same standard of service available to them.

As one PA put it, *“there is a high number of statemented young people here ... but there are also lots of young people on School Action as well ... We are not obliged to fill out the Section 140 document with these young people, only the statemented ones, but we’ve decided that we’ll try and do that if they are moving on to college and they wanted it just to provide some sort of record of what their needs are, you know, or support that they might require ... You should really see the parents of these young people also ... but with statemented young people we are obliged to do that.”*

6.4.3.5 Practice varies with every school and Connexions Partnership. Where the school’s ethos is one of inclusion and serving the community of which it is part, it appears to us likely that the work of Connexions will be valued and will positively form part of that wider strategy. The path by which Connexions came into contact with non-statemented pupils was affected in our experience by factors such as the strength of the school’s systems for providing extra support for pupils, the availability of Connexions resources for that school and the roles and responsibilities that had been agreed with Connexions. Partnership arrangements are clearly influential but it is often resources that dictate the level of provision that Connexions can deliver.

6.4.3.6 Where a formal statement does exist, there is a level of automaticity in the processes that lead to annual reviews from Year 9 onwards, as the statutory requirements come into play. Our respondents were generally agreed on the usefulness of the annual review process and there seemed to be a very similar use of the Section 140 documentation regardless of the type of school. According to one SEN teacher, the annual reviews ensured the involvement of Connexions. *“Connexions get involved with review transitions meetings. They involve Connexions, the student, parents, teachers and any external agency involved with the child. Connexions are invited to those reviews from Year 9 up to Sixth Form. In the review ... we talk about the child’s progress in the previous 12 months and then we go into the planning bit by ensuring we can provide everything the student needs in terms of exams, extra time, scribe, reader etc.”* One particular school saw the Section 140 assessment so positively that it had started a pilot scheme in which it had replaced the previous LEA school leaving documentation.

6.4.3.7 The Section 140 documentation follows the young person wherever they go at transition times (changing schools, moving into supported employment, training or further education). It covers educational details about the young person, explains in lay language the implications of the SEN statement, and includes assessments from professionals, such as speech therapists, clinical psychologists or physiotherapists, who have dealt with the

young person. It can also include details about the young person's social and family circumstances and the support needed for an active and fulfilling life.

6.4.3.8 The holistic nature of the Section 140 assessment includes the work carried out by Connexions through APIR. Connexions PAs, however, showed some reservations about the usefulness of APIR for this client group. As one PA put it, *"There is gong to be an issue with assessment for SEN, that's going to be an ongoing debate... If you can't read something or don't understand, there has to be an issue as to the appropriateness of the wheel... There has to be some flexibility. With people with EBD (emotional and behavioural difficulty), that's fine. We can talk about housing, drink, work...to do the wheel with someone who doesn't know what you are doing... is that right?"*

6.4.4 Working with parents: what worked well and why?

6.4.4.1 Positive impact with the SEN/LDD constituency depends, partly, on the expectations placed on Connexions by parents and young people alike. Parents have different expectations, often depending on their child's degree of disability and the type of educational regime provided. Young people with severe learning disabilities could be in the same school setting until the age of 19 or even later. In these cases, the role of Connexions could be limited to finding alternative provision or to liaising with Social Services over day care when the young person leaves. Other special schools offer educational provision up to the age of 16. Here, the same choices around transition apply as when the young person is integrated in mainstream education. Parental readiness to cope with the transition to further training or work varies and workers talked of parents' feeling of *"falling over the edge"* when that stage is reached. As one PA put it, what makes a difference is *"Getting the parents involved. They are the biggest influence on the young person. A lot of parents want the decision to be taken for them. They are not aware that things are different from the moment the young people leave school... they have to get to cope with the new situation."* This seemed particularly hard where the young person had attended special schools. In the words of an SEN teacher, *"We have physio, speech therapist, a nurse, chiropodist, a dietician, ... doctors, people for seating clinics etc. They all come to the school to see our pupils. Because we have every expert here, this is why the transition is very difficult for some of our young people and their parents."*

6.4.4.2 At the heart of the matter lies the issue of integration versus separation in specialist provision. Even among specialist education providers, the consensus seemed to be that eventually, young people have to be able to live as independently as possible.

"Work is a problem for our kids because they have a real issue multi-skilling. They are one task wonders and they never cut corners... Getting good courses that go beyond baby minding is hard. Also, it is hard to find supported employment. In effect, many end in day services rather than living independent lives. That is very frustrating... We are interested in collaborating with mainstream colleges. You have to be out there and you've got to be

battling. You don't want them to be living at home with parents all their lives. You need them to be able to cope with life outside, in the real world."

6.4.4.3 This aspiration of making the young people life-ready to the largest extent possible appeared to have a degree of consensus among parents and professionals and was often shared by the young people themselves. Even the parents of a young man of 16 with Asperger's syndrome commented with reference to their son's work experience at the local library: *"It [work experience] is a very stable, protected environment isn't it? There's nobody there poking fun at you... they are all making a fuss over you. It was an artificial environment and as much as I would like to wrap him up in cotton wool... you have to prepare him for not so nice things."* According to the head teacher at one special school, the greatest effect from current Connexions provision for SEN/LDD young people lay in the work of Connexions in developing their skills to live independent lives.

"Connexions now work with them in developing their social skills and leisure opportunities, life skills and independent living ability. They are concerned with the independence of our youngsters. It is a particular problem of ours...parents are very concerned about their children, they are wrapped in cotton wool and do not get to experience the wider world."

6.4.4.4 All those interviewed shared a clear realisation that for this group the formal contact between the school, Connexions, the young person and their parents could be beneficial as it can provide support and continuity of service for the young person and their parents, and helpful liaison between the parents and the school. There were examples of PAs who had worked with both parent/carers and young people to mediate around questions of independence, allaying their fears about college or work, or instilling realistic expectations for young people who might have wishes beyond their ability to cope. A high level of contact with the entire family appeared to be key to the success of Connexions with SEN/LDD young people. As the parents of a 15 year-old also suffering from Asperger's syndrome put it, describing the PA: *"She genuinely tries her best for them. I'm really glad there is someone like her in the frame, very approachable, ... very supportive... I wouldn't hesitate to ask for her advice.... We're getting a real personal service... you could be forgiven for thinking she was just assigned to [our son]."*

6.4.4.5 However, there was also a recognition from several PAs that the priorities might be different for young people and their parents and that a close relationship with parents can be a double-edged sword. Skilful intervention is needed to avoid limiting the decision-making ability of the young person. According to one such PA, *"[with SEN/LDD] ...there is an element of officialdom taking over from the young person and doing it all for them, including taking all the decisions from them rather than with them."*

6.4.4.6 This issue had echoes in the way benefits appear to work. The lack of flexibility in the system to allow young people to move in and out of benefits was identified as one main reason why often potential employers, parents and

others concerned in potential re-integration were not prepared to take on the challenge, preferring the safer option of managing dependency.

“Also, in this country, if they [young people] fall back from employment after a spell working, getting benefits, especially disability allowance, is so, so difficult. Because you lose benefits if you work. So when this happens, employers step back, parents step back.”

6.4.5 Advocacy

6.4.5.1 As a result, some Connexions PAs argue that their role with SEN/LDD must include advocacy and campaigning for this client group. This may include educating employers, providers and the wider society about the rights of such young people and the need for quality provision, and demystifying certain conditions so as to break the vicious circle of exclusion that arises from fear of the unknown.

I: So is your role as a PA to lobby for filling the gaps in employment opportunities for this client group?

R: Oh yeah, and to say ‘Here, this is what we need to do for this group,’ because most won’t get a job and they won’t necessarily show on our figures because they’ll go down as ‘unable to work’. What happens to them at 20 and 22? I suspect they go into some kind of day care ... so that’s something we need to work on ... the options are very limited for this client group... now the local college has changed a lot but it used to be bad, and then the transport for these clients is very difficult... yes, my the job is very much about banging on doors and letting our managers know.

6.4.6 Key issues for young people with LDD/SEN

6.4.6.1 This section has argued that:

- The number of statemented young people does not represent the entire population of young people with SEN. The *statutory* obligations of the Connexions Service begin and end with those who are statemented. As a result, a large majority of young people with SEN/LDD are probably not receiving a service from Connexions that reflects the full level of their needs.
- When the young people are statemented, these statutory duties were, from our evidence, respected and observed by the professionals concerned and seemed to work well. In particular, the statements provided a clear set of guidelines and paper trail that can help with tracking and in allocating roles and responsibilities.
- Connexions appeared to engage positively in helping identify the specialist provision or the leisure activities that can help this client group live more independent lives and by signposting available opportunities.
- Benefit systems can have the effect of discouraging work and independence for this group.
- The role of PAs with parents is particularly important for this risk group, as they need support to enable their children to lead as full and independent lives as possible.

- There is a necessary advocacy role for PAs that includes making representations to Connexions, individual providers, LEAs or employers for this client group and their parents. There is also a general role of combating prejudice and avoidable limitation of achievement.

6.5 Teenage parents

6.5.1 Teenage pregnancy and social exclusion in the UK

6.5.1.1 The UK currently has the highest teenage birth rate in Europe, which is problematic in two ways. Firstly, giving birth while still a teenager is strongly associated with disadvantage in later life. (Unicef, 2001:pp. 2-9) Secondly, young women who are already disadvantaged, are more likely to become teenage parents (Botting, Rosato and Wood, 2001; Kiernan, 1995). These two problems compound one another, with the result that young women who experienced childhood poverty *and* who become teen parents are more likely than older mothers to have no qualifications, a low household income, or to be claiming benefits (Unicef, 2001: p.16).

6.5.1.2 In response to this association with social disadvantage, the Social Exclusion Unit (SEU, 1999) proposed a strategy for reducing the number of teenage parents, aiming to set a downward trend in conception rates by 2010, and to increase the participation of teenage parents in education, training and employment – working towards doubling current levels to 60 per cent by 2010. Connexions now shares these crosscutting targets.

6.5.2 The role of Connexions

6.5.2.1 The contribution of Connexions to reducing the rate of conceptions among teenagers is outside the scope of this evaluation. Indeed, it is hard to imagine what data could be collected that could measure such a contribution, although one PA told us that working in partnership with various other agencies, including schools and the Brook Family Planning Service, makes a considerable difference by letting young people know where to go for advice.

6.5.2.2 However, in terms of increasing the participation rates of teenage parents in education, training and employment, the role of Connexions has involved working with a variety of other organisations to provide better support. Its interventions may be designed to address not just teenage pregnancy but also risk conditions, which may have negative consequences for young parents or their capacity to care for their children (DfES, 2003b).

6.5.3 Teen parents and multiple risks

6.5.3.1 For the Connexions Personal Advisers charged with the task of achieving the government targets of reducing the number of teenage pregnancies and the number of NEET young people, there is no single straightforward approach that will work for all teen parents in all contexts. Some will have multiple risks and the PA must be able to respond on a case-by-case basis to the complexity of the needs presented.

6.5.3.2 The young women we interviewed had come into contact with Connexions by several different routes. Some had been referred by other agencies, such as health services or schools, because they were pregnant. Others came to Connexions while pregnant but for another, more immediately pressing reason, such as homelessness. A third group had already had some contact with a PA (whether regular or not) when they became pregnant.

6.5.3.3 The nature of the relationship established between PAs and young people was critical. A relationship high in trust, where there was a significant rapport seemed to be a key factor in progress towards positive outcomes, whether the PA was a specialist, working intensively with teenage parents only, or not. Orientations such as the young person's perception of the PA, or of the Connexions Service itself; or of their past experience of the service (through their own use of it, or others'), or their readiness for employment or training were all important factors and are discussed below. The PA's ability to respond to such orientations with sensitivity was essential to trust building.

6.5.4 The PA at work with teenage parents

6.5.4.1 One respondent was a specialist PA deployed in Surestart Plus. Previously in social work, she had specialised in working with families and child protection, both highly relevant in dealing with the post-16 mothers who were now her main clients. Her formal objective for working with this group was to return them to education and training. In practice, she told us, she saw her role as one that involved building a good relationship, before moving on to deal with the issues for which the young person was referred. Although her brief involved meeting the targets for getting the young people on her caseload back into education or training, she felt it was unfair to push them into leaving young children to return to education unless they wanted to do it.

6.5.4.2 The young women we interviewed at a Teen Mums group run by this PA faced a variety of problems in addition to caring for their children. These included post-natal depression and low self-esteem, domestic violence, and inadequate housing. Interventions were clearly needed to deal with these more pressing issues, before any impact could be achieved in terms of getting them back into education, training or employment. They felt that the PA had helped (or could help) with their problems and that her interventions had reduced their isolation. She was described as *"fun and easy to get on with"* and as someone who *"listens to you, and solves your problems"*, who did not *"talk down to you"* but treated you *"like an equal."* One example of many may help to explain why the achievement of "soft" outcomes may be a necessary prelude to achieving the "harder" targets in the future.

► Janice was 17 and left school with no qualifications after getting pregnant at 16. She now lived in a flat with the baby's father. The PA had drawn her into the young mums' group, so that she was no longer socially isolated. She said of her: *"She's one of those people you click with straight away... She doesn't judge you for being a teen mum."* The PA had given her information about college but she wanted to wait until her daughter, who was only 5 months,

was older. This approach, of maintaining contact and offering personal support, was working well.

6.5.4.3 Another PA, about whom the young mothers spoke highly, had the job title “PA: Employment and Training Team”, although she also dealt with the Jobseeker’s Allowance (JSA) claimant file. She also emphasised building good relationships with the young people, including friendliness, impartiality and confidentiality. To maintain continuity, she tended to keep working with those for whom she was the first Connexions contact. She too shared the formal target of getting her clients into some form of education or into employment. However, she told us that, for her, a good outcome was achieving trust and rapport with a young person. Although her role within Connexions was not a specialist one, she was achieving similar “soft” outcomes and, according to the respondents themselves, these could well lead in the longer term into education or training.

6.5.4.4 The examples of these two Personal Advisers, each of whom had a very different formal specialism, but who held similar views about what their role entailed in practice, suggest that what is important here is the nature of the PA/young person relationship. Both these PAs reported the significance of building good relationships and the young women reciprocated with a positive view of their PAs, as people who were important in their lives. The PA specialism could be important in certain cases, where familiarity with the needs of the group and referral routes were of real benefit, but the paramount factor in producing positive outcomes appeared to be the trusting relationship.

6.5.4.5 A good relationship with a PA is vital for the disclosure of personal information, which a young person may prefer to keep private, but without which intervention by Connexions or any other agency is probably doomed to be at best only partially successful. One young woman did not tell us herself that she was suffering from domestic violence, though her PA knew that this was a key issue for her and offered a relationship that reduced her isolation. Another young woman, 32 weeks pregnant at the time of the interview, said she trusted her PA to the extent that she could talk to him about all sorts of things and that it was important to her that she could speak to him in total confidence. Importantly, she felt that he was the one person to whom she could confide about the baby’s father, who was now in prison - an issue she felt unable to speak about elsewhere, even with her mother.

6.5.4.6 However, there appears to be a delicate balance between positive trust building and listening and what can be perceived as intrusiveness. Cautionary notes were sounded by several respondents, one of whom described her PA (of whom others had offered positive reports), as a busybody, “*who sticks her nose in too much.*” Another told us that she had found her PA a bit too intrusive, describing her as “*going too far*” and digging “*too deep*”. “*Some things*”, she said, “*are just too personal to talk about.*” Orientation had been misjudged and for this reason, some young women were deliberately choosing alternative support. What is to one young woman a close and supportive relationship with a trusted friend and adviser may be perceived by another as interference that goes “too far”, and may well

produce the opposite of what is intended. In this situation, there will perhaps always be a few young women for whom a “false move” on the part of the PA will precipitate a withdrawal from the Connexions process itself.

6.5.5 Understanding what Connexions provides

6.5.5.1 Amongst the teen parents interviewed in the study, contact with Connexions was often heavily dependent on whether they understood the extent of the service and the range of the help a Personal Adviser could offer. The physical location, marketing and referral systems of a local Connexions Service outlet, and the nature of the first contact all contributed to forming expectations of what was on offer at Connexions.

► Annette was in the later stages of pregnancy and living in temporary accommodation with her partner. Her mother had mental health problems, which had resulted in her leaving home at 13. She had left school at 16, having “*skipped quite a lot of days*” and “*screwed up*” her GCSEs. She came to Connexions through the Jobcentre where she went for help because she had no money. She knew nothing about Connexions at the time, but was put in touch with a training centre where she met her current PA, whom she has been seeing at least once a week for almost a year. She took a broad view of the help he could offer and felt very well supported. She had the PA’s mobile number to use whenever she needed and said that she had nobody else to turn to but could talk to him about anything. He arranged her access to training (up to her baby’s arrival), gave her lifts, helped with forms, and checked up on her. She said she felt he really cared, even though they did not agree all the time, and that he had given her something to look forward to, helped her to believe in herself, and made her “*feel like something and not nothing*”. Otherwise, she said, she might now be “*in the gutter somewhere*”.

6.5.5.2 Young women who are parents are often not picked up in routine organisational processes. A positive referral, from friends or agencies, who understand the nature of the service, can be helpful in this situation.

► One 18 year-old told us she had been to Connexions “*loads of times*”, after hearing about it from a friend. She had tried a college diploma in childcare but left after 3 months because she was not enjoying it. The Jobcentre also referred her to Connexions – “*I just thought it was for problems, I didn’t know it was for jobs.*” Without the help of her PA, she said, she would have been “*dossing*” neither on a training course, nor in the young mothers’ group. At six months pregnant, she took a positive view of the future, saying that she hoped to get back into education in a couple of years. “*Connexions is a good service*” she told us, “*and we need to have it. There is nowhere else to go. They arrange apprenticeships and good wages. All my friends have been.*”

6.5.6 Key issues for young parents

6.5.6.1 Central emerging issues here were that:

- For teen parents, the PA relationship appears to be of primary importance in determining whether, and to what extent, impact can be

achieved. Although there will inevitably be some young women for whom this relationship is unsuccessful, it works best when it is a relationship of trust and rapport, and when the young person perceives that their needs are being listened to and acted upon. In other words, it is precisely the nature of the PA/teen parent relationship that is the “key” that “switches on” the Connexions mechanism.

- Other factors, however, may inhibit or encourage the extent of the contact a young person has with Connexions. These include whether or not they see the service in holistic terms – and therefore able to help them with problems, such as their pregnancy, which are not job related, and whether any earlier contact with the service was positive.
- These young women inevitably have many personal and sensitive issues. Assessment and trust building have to be carefully balanced against an over-intrusive approach.
- Young parents can suffer extreme problems of isolation. The informal social and support networks that Connexions can create for them may be crucial in preventing a loss of self-confidence and motivation.

6.6 Young carers

6.6.1 Introduction

6.6.1.1 Young carers share several features of the teenage parent group, especially the marked isolation that is often a corollary of their responsibilities. They too may have little awareness of how Connexions might help them. There may be as many as 50,000 young carers in the UK (Dept. of Health, 2003: p. 36; 2004: p. 75) but the group is not always visible or easily identified.

6.6.1.2 Most of the small number of young people in our sample, who cared for one or more family members, told a similar story. Some displayed more than one category of risk but it was impossible to explore in the limits of this study how far these other risks sprang from or were related to their caring responsibilities. Overall, three central points emerged. First, young carers accepted responsibility for looking after other family members even if this meant that they missed out on education. Second, dropping out of school to care for a relative not only affected qualifications, but also sometimes meant that they lost contact with the helping agencies. Third, even where caring was clearly a burden, adding to the weight of other problems in their lives, young carers did not usually consider asking for help.

6.6.2 Missing school to care

6.6.2.1 In various ways, these young people indicated that the responsibility of caring for another family member, regardless of other circumstances, had led them to miss substantial amounts of education, which in turn had left them struggling in the education system or lacking in qualifications.

► *Sarah was 16 years old and had not taken any GCSEs. She had dropped out of school to look after her parents, because her mother, now deceased,*

had cancer and her father had had a stroke. She had not seen a Connexions PA since she left school, and in any case associated the service primarily with jobs and careers. She did not appear to be receiving any help at all with her caring responsibilities. She told us that she had discussed her mother's care with the nurses who had looked after her, but had not talked about it with her PA at school.

► Jenny had had substantial absence from school. Her mother had died a few months previously, and although she now had a PA, she spoke as though Connexions was just about employment and careers. Jenny had managed to get some GCSEs in spite of having taken whole weeks out of school to care for her mother. She had wanted to go to college, but her father had helped her to get a job instead. Only when this did not work out had she gone back to Connexions. At the time of the interview, she was undertaking more qualifications with a training provider, which had been arranged by her PA. She could not identify any other form of support offered to her by Connexions.

6.6.3 Accepting responsibility and the burden of care

6.6.3.1 Although the young carers we spoke to dealt with their caring responsibilities in different ways, they generally saw these as an ordinary part of family life. Not one respondent with caring responsibilities suggested that this should have been done by someone else, or asked for or expected help. The caring responsibility was accepted without question.

► David, who was 15 when we first met him and quite new to the UK, lived with an uncle, and looked after his disabled brother after school each day. Despite missing substantial time from school, David had received help from his PA with accommodation and offending problems and had been persuaded not to drop out of school. At a second interview four months later, he told us that he was trying to catch up with school work he had missed, and looking forward to taking GCSEs and going to college, which his PA had helped him sort out. Although the support received from Connexions did not directly address the caring responsibilities, he had received encouragement to stay in education and acknowledged the importance of this.

► A young woman of 18 spent every other day looking after her sick mother. She had a history of self-harm, had suffered from stress and anxiety in relation to her schoolwork, and was living in temporary accommodation with her boyfriend. At the time of the interview she had dropped out of further education, and in spite of her accommodation problems had no contact with a Connexions PA. She told us that her mother had been told that she was not entitled to help with care because she had 5 children. Her sisters did very little, however, and she felt that the full burden fell on her. She stressed, nevertheless, that she felt it was her responsibility.

6.6.4 Support groups and other assistance

6.6.4.1 Young carers need recognition, support with caring tasks, information about the help that may be available to them, and emotional support. Standards Fund money is set aside to improve access to education for vulnerable young people (Department of Health, 2003:p. 36), and under the Carers, Recognition and Services Act, 1995, young people are entitled to ask for an assessment of their needs, which could help them to access statutory help (Department of Health, 2004: p. 76). Young carers are also highlighted in the APIR system as a group with particular needs.

6.6.4.2 Best practice in Connexions includes linking such young people to support groups, often run by specialist voluntary sector agencies or securing additional care for respite purposes. These approaches appeared to be as yet little developed: given the significance of the issue for achievement and the relative invisibility of this group, more pro-active attention could be given to their needs. We found very few examples of such positive intervention, though we interviewed one young woman, who cared for her Downs Syndrome brother, at a group run by a local youth centre. She saw the Young Carers' Group as an asset. She said she felt she had missed out on her childhood through her caring responsibilities, but that the group was *"like a home, it's always here for me."*

6.6.5 Key issues for young carers

6.6.5.1 This small but important sample showed that:

- Many of these young people drop out of school, thereby losing any existing Connexions contact. Early identification and assessment of the situation appear to be critical. What is more, while their commitment continues they are unlikely to "get back into the system" by signing on for Jobseeker's Allowance.
- They were unlikely to seek out Connexions help with caring responsibilities, especially if they associated the service with jobs and further education. In addition, although caring for a relative might be a burden, these young people accepted it as their responsibility, and were therefore less inclined to seek help. None of the young people we spoke to expressed a desire to off-load this burden onto someone else.
- Some PAs did, however, have some positive impact on the lives of these young people. First, young carers who took substantial time out of school or dropped out of education altogether, had few if any qualifications. Yet, where they did have contact with a Connexions PA, there were examples of positive outcomes achieved through encouragement to stay on in education.
- Connexions has the potential to link such young people to support groups or respite assistance.
- Again with this group, the ability to help depends to a great extent on the development of a trusting relationship with the PA, in which a young carer feels confident to say that they are finding it hard to cope with a burden that they feel is their own responsibility, without fear that their confidence will be broken.

6.7 Young people who misuse substances

6.7.1 Distinctions between substance use and misuse

6.7.1.1 For the purposes of this study, it is necessary to distinguish between substance use and misuse. Whether a young person misuses substances or simply uses them occasionally has implications both for this research and for the assessments carried out by Connexions. The Health Advisory Service (HAS) acknowledges that clear distinctions between use, often styled experimental or recreational drug taking, and misuse, are hard to draw.

“Most drug use is illegal, and some who use or experiment may have adverse consequences, sometimes fatal. However, use of alcohol safely in the older adolescent cannot be considered misuse. We recognise that the use of substances has different implications at different ages, with use mainly related to experimental use in the older adolescent. ... Drug use will require screening and assessment of the implications of this use, depending on age and any vulnerability, with prevention initiatives such as education, advice and information and prevention work, to reduce the potential for harm...For ... clarity the term misuse will encompass harmful use and dependence...Those who misuse will require more comprehensive assessment and appropriate interventions.” (HAS, 2001: p. 5)

6.7.1.2 How the needs of a young person are assessed by Connexions or other agencies will depend on this very thin line of distinction between use and misuse. The process of normalisation of drug use among young people (Parker et al, 1998) also presents further difficulties for policy responses and assessment (MacGregor, 1999). Indeed, as many of our interviews demonstrated, young people often do not see their use of Class B or Class C drugs, such as amphetamines or cannabis, as problematic at all. The fact that “misuse” is generally defined by harmful use of substances, does not preclude the fact that “use” can also be problematic in certain circumstances. In one Connexions Partnership included in our study, for instance, concerns were voiced that regular and excessive use of cannabis was negatively affecting young people’s motivation and capacity to take up learning (Hoggarth and Wright, 2003). Harm reduction is therefore the most commonly accepted approach (Newcombe, 1992; Lenton and Single, 1998).

6.7.1.3 As set out in Appendix B, some judgements on categorisation had to be made by the interviewers as to whether the young person was using, misusing or not using substances. Based on these judgements, a total of 112 young people (16 per cent) from the overall sample were considered to have substance misuse problems. A total of 249 young people (36.5 per cent), however, disclosed that either they or their friends had used substances. It is clear that both use and misuse were present in the sample and although these figures cannot be seen as representative of the youth population, they confirm the perceived widespread use of substances in some of the Connexions areas.

6.7.2 How substance misusers were contacted

6.7.2.1 In addition to the usual contact routes outlined above, young people with substance misuse problems were also identified through specialist treatment or counselling agencies or the Drug Action Team (DAT, sometimes also referred to as Drugs and Alcohol Action Team or DAAT). Connexions is expected to work closely with these multi-agency partnerships, which work to implement the National Drug Strategy (Home Office, 2002; DfES, 2001e). The researchers were unable to rely heavily on referrals from such specialist agencies, as the issue of confidentiality frequently proved to be an obstacle in allowing such agencies to release contact details. However, in a few cases, when the young person's permission could be obtained through such agencies, the research team was able to approach interviewees directly.

6.7.3 How Connexions is identifying and working with young people at risk of substance misuse

6.7.3.1 The Connexions Service recognises substance misuse as a barrier to achievement (DfES, 2001e), and shares a crosscutting target with the Home Office to refer all young people, with a drug related problem, to specialist support. Connexions may offer support to this risk group in the form of complementary help by PAs, referrals to specialist agencies, drawing on the expertise of a specialist PA or involving a specialist PA directly with the young person. The term "complementary support" is used here to mean support offered alongside other agencies, not specifically on substance misuse problems but aimed at other issues the young person may also be facing.

6.7.3.2 Overall, however, on the basis of our evidence, the PAs in our sample tended not to engage directly in helping young people with their substance misuse problems and some experienced difficulties in making referrals. In some cases the problem had not been recognised. In others, PAs felt they lacked the expertise to provide support and would generally seek to refer a young person to a specialist agency. Such local agencies, which provide services ranging from street work and awareness sessions to one-to-one counselling or treatment, seemed to be known to Connexions as they featured in their "directories" of local services. There is less evidence on how familiar PAs were with local referral routes in practice.

6.7.3.3 Despite having a very positive view of the specialist agencies, in some participating Partnerships, the PAs found it difficult to give examples of work with the risk group or referrals they had made. In fact, the research team was able to establish very few contacts with young people who had been referred by Connexions for specialist advice. This appears to mean that in some areas, even though drug taking is recognised by Connexions as a local problem, the service has not developed an effective means of identifying and referring young people with potential misuse. One area manager, concerned about the misfit between the area's drugs problems and the ability of Connexions to work with clients in need of support with substance misuse, reflected self-critically on the situation, *"If we are not helping those young people, who are we helping then?"*

6.7.3.4 In the cases where substance misuse was identified, many PAs were also uncomfortable providing complementary support to such young people and many felt that a referral to a specialised agency was all they could offer. One PA gave an example of a young heroin user on her caseload, whom she felt unable to help directly: *“What could I have done about him?”* She “brokered” a referral in relation to his drug misuse but it appeared in this case that her background as a careers adviser had not equipped her with the confidence to offer complementary support on other issues.

6.7.3.5 Some Partnerships employ PAs with a specialism in substance misuse, sometimes seconding them to the DAT. Where PAs with such expertise – acquired through specialised training or due to professional background – were deployed within Connexions teams to offer targeted support to this risk group and advice to other PAs, our evidence suggested more positive outcomes were likely to occur and that effective joint work alongside specialist agencies was more likely. Our reservation is that this model of work did not seem to be used by Connexions staff to its maximum effect. In one of the participating Partnerships, where substance misuse was recognised as a major problem, a specialist PA revealed that she had offered support to only a small number of individual clients and received a relatively small number of requests for support from PAs over a period of more than a year. An area manager confirmed that PAs were perhaps not using the support of specialist PAs enough.

6.7.3.6 This also raises the issue of providing training and supervision to PAs in relation to substance misuse. In some areas, the training PAs had received was intended to enable them to provide basic assessment, information and advice to young people (Level 1 support in the DAT categories). Drug awareness courses were also generally available. However, despite this provision, many of the PAs we interviewed still seemed wary and lacking in confidence on substance misuse issues, which suggests that more effective training is needed to raise the level of confidence and expertise.

6.7.3.7 In some cases, the PA had made an informal suggestion to the young person that they should see a specialist in another agency but had not offered continuing support to encourage take up. Our evidence suggests that continuous support is important to progress.

► At his first interview one young man disclosed serious drinking problems and recent involvement in drug taking and dealing. He had told another worker about this, but not his PA. *“I drink too much, to be honest. I drink every night... I have at least two litres of wine every night... [I] used to smoke lots of cannabis, and also sell it, but not anymore. [I] used to take ecstasy – 6-8 pills at a time...pretty much every night.”* During the follow up interview, he said that he had told his PA about the problem in the long run. Her response had been to direct him to a drugs treatment agency, but not to offer support along the way. The young person decided that he needed nobody’s help but his own and did not follow up the contact: *“...she [the PA] would have advised me about going to [the agency], and given me some phone numbers and that,*

but I never actually rang any of them or did anything about it, because I knew the only person who can help you when you're drinking a lot is yourself, really, innit? Willpower."

► Another example illustrates that it was not until the young person became involved with the Youth Offending Team that he was referred to a drugs worker. He drank "*quite a bit*" and used "*quite a bit of resin*". His misuse of substances made him "*aggressive*" and resulted in him "*burgling two houses*" to pay for drink and drugs, but he did not get caught at the time. Although he was seeing a PA in that period, no one suggested that he should seek help with his substance misuse. Although the PA did offer help in relation to the work experience and also his court appearance, according to the young man, she never raised the issue of substance misuse.

6.7.3.8 Agreeing the parameters of expertise, access to specialist provision and referral procedures between the Connexions Service and drug and alcohol agencies is deemed essential for joint work. For example, a statement of joint working between Connexions and a community-based treatment service for young people under 19, in one of the Partnership areas, detailed their principles of collaboration. These included referring clients who required more specialist support, using the DAAT "approved screening tool" and identifying complementary activities and opportunities for joint working (Connexions/Addaction, 2003). A similar local agreement existed with the DAAT, which recommended ways of optimising cooperation over assessment, mapping and baseline data; identifying gaps; training; information sharing, joint commissioning and pooling drug-related resources.

6.7.3.9 The crucial issue, however, regarding partnership cooperation is not the existence of such agreements but how they are implemented. Whether Connexions pulls its weight in these networks is particularly important, especially in relation to identification of need and referral. While, in some Partnerships there were examples of very effective implementation of agreements, in others Connexions managers believed they were not doing enough to relate properly to the DAT and other drug related agencies. Wide disparities are evident between Partnerships in the numbers referred to Tier 2, 3, and 4 services, in a range from 1 to 161 per Partnership in a quarter (SCYPG, 2004a, Annex 4.1). This management information also shows that the numbers of substance misusers identified across the Partnerships varied widely, and this variation often goes against what might be expected given the population and rural/urban make-up of certain areas (e.g. Cheshire and Warrington lists 231 substance misusers at March 2004, whereas the more populous and urban South Yorkshire area lists only 35). These variations may be partly explained by differences in the implementation of partnership agreements, staff training and awareness, closeness of relationships between practitioners in the various agencies, co-location and availability of appropriate services (especially at Tier 3).

6.7.4 What works well and why?

6.7.4.1 If a young person's expectations are that Connexions cannot help with substance misuse, impact will be more difficult to achieve. One young woman, who was a heavy drinker and a regular user of cannabis, told the researchers that she went to the Connexions centre just to use the computers. She had not seen a PA to discuss her issues, as in her mind, Connexions was a *"place to help people... help them work towards what they want to do... reading and writing and stuff"*. She said that she would be *"embarrassed"* to contact Connexions herself. Such perceptions are particularly important as young people are not always aware of what support is available in relation to substance misuse, and agencies do not always make clear the nature and level of service they provide (Payne 2003: p.14).

6.7.4.2 As suggested earlier, another of the other supporting conditions for impact in this risk group is disclosure; that is whether, when and how the young person chooses to disclose that they are at risk of abusing drugs or alcohol. Young people's confidence to disclose is likely to be contingent on the degree of trust and their relationship with the PA. In turn, the interventions chosen will be dependent on the young person's relationship with the PA and on the congruence of orientations within that relationship. A clear explanation of the approach to confidentiality will help in this respect. One young person, asked if Connexions knew about his drugs problem, replied: *"No, I don't really want them to... I don't want them to 'cause they'll just tell my mum and dad."*

6.7.4.3 Where a young person does not want to discuss misuse issues with a PA, but is happy to accept help from others, Connexions can still facilitate impact indirectly. We observed two elements to this process: appropriate and sensitive referral, and continuing complementary support.

► One PA had recognised the need for specialist counselling for a young woman with both alcohol and drug problems and made a successful referral. The PA accepted that she did not feel able to talk to her about these problems but remained in touch, offering continuing support. When we asked this young woman when was her PA most helpful, she pointed out that her PA was still there for her when she was self-harming: *"When I tried to kill myself, I suppose... when I was eighteen... I took an overdose, and when that didn't work, I tried to cut my wrists."*

6.7.4.4 While there was a general consensus among PAs in this study that *"the PA is not a drug worker [and] the PA's role is assessment, identification and referral,"* several cases underlined the importance of continuing contact where young people have been referred on to specialist agencies. It can be argued that the support of Connexions should not stop with the referral: it is comprehensive support, offered both by Connexions and other agencies that seems to be most effective. A worker from a treatment agency explained the positive benefits of such joint action and skill-sharing: *"That's good from our point-of-view because they [the young people] have struck up a relationship with their adviser... I had a young lady who... because I'd never really dealt with young people before... who had a problem with benefits, and so I went*

with her to Connexions to see [name of PA] who was her worker at the time, and I learnt a lot in that session... she was referred by Connexions to Progress to Work, so it worked really well.” This cooperation appears to be even more beneficial if specialised agencies refer young people back to Connexions once their work has concluded with them: *“What we [Connexions] would like to see is when their counsellor or drugs worker feels their job is done, we want those young people...sign-posted back.”*

6.7.4.5 The complexity of needs in this group is acute and coordination is particularly important. As shown at Table 10, more than two thirds of our substance misusers had five or more other risks, approximately one quarter had been either homeless or looked after and nearly two thirds had offended, as underlined again in the discussion on young offenders below. Roles need to be clearly agreed, so that different issues can be addressed by the relevant specialist and there is a clear lead. To take an example, one PA told us of his difficulties in engaging a young care leaver with a history of substance misuse, who had involvement from a social worker, an anger management worker, and a probation officer, as well as help from a voluntary youth organisation, but no key worker had been designated.

6.7.4.6 We found some young people, where the pattern of drug misuse, offending and dealing had become entrenched. Illegal activity, especially dealing, can be extremely lucrative and some young people will withdraw from contact with Connexions or merely show superficial conformity for instrumental reasons. One such case, where a young man told us he had income from what he called *“illegal stuff”* is set out in the additional illustrations at Appendix H. A Personal Adviser also described this barrier to us in relation to referrals to E2E, *“We’ve got to fight against the streets... I’m talking about ... young people who have got in trouble with the police and they’re into drugs and whatever, hustling, and they’re actually getting their money by other means. It’s really hard to sell £40 per week to a young person who is getting like £100 a day... We’ve got to be real. We are not going to be able to address all the needs of all young people... I don’t think the government recognise that.”* As we argued in Section 2, there are structural and social conditions, which can limit the impact of the work or make positive outcomes very much harder to achieve.

6.7.5 Key issues with substance misusers

6.7.5.1 Connexions could further strengthen its work in the area of identification, assessment and referral of young people at risk of substance misuse to specialist agencies.

- Many, perhaps even most, young people accept drug use as normal. The extent of misuse in an area is masked by the illegal nature of much of the activity and the reticence to disclose.
- PAs need confidence in basic drug awareness and the training and support to keep them informed of the interventions and referral routes available.

- Connexions needs to see itself as a weight-bearing partner both with DATs and with individual young people who need support in dealing with their drug misuse.
- Some specialism within Connexions is often helpful but where specialist PA posts are created, steps are needed to ensure that their contribution is used effectively by generic teams.
- The interventions chosen need to be dependent on the young person's relationship with the PA and an understanding of their orientations to their drug misuse and to their interaction with Connexions.
- Successful contact with drug misusers can be more easily be achieved when young people understand Connexions as a general service that can be used by anyone, regardless of the nature of their issues.
- Sustained contact with the young person who needs tailored interventions or who has been referred to a specialised agency can be crucial. Although the Connexions Service generally expects support with substance misuse to be provided by specialist agencies, the work most likely to improve outcomes lies in offering complementary support to address some of the multiple needs that these young people may have, for example by offering careers and education guidance and help with financial, emotional or practical difficulties.
- Coordinated multi-agency work and follow up can increase the chances of positive impact, especially if young people are referred back to Connexions after counselling or treatment ends.
- Mechanisms should be in place to identify and agree between agencies the key worker for the young person with multiple risks.

6.8 Young offenders

6.8.1 Introduction

6.8.1.1 In our study there is a distinction between “young offenders”, a term generally used to describe young people found guilty in court of an offence or in receipt of an official police caution, and young people who admit to offending behaviour but have not been charged or cautioned. During the whole study 150 young offenders were interviewed (22 per cent). Some 307 young people (42.5 per cent) divulged committing offences and this figure includes not only those with formal charges or warnings but also those who had been arrested but not formally charged or warned and those who had not been arrested at all. The methodological problems of assessing offending behaviour chiefly from self-reporting are discussed at Appendix B. Our findings can only be seen as representing young people who were asked to take part in the research and what they were either happy or able to tell us.

6.8.1.2 These young people were contacted through Youth Offending Teams as well as through Connexions and other agencies. In addition to the usual settings, interviews took place in an open prison, a Young Offenders Institution (YOI), and through outreach services provided by specialist agencies such as the National Association for the Care and Resettlement of Offenders (NACRO).

6.8.1.3 The Youth Offending Team (YOT, sometimes termed the Youth Offending Service or YOS) is required to provide a supervising officer for every young person in receipt of either an intervention in support of final warning; a referral order; a reparation order; a community penalty or the community element of either a detention and training order or custodial sentence. These categories are counted together for the purposes of Connexions monitoring (SCYPG, 2004b).

6.8.1.4 Young offenders may differ in both the type of offence committed and the court order they are given, and these may affect the way Connexions is able to work with them. For example, a young person who received a custodial sentence for a violent crime may require different support from someone who received a caution for a shop lifting offence. As one PA explained: *"I'm aware of those that are Category 1, Schedule 1 offenders [meaning violent or sexual offences against a child] because I need to know that. Obviously, it affects the sort of opportunities you might be able to get them involved in."*

6.8.2 How Connexions is reaching and working with young offenders

6.8.2.1 Connexions shares responsibility with YOTs for the target of making sure that 90 per cent of young offenders aged 13-18 who are supervised by the YOT are in education, employment or training by 2004 (DfES, 2001h). In our data, 70 per cent of young offenders were EET and 32 per cent received intensive support from Connexions. It was suggested by one PA that in fact all young offenders ought to be treated as in the top priority group because of their need for intensive support over a sustained period. *"They all come into what we call the P1 group by the very fact they are young offenders."*

6.8.2.2 The working arrangements between Connexions and the YOTs vary considerably. In one Partnership area, for example, there were PAs seconded to YOTs who took on either a careers guidance role or a more generic responsibility, to whom Youth Offending Officers could make direct referral. In another area, the YOT had a Learning Liaison Officer post, jointly funded by Connexions and the LEA, which referred young offenders on to PAs for wider support.

6.8.2.3 We identified several routes by which Connexions was **making contact** with young offenders: by outreach, from contact with the YOT or through referrals from other agencies.

6.8.2.4 Referrals from the YOT tended to take place if the young person had education, employment or training needs identified during the YOT's assessment, known as ASSET (Youth Justice Board, 2000). Under a partnership agreement with the YOT in one of the areas in this study, a list of new young offenders was sent to the relevant Connexions office each week. In another area, *"When [the YOT] are allocated a young person, they will immediately assess if they need careers help."* If the young person had learning or training needs then a referral might be made to Connexions.

6.8.2.5 Referrals that come from the YOT can be broken down into three groups, which influence the roles both of the PA and the YOT worker, namely, those people who are already in contact with a Connexions PA prior to an offence; those who have had no previous PA contact prior to an offence; and those who have been given a substantial community based order or a custodial sentence.

6.8.2.6 It is evident from the interviews that **young offenders** were frequently **already in contact with a Connexions PA**. When a young person comes to the YOT and already has Connexions involvement, an agreement should be made on whether there is a need for input from the PA during the intervention from the YOT and what this should be (DfES, 2001h). It did not appear from our research that such liaison always occurs, sometimes due to sensitivities around confidentiality. In one area, a PA seconded to the YOT had access to the Connexions database to see who had been working with the young person, and could add details about the guidance interview at the YOT. In another, a YOT caseworker said that the young person would be asked if they already had a PA and only if the young person was unhappy with their existing PA or did not have one would they be referred to the PA seconded to the YOT. The quotation below shows that within this process a judgement was being made by the YOT on whether or not the Connexions PA should be told about the young person's offending. While we would not argue that it is always necessary for a PA to be aware of a client's offending - the more rounded their picture of needs is, the more effective their work is likely to be.

I: If a young person came to you and you found out they already had a Personal Adviser, how would you get in contact?

R: I wouldn't...The only reason is if they already have an adviser ... if they say 'Well I just don't like them,' we'll get on to [the PA seconded to YOT] but if they said 'Things are fine, I've got an adviser,' rightly or wrongly I don't want to get on the phone and say they've got a referral order, they've been a naughty boy...we leave it to the young person to tell them.

6.8.2.7 In a different area, another YOT worker was unaware of any protocols about finding out if the young person was already working with a Connexions PA: either such working arrangements were not in place or this particular YOT worker was not aware of them.

"I think I probably do always ask... you don't always get a very straight answer to it, and so sometimes it's untangling what it means...I don't know if it's a protocol, I don't know if it's a requirement [to contact Connexions]... There isn't an immediate obviousness about who the worker is and how to get in touch with them."

6.8.2.8 In one partnership agreement we examined between a YOT and Connexions, it stated a priority to consolidate referral and communication systems to identify clearly the lead worker under the Connexions Service for each young person to ensure ongoing support beyond the involvement of the YOT. Such work on clarifying inter-agency relationships seems to be of paramount importance.

6.8.2.9 Where the young offender has no current contact with Connexions, it is expected that the YOT worker will take the lead role (DfES, 2001h) and may then refer to Connexions for advice on education and employment if it is identified as a need on the ASSET assessment. A PA seconded to a YOT explained that young people who did not have a Connexions PA would be referred “*on to a generic PA down at the centre*” if they required more than the limited careers guidance interview he was able to offer at the YOT.

6.8.2.10 Where the young person has been given a period of community service or a custodial sentence, and will be in contact with the YOT for a substantial amount of time, it is again expected that the YOT worker will take on the role of the PA (DfES, 2001h).

6.8.2.11 There were also some examples, however, of positive contact between Connexions and young people in custody or after release. A PA working within a secure unit told us that she saw all new inmates during their induction to look at their career development and a young interviewee confirmed that “*everybody sees her.*” Another young person was introduced to her PA by her YOT worker while in prison. Since her release she had had weekly contact with the YOT and saw her PA at the Connexions centre on a monthly basis.

I: You mentioned that you have been seeing her [your PA] for a year now, how did you meet up with her?

R: When I were in prison and umm, who were it that put me in contact? I think it were my YOT worker she said ‘Oh, I’ll get someone.’ ‘cos I was asking about jobs I’ll be able to do now because of my offence and stuff so she got the PA to come in and see me.

I: Actually in prison she saw you?

R: Yeah, she came 2 or 3 times

I: Right, and then obviously she’s seen you once you came out as well.

R: Yes, I’ve stayed in contact.

6.8.3 The PA role, trust and orientation

6.8.3.1 Some PAs seconded to the YOT carry a generic caseload with a limited time allocation, and can consequently only offer an isolated careers advice session, before passing the offender on to a PA based at Connexions. This approach can give rise to difficulties in follow up of the employment and training issues. More commonly, seconded PAs are used for advice and guidance on learning and employment rather than adopting the generic role. The usefulness of this approach is reduced if communication and information sharing between workers is poor.

“I’m used very much as a careers consultant rather than as a generic PA. That’s how they [the YOT] want it to be. Because in my experience youth offending officers themselves take the role of PA with the clients they are

working with... What they feel they need is specific information about what is available for these young people and how to get these opportunities.”

6.8.3.2 PAs may also work within the YOIs. One such PA explained that her role involves running a pre-release course and helping young people with vacancy services, career plans and training both within and out of custody. Inmates can also book appointments to see her and one young person emphasised the significance of such support: *“I really need a Connexions worker to help while I’m in here, to get into college and things. If not I’d be stuck in here for the next eleven months ‘cos the officers in here are not that bothered, it’s just a job for them.”*

6.8.3.3 While the relationship with the offender will be critically important in the generic role, the PA in the advice and guidance role also needs to be able to create trust and understand the young person’s orientations. The offender’s previous experience of learning, motivation and aspirations for the future will all be influential as will their willingness to discuss personal issues.

6.8.3.4 For Connexions to provide maximum support to young offenders, it is desirable that the PA should be aware of their offending behaviour but this will often depend on trust and the young person’s willingness to divulge their situation.

► Andrew had been in trouble with the police on several occasions. At the time of our first interview, he had frequent contact with Connexions and was attending training. It seemed that he had never spoken about his offending with his PA. As Andrew put it himself, *“I don’t think she knew about it...No, I didn’t tell her, so, you know what I mean, I knew I had it under control. I knew I’d done it. I spoke to my solicitor about it. It weren’t something that was bothering me.”* In our follow up interview, he no longer had Connexions input despite continuing offending behaviour and becoming NEET. To provide optimum support, the PA would have needed to know about his original offending, any new offences and his recent NEET status.

6.8.3.5 Spotting readiness and harnessing motivation play an important part. Some young people may be resistant and others may want to deal with their own issues without Connexions involvement. As one PA acknowledged, it is extremely difficult for Connexions to help young people who are unreceptive, *“I never really seem to be able to move forward with [name]. I’ve tried home visits, I’ve tried giving him incentives, I’ve tried a whole range of things...and I find him very difficult to engage. I sometimes find myself thinking ‘am I really the best PA for the job?’”* With such young people perseverance and a long-term trusting relationship may be required.

6.8.4 Multiple risk and multiple workers

6.8.4.1 We already noted the considerable overlap between substance misuse and offending. Young offenders in our sample also showed a high incidence of underachievement and emotional and behavioural problems (see Table 10). One young person, for instance, said he *“did burgle two houses to*

pay for drink and drugs.” and a PA described another young woman as offending *“when she had alcohol in her system.”* These findings are entirely in line with national data, which shows strong links between problematic drug and alcohol use and crime, with 75 per cent of persistent offenders having misused drugs especially heroin and/or cocaine (Home Office, 2002). In one Partnership area, examples were recounted of young people spending as much as £150 per day on heroin or even £80 a week on cannabis. If drug users steal to fund their use, they will usually need to raise approximately four times the value of their drug spending given the resale value of stolen items (Brand and Price, 2000). As one PA explained, such linkages have many implications for Connexions:

“Hmm, there is a lot of drug related offending and alcohol related offending. I’ve worked with a number of people who have had custodial sentences ... and they’re coming up to release date and they’re full of ideas about what they’re going to do when they get out. And they look really well, especially if they had been on drugs before ... and come off them. They look better and they feel better and they say they’re not going to get back on them and sadly often those resolutions aren’t kept and they do drift back. And if they do, almost invariably they do re-offend: there is such a clear connection.”

6.8.4.2 Overlap occurs on other issues as well. A PA described a situation of working with a young offender on the urgent problem of sorting out her housing situation, where agency coordination was needed. *“She attended one interview at a hostel and was booked for another one the following Thursday, which she didn’t attend. So it fell through. We are still looking at her housing issues – the youth service worker is looking at that, the YOT worker is looking into that, and obviously I can do that as well.”*

6.8.4.3 Duplication is also a recurring issue at assessment. For each young offender, the YOT carries out an ASSET assessment. If a PA is working with the same young person, they may carry out an APIR assessment. Whilst these two assessments do differ, they also cover a lot of the same issues but PAs and YOT workers do not necessarily have mutual access to the information.

I: Are you able to access that [the YOT assessment]?

R: They will pass on some information that’s relevant ... but I don’t actually access their assessment. I think that is again something that is possibly going to change. It needs to... It’s a bit silly that an assessment has been done and it shouldn’t be made available to other people.

6.8.4.4 There are reasons for and against carrying out separate assessments. If properly handled, two separate assessments, undertaken by different people, may produce a fuller and more accurate picture of a young person’s situation. Balanced against the potential for greater accuracy, however, is the risk that for some it will only serve to increase their alienation. As one YOT officer observed: *“I went to see a young man last week, and he refused to talk to me at all, because he said, ‘I’m fed up with talking to people, I’m fed up*

with people asking me questions, I'm fed up with everybody wanting to know about me. Go away.' They feel over-social-worked, really."

6.8.4.5 There is evidence that the more flexible approach Connexions can provide can work to young people's benefit alongside the YOT's statutory role. In the words of one YOT worker, *"[The PA] is very committed and will still contact young people even if they fail to keep appointments and some of the other organisations don't necessarily want to follow things up."* The PA in this situation described a client in these terms: *"At times she didn't help herself, she'd miss appointments ... I'd have her booked in to do a CV or some help with applications forms, ... she'd say 'Oh yes, yes that will be really helpful.' and then she'd wouldn't turn up. She is a little bit, if she's not in the right mood, she won't do it ... you can understand that totally ... but it's very easy to lose heart, ... it hasn't helped her in the process of finding a job."*

6.8.5 Follow up issues and impact leakage

6.8.5.1 In this complex process, contact with young people is easily lost. Connexions PAs often lose touch when they are not aware of a young person's situation, including their offending, or lose contact during the follow up stage or at the end of a custodial sentence. Management protocols on notifying Connexions about new young offenders or those ending a sentence are not always used at an operational level.

6.8.5.2 Contact may also be lost after the initial compulsory interview at the YOT, if the young person does not keep their next Connexions appointment. As a PA seconded to the YOT put it, *"I could see them once here, then arrange another appointment down at the Connexions centre. That's another drop off point."* Furthermore, PAs do not usually have time to follow up all young offenders, which means that some are being referred on to education, training or employment but are not receiving continued support from a PA. The loss of contact can be bewildering from the young person's point of view, as a young man of school age who had received Connexions input whilst in custody (YOI) explained, *"from the time my licence stopped until just before Christmas I didn't see nobody."*

6.8.5.3 Examination of the Connexions Management Information requirement, (SCYPG, 2004b) may explain why the follow up of young people who have been in custody is so variable. For young people of compulsory education age, there is a minimum requirement that follow up occurs after one year and that the young person's "currency" also expires after one year from last confirmation. ("Currency" is the record of a young person's contact with the service; lack of contact over the prescribed period results in a lapsed currency and the young person becomes classified as "not known" in the management data.) This may explain why the young man who left custody above was left for six months not yet in education. In fact had the young person not instigated Connexions support himself, several more months may have passed until a PA needed to follow him up.

6.8.5.4 Establishing a supportive relationship with the young person during the lifetime of the court order itself can be an important element in ensuring that support continues afterwards, as young people *“tend to be compliant while the court order is imposed”* and may stop contact when they no longer have to attend compulsory appointments. This risk will be increased if there is no handover arrangement or no clear protocol requiring the YOT to inform Connexions that a young person is coming to the end of their court order. A PA further explains this difficulty: *“I feel that there is a gap when they come to the end of their order. They drop all contact with the YOT and my feeling is that there is a danger of people slipping through the net at this point. Because there isn’t a clear handover the Youth Offending Team don’t on the whole come to me and say that this young person is coming to the end of the order [and] is going to need more support either from you or another PA.”*

6.8.6 The impact of Connexions on young offenders

6.8.6.1 There is a general consensus that becoming involved in education, employment or training is one key factor in preventing young people from offending (Youth Justice Board, 2001) and this is the area in which Connexions seems to have the biggest impact on young offenders.

“What works? The only thing that stops people re-offending is employment. We can give as many interventions to fill their time or inform them but education is the one.”

6.8.6.2 There is some evidence also that helping young people to engage in constructive activities can lead to a reduction in offending behaviour. The Connexions Service now leads on Positive Activities for Young People, usually in partnership with Youth Offending Teams and other agencies. These schemes tend to concentrate on Year 11 school leavers in the summer *“because that is the key drop out time”* and on *“those that are at risk of committing crime.”* Evaluation suggests that such activities are most effective in reducing crime when they are targeted on known young offenders and/or on geographical youth crime hotspots (Loxley et al, 2000; GOWM, 2004).

“Usually, a youngster changing out of offending ways is because they found some other constructive ways of doing things with their lives, and that’s usually leisure and work or training. So I think Connexions have an absolutely vital role in terms of helping young people stopping re-offending.”

6.8.6.3 Besides these opportunities, Connexions also offers continuing support and encouragement: a factor that should not be underestimated. This may involve help with information, inter-personal skills and confidence and handling the questions about background that inevitably arise.

6.8.7 Key issues for young offenders

6.8.7.1 In relation to young offenders, the key issues emerging from the fieldwork and analysis of the interviews were that:

- Connexions can play a vital role in supporting young offenders both in and out of custody into education, employment and training. PAs appear to take less of a generic role with this client group, possibly due to the role they are expected to take in relation to the YOT.
- Young offenders are likely to have multiple interventions. As long as a young offender has a clearly designated key worker, it may not be important which worker takes on the generic role. Some flexibility of roles is beneficial to the way that the YOTs and Connexions work together since arrangements can be better tailored to individual needs.
- Agreed roles and protocols between the Youth Offending Team and Connexions are critical, especially in relation to how new young offenders are notified to Connexions, who takes the lead role on each case, and how referrals are made to Connexions by the YOT. There is also the risk of duplication of assessment. Information sharing needs to be further developed.
- Impact leakage may occur at key stages in the Connexions process, particularly at the end of a young person's court order or during follow up. Guidance on the "currency" of a case and prescribed follow up periods may be compounding this.

6.9 Homeless young people and young people leaving care

6.9.1 Context

6.9.1.1 In 1999, the Social Exclusion Unit identified homelessness as one of the factors that leads to "descent into the hardest end of the social exclusion spectrum" (SEU, 1999:p. 9). Homeless young people are therefore likely to be hard to reach, both in the straightforward sense of making contact with them, and in the sense that their life histories may have already set them at odds with mainstream responses to the issues they face. Being homeless makes it almost impossible for young people to sort out education or training, or to hold down a job – and a lack of income is likely, not only to compound the problems of homelessness, but also to increase the risk of becoming homeless in the first place (ibid: p. 54).

6.9.1.2 Young people leaving care are disproportionately represented in the numbers of the homeless and present a range of other overlapping needs. Their situation has some particular features arising mainly from legislation and related organisational arrangements. Their needs are recognised in the Children Act 1989 and the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, which placed new duties on local authorities to provide leaving care advisers and support looked-after 16 and 17 year-olds and care leavers until they are at least 21.

6.9.2 Connexions and young homeless people

6.9.2.1 Recognising the difficulties of working with this particular group, *Working Together – Connexions and youth homelessness agencies* (DfES, 2001g) outlined methods of identifying and supporting young people at risk of becoming homeless or already homeless, and offered several models of practice for their support.

6.9.2.2 A number of factors can tip young people at risk of becoming homeless into a housing crisis, including family disputes or relationship breakdown, leaving care or another institution, and the risk of eviction or abandonment. Other associated “welfare” factors include exclusion from school, a lack of coping or practical skills, learning disabilities, anti-social behaviour, mental ill-health, substance misuse and a history of sleeping rough or running away. The risk of becoming homeless can be mitigated by positive factors such as a network of family and friends, being in education, training or employment, and by existing statutory help. The preventative role of Connexions involves identifying young people for whom these triggers are present and protective factors are lacking, and helping them to access the available support (DfES, 2001g: pp.10 -14).

6.9.2.3 For young people who were already homeless or living in insecure accommodation, **four models of multi-agency working** were outlined:

- Drawing existing specialist workers into the Connexions Service – which could offer continuity to homeless young people while also utilising the existing expertise in the sector.
- Taking an existing specialist on board as part of a multi-agency team working in a particular setting, thus enabling young people to get help and advice on a range of issues before they reached crisis point.
- Deploying Connexions PAs into homelessness services or agencies to work alongside existing specialists, thus adding the specific Connexions contribution and expertise to the mix of skills in the sector.
- Existing specialists within the homelessness sector continuing to work as before, but alongside a Connexions PA, who could offer more long term support as young people progressed and passed between different agencies (ibid: pp.15-20).

6.9.2.4 In practice, none of the PAs we interviewed quite matched any single model, though there were clear differences in the way they were deployed. These differences affected the degree of help and support offered to the homeless young people we interviewed.

6.9.3 Creating trust with homeless young people

6.9.3.1 Among our homeless respondents, many had just left, or were in the process of leaving care. Others told us they had been “*kicked out*” by their families for a variety of reasons. Some were reluctant to specify a reason for leaving home, where others cited abuse, bereavement or relationship breakdown. All of them faced multiple difficulties, and for some, these were long-term issues, which had been defining characteristics of their lives. For these young people, it would be unreasonable to expect that solutions would be either easy to identify or quick to implement. Impact – in terms of a positive outcome - may in such cases be nothing greater than developing the ability to form and maintain a more or less trusting relationship with a support worker over a sustained period of time. In lives where such relationships have been almost wholly absent, such small increments of stability are magnified to take on considerable significance.

► Sean was first interviewed while he was living in a hostel. Aged 19, he had spent four years in care after the death of his parents, who were both heroin addicts. Despite having been in trouble with the police for a variety of violent offences, and admitting to a heavy use of alcohol and drugs, Sean had high aspirations for his future, wanting to prove to extended family members that he could do well for himself and avoid becoming a “*druggie*” like his parents. He had gained several good GCSEs, and on the instigation of his Connexions PA, had taken and passed a range of other courses. The main things holding him back appeared to be his low self-esteem and an inability to trust other people. These, however, appeared to be overwhelming. When asked about his friendships, he told us: “*I am my main friend ... trust nobody*”. Four months later, at our second encounter with Sean, things were even bleaker. He had been excluded from the hostel for violent behaviour, and dropped out of his training courses as a result. He was now housed in his third bed and breakfast accommodation, and was facing charges of assault. It seemed as though things could not really get any worse. He put his continuing troubles down to the fact that “*I’m still an arsehole.*” – a response that acknowledged his own responsibility and bad behaviour, which according to a recent report is typical of people in his situation (Prince’s Trust, 2004: p.6).

6.9.3.2 On the surface, it looks as though Sean had made little or no progress since leaving care. The only stable feature of his life was his relationship with his PA, whom he had been seeing on a regular basis for two years. However insignificant this may seem, in terms of results from the deployment of PA resources, it is important not to underestimate its significance for a young man who by his own admission, trusted nobody. According to Sean, he told him pretty much everything “*If I don’t tell [my PA], then I don’t tell anyone.*” Without his PA, he said, “*I would have been down in the dumps and in the gutter somewhere*”.

6.9.3.3 For such young people, it is not necessarily the case that the development of a trusting relationship activates the “mechanisms” that in turn may lead to “hard” or practical outcomes. Rather, it appears that the relationship itself constitutes a substantial positive outcome for young people who have never had a trusting relationship of any duration with a significant adult. Support, where it exists, for these young people may need not only to be intensive, but also long term.

6.9.4 Working with homeless young people

6.9.4.1 None of the models of PA deployment we came across exactly matched those outlined in *Working Together*, but they did make a significant difference to the extent of the support PAs were able to offer the young people on their caseload.

6.9.4.2 Bob, the PA cited above, was deployed to work in a Youth Housing Agency, most closely approximating to the model of a specialist worker drawn into Connexions. His post was jointly funded by Connexions, to work intensively with 10-12 young people, and by Social Services, to provide a

statutory service to care leavers. His professional background, in both youth work and housing, was very useful in his Connexions role, which included attempting to engage young people in education, employment or training, and encouraging them to gain experience through volunteering. He was well aware of the overlapping and recurring nature of the issues faced by the youngsters with whom he worked, acknowledging that for some of them, *“engaging with other people is a critical issue”*. He was also concerned, however, that such clients, with very unstable backgrounds and little in the way of family support or role models, could very easily become too dependent on the close relationship he had with them. This PA put us in touch with the young man in the next illustration.

► Craig was 16 and had a history of self-harm, low self-esteem and an inability to trust. He had taken a lifetime of beatings and verbal abuse from his stepfather, but when he finally snapped and hit back, he was told to leave home. Craig was living in supported lodgings and told us of his ambition to prove to his stepfather that he was not *“dumb”*. His PA had helped him to get on a plumbing apprenticeship, and had been trying to help him with a benefit claim and with opening a bank account, although this was proving difficult, because he did not have a permanent address. Otherwise Craig told us, he would still be living in bed and breakfast accommodation, and would probably have dropped out of college as a result of his self-harming. He told us that he would like to be able to see his PA more often, *“I would like to see him every day ’cos he is a great mate”*. Eight months later, however, things had again gone downhill. Craig had been *“kicked out”* of his supported lodgings and had been sleeping in a car for about a week. He was now back in bed and breakfast accommodation, and his girlfriend, who was only 15, was pregnant. There had been some talk, he said, of prosecution, but because they were in a relationship this had not been pursued. However, he felt he needed a full time job to support them both. Craig told us that being abused had led to feeling bad about himself, and that he was surprised by how quickly he had come to trust the PA, who was continuing to help him with finding accommodation and offering support with jobs and training.

6.9.4.3 Such young people are extreme examples of “lives gone wrong” (SEU, 1999, p. 8). They have intractable, multiple, inter-connected and recurring problems and their histories mean an orientation of suspicion towards adults. If they are able to sustain a relationship with a Connexions PA over a period of time, this represents a positive outcome in itself, regardless of any other, “hard” outcomes, such as qualifications, employment or a permanent tenancy.

6.9.5 Connexions PAs working with After Care services

6.9.5.1 Another model of practice observed with this group was where Connexions PAs were deployed on a “drop-in” basis at After Care services run by a voluntary sector agency, contracted to provide the statutory support for young people leaving care. This was closest to the third model outlined above (6.9.2.3), where Connexions worked alongside other specialist workers, who took on the key worker role. In such settings, most young

people spoke highly of their After Care workers, with whom they had built long-term relationships. Many of them felt that they did not need to see a Connexions PA as they already had all the help they needed.

6.9.5.2 As detailed in Section 5 (5.4.2.8), the overlapping use of the term Personal Adviser in the key worker role for care leavers, and in Connexions, and sometimes other agencies was seen to cause some confusion, both in the agencies and for young people themselves. When the young people we interviewed at this agency spoke of their PA, few of them were referring to a Connexions PA. Some were unaware of having had any contact with Connexions at all, even though a Connexions worker visited the centre twice a week. These young people tended to go to their After Care PA for advice about most issues, including housing, life skills, benefits, pregnancy, relationships or family problems. Where they were in contact with Connexions at all, this tended to be limited to advice about jobs and education.

6.9.5.3 It can be impossible with young people who move through a succession of temporary “homes” to maintain a single point of contact with a Connexions PA. Under these circumstances, care leavers or homeless young people would often rather rely on another worker with whom they can maintain a more permanent relationship. It becomes critical that decisions are made clearly on which worker should be the key worker, charged with ensuring continuity and consistency.

6.9.5.4 Other care leavers reported more positive experiences of Connexions, especially where the PA was deployed differently, on a model of practice more closely akin to the fourth model above, of working closely alongside other specialists in the sector.

6.9.5.5 One PA we spoke to was deployed within an After Care centre itself, which provides 24-hour helpline cover and a drop-in facility, with kitchen, lounge, shower and laundry. The young people can get their Care Leavers' Allowance there and food parcels, if necessary. This PA had a professional background in careers and higher education, but had also worked with young people with emotional and behavioural disorders. Her role did involve “adding value” in terms of education, employment or training advice, but she stressed that this was broadly defined and flexible, and that for her it was largely about engaging young people. With care leavers, she said, who might be very mature in some ways but have issues from being moved around too much, an informal approach works better, especially as they may lack skills and are consequently often unable to deal with paper-based information. She advocated a slow “*drip-drip*” approach so that young people would gradually learn that she presented no threat.

► Brendan had been in foster care since the age of seven. Now 17, he was living in a housing association flat that the After Care centre had helped him find. Brendan clearly had issues related to his time in foster care, as he told us that the foster parents were only doing it for the money and that they always treated their own children a lot better. He also claimed that if people knew you had been in foster care, they always suspected that you had been

in trouble, even if it was not true. Perhaps not surprisingly, he was initially quite suspicious of his PA and thought her “nosey”. He had grown to trust her more after she stuck up for him recently when he was being falsely accused and he now really appreciated her practical advice and support with education and training, as well as the help with claiming his benefit entitlements.

6.9.5.6 Responding to the young person’s orientation in this situation can be a fine judgement. Another care leaver told us that although he had a Connexions PA, he would prefer to talk to his After Care worker about most issues. However, at a subsequent interview, he told us that his Connexions PA had made him realise how hard it would be to get anywhere in life without qualifications, and had shown him “*the harsh realities of work, not just sitting around*”. His PA had used the APIR tool with him, which “*showed me what I should have been putting first*”. He had become a peer mentor at a youth club affiliated to Connexions. Without Connexions, he said, young people would not get any help until they had “*seen Probation, and by then it’s too late*”. This young man put his changed attitude to Connexions down to his own frame of mind. He had been very negative and depressed when he first came into contact with Connexions, and consequently had not been able to make best use of the service. A short spell in hospital with mental health problems had helped him see things in a different light.

6.9.5.7 We would be confident, however, in saying that where these young people with multiple risks put forward a clear and urgent presenting problem, there is no subtlety involved. Where Connexions fails to respond to those urgent practical needs, amongst which homelessness is the classic example, then almost inevitably damage is done.

► *Andy was 17 and NEET when interviewed with his 18 year-old girlfriend in temporary accommodation arranged by a local youth housing association. This extract from the interview illustrates the reaction to a failure to deal with the practical issues presented of homelessness and lack of money.*

I: Can you remember who the first person, that you spoke to from Connexions was?

R: We spoke to someone, when we first moved in here, I think that was my Personal Adviser; I spoke to her about getting benefits, needing money and everything. When we first moved here, we had no money, and we were living off toast for about a month, until we got money...and then I ran out of money, and they couldn’t do anything else for me.

I: So do you feel as though they let you down?

R: Well, they let us down from the beginning, when we phoned up to find somewhere to live. We were both getting chucked out. We phoned Connexions, ’cos we were looking through the book to see who could help us, and they said, ‘ We’ll get back to you in a week!’

Girlfriend: But we needed them that day.

R: And they didn’t help us, and then we phoned up [local housing association] and they told us to come down and we’ll be able to sort something out; and we went down and they got us in this place the same day!...and then we goes

to Connexions and they says, ‘ Sorry, we can’t help you.’ And that was last month. They weren’t exactly good for that.

I: So was it [Social Worker] that you saw at [this local housing association]?

R: She’s the best! She sorted us out with money, food, a roof over our head...she’s brilliant.

6.9.5.8 Similarly, an over-emphasis on the destination targets of training or employment may fall short of the sensitivity needed. Lack of trust compounds the situation. This is illustrated by the case of one young man, who had to see his PA at the Jobcentre every time he went to sign on. In this situation, he experienced his contact with Connexions as enforced, and felt that he could not openly discuss his housing problems, because the PA was only interested in getting him into training or work. He stressed that he had not acted on any of the advice the PA had offered him because his priority was to get some permanent accommodation sorted out. He felt that he could not fully trust this PA because she was based at the Jobcentre, and that she was only interested in “*pressurising*” him to go to college. “*You trust her to an extent, but at the end of the day, she’s working.*” If he needed help, he said, he would rather choose to talk to the Social Worker at the housing agency.

6.9.5.9 It was so common for our homeless and leaving care respondents to have multiple issues as to be the norm. Positive outcomes required intensive and sensitive support, often across several areas simultaneously.

► Sam, aged 15, was one of 11 children from a very poor family, with a history of physical abuse, who had been permanently excluded from a school for children with emotional and behavioural difficulties. He told us that he aspired to be different from the rest of his family, who “*drink and fight*” and that he believed education was important, “*otherwise you end up on the streets, on drugs or an alcoholic*”. It seemed, however, that the odds were stacked against him. His PA, whom he had met at school prior to exclusion, told us that she had seen him over 200 times in two years. She had just managed to get him a clothing grant, as he owned only what he stood up in and nothing else. She said that Sam had a total lack of support, and insisted that although “hard” targets were important, it was crucial to help him just to be able to survive from day to day. Even if he managed to get a college place, she felt, it would be hard for him to keep it, as there was no one to help him get out of bed in the mornings. Indeed, he sometimes slept rough. Her aim was to re-establish Sam’s trust in adults, so that he could access more of the statutory support available, but which he currently rejected because he felt so let down. Although it would be difficult, she hoped that through maintaining contact and practical assistance with things such as a bank account (and a birth certificate, which he lacked), independent living skills and self-esteem, she would be able to give Sam the support he needed.

6.9.6 Key issues for care leavers and the young homeless

6.9.6.1 Major themes from these groups included the following:

- Overall, the majority of the young people who were homeless, at risk of homelessness, or leaving care had multiple issues, including an

inability to form or sustain trusting long term relationships with a significant other as a result of a history of abuse or neglect, or other damaging life circumstances.

- Under such circumstances, where respondents had intensive long-term PA support, positive outcomes in terms of personal development were being achieved, for which the PA/young person relationship itself was often very significant. In addition, the young people themselves most often told us that “hard” outcomes, such as education or employment, were of secondary importance for them, compared with practical help such as in getting somewhere permanent to live.
- Some of the most damaged and fragile young people responded positively where there was a solid relationship built on trust, but even young people who were apparently much less damaged and more robust could not be helped unless this relationship was in place first.
- Creating a relationship with such extremely vulnerable young people amounts to a positive outcome in itself. It can also act as a platform from which they can work towards more concrete achievements.
- Homeless young people, those in temporary accommodation, and care leavers are often moved (or move themselves), which can make it difficult for them to maintain contact with a PA, and just as difficult for a PA to contact them. The mobility problem was exacerbated in circumstances where PAs were deployed in a “drop-in” capacity, and where staff turnover might create a gap in continuity. The best PA/young person relationships, for this risk group, were either not with Connexions PAs at all, as in the case of the first After Care agency cited above, or were with specialist workers who were now PAs within Connexions.
- The issue of inter-agency agreement on the role of key worker becomes critical with groups that by definition have multiple problems and need to relate to many services. Clarity on this matter assists with the question of maintaining contact and continuity.

6.10 Asylum seekers and refugees

6.10.1 Introduction

6.10.1.1 Asylum seekers flee their home country, possibly because of war or human rights abuses, and make a claim for refugee status because they believe they have “a well-founded fear of persecution in their country of nationality due to their race, religion, nationality, political opinion or membership of a social group.” (United Nations, 1951.) As a signatory to the 1951 UN Convention relating to the Status of Refugees and the 1967 protocol on refugees, the United Kingdom must consider all such applications. It must also consider whether an applicant would face “inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment”, contrary to Article 3 of the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR). The Home Office assesses each asylum claim against these criteria. At the end of the application process, the asylum seeker may be given Refugee Status, Humanitarian Protection, or Discretionary Leave. If the claim and any appeal are unsuccessful, they may have to leave the country.

6.10.1.2 The National Asylum Support Service (NASS) of the Home Office supports, on request, asylum seekers, who are destitute and can demonstrate that they claimed asylum as soon as reasonably practical after entering the country, with accommodation and support for essential living needs. Unaccompanied asylum seeking children (under the age of 18, outside their country of origin and separated from both parents/carers) are not supported by NASS but under the Children Act 1989, are the responsibility of Social Services (see DfES, 2003c, pp.12-13).

6.10.2 Issues affecting young asylum seekers and refugees

6.10.2.1 Many young refugees and asylum seekers have experienced conflict and trauma, fleeing from countries where major conflicts were taking place or where there are serious human rights abuses. Once they arrive in the UK, they experience a new set of difficulties (DfES, 2003c: pp. 19-20):

Language

- The majority speak little or no English on arrival, so face difficulty in progressing in education and/or looking for work.
- Because young people often learn English more quickly than their parent/carers, they may have to take on added responsibilities such as translating for their parents in their contact with authorities.

Education

- Asylum seekers may have had little or no education in their home country or significant interruption to their education.
- Horrific experiences in their country of origin or during their journey to the UK can affect some young people's ability to learn.
- Once in the UK, young refugees and asylum seekers often find teaching styles very different, with much more emphasis on library and Internet research and coursework.
- They may need additional language support.

Getting used to a new system

- In a new country, asylum seekers and refugees often do not know their rights and entitlements and have to find their way through the system by themselves.
- Some will have difficulty accessing services such as GPs, school and college places, or bank accounts.

Racism, discrimination and bullying

- In addition to their isolation, some young people will experience racism or discrimination because of their race, colour or immigration status. Bullying is also commonplace in schools and colleges.

Financial hardship

- Many asylum seekers and refugees find themselves living on low incomes, often in bed and breakfast or hostel accommodation.
- Some are drawn into crime because of adult pressure or poverty.

Mental health

- Asylum seekers and refugees may suffer from problems associated with loss or trauma in their past, or from emotional or mental health problems, such as loneliness or depression.

Isolation

- Young asylum seekers may lack confidence and have difficulty in adapting to their new environment. They may be separated from family and friends and have little or no money for social activities.

Immigration status

- Asylum seekers have to deal with the complex asylum application and appeal procedures. They also have the stress of not knowing if they will be able to stay in the UK. Their situation may change during this process and alter their support entitlements.
- Although refugees and some asylum seekers are permitted to work, there are still frequent barriers to getting a job, such as a lack of proficiency in English; qualifications that are not accepted in the UK; a lack of knowledge about finding work or the culture of the workplace; a lack of work experience or references; reticence of employers to undertake the checks and paperwork; and racism, exacerbated by unfavourable media coverage.

6.10.2.2. Connexions has a vital role to play in overcoming and alleviating these problems. *“This involves bringing together all the organisations that deliver services to these young people to provide a coherent, multi-agency package and one that is clearly focussed on the individual needs of each person.”* (DfES, 2003c, p.3) All asylum seekers and refugees aged 13-19 are entitled to use the Connexions Service, whether they have been given refugee status or other leave to stay in the UK, or if they have made a claim for asylum. This will involve Connexions working closely with Social Services, the LEA, schools and Jobcentre Plus as well as with local voluntary organisations to ensure effective advice and support.

6.10.3 The sample and how contact was made

6.10.3.1 The researchers interviewed 16 young asylum seekers and refugees, from several different countries and at varying stages of applying for asylum. In addition, more contextual information was gathered from PAs and workers from community organisations that work specifically with this group. The multi-risk nature of our sample is shown at Table 10 at 6.2.1 above, including a high incidence of housing problems and of being NEET.

6.10.3.2 The young asylum seekers and refugees were contacted directly through local voluntary and community organisations and Connexions PAs working directly with the risk group. However, it is worth mentioning that the research team experienced many difficulties in reaching this group of young people (hence the relatively small numbers). The methodological difficulties in obtaining information about this group are outlined at Appendix B.

6.10.4 How is Connexions reaching and working with young asylum seekers and refugees?

6.10.4.1 The young asylum seekers and refugees interviewed for this study came into contact with Connexions through two main routes: either by being referred to a PA by teachers at school or through compulsory referrals from

the Jobcentre. Several, contacted by the research team via a church community group had had no contact with Connexions and had never heard of the service. These non-users were not in education, employment or training and were not entitled to claim benefits because their status had not been confirmed in the UK. They were being supported by the National Asylum Support Service. It would seem that such young asylum seekers, who are NEET and not entitled to claim benefits may be more vulnerable to slipping through the Connexions net.

6.10.4.2 Young asylum seekers and refugees also came into contact with Connexions through referrals from Social Services or through voluntary groups with links to Connexions. For example, one PA worked specifically in the black and minority ethnic (BME) community and was in the process of creating a forum for BME and faith based community groups in the local area, so that these organisations could act as a channel for referrals. *“They almost act as satellite centres for Connexions... I use a black minority and ethnic focus group ...and I have talkers to talk about Connexions. So they get made aware and they go out to their centres, and I don’t expect these community workers to become experts in what Connexions does... but to be able to equip them with enough knowledge so if a young person came to them and said ‘I am struggling’, at least they can say ‘Well, have you tried Connexions; would you like me to refer you to a Connexions Personal Adviser?’”* This forum was still being developed but was clearly making positive steps in contacting young asylum seekers and refugees not in education, employment or training and referring them on to Connexions and other services.

6.10.4.3 The young people were being referred to Connexions by adults they already trusted, workers in their own community, and this had a positive effect - they were better able to identify Connexions as providing a holistic service and use the range of provision on offer, and they spoke more positively about their experiences of the service. As one young asylum seeker confirmed, *“Connexions is very helpful. I’ve spoken to them about my family and housing... I spoke to (my PA); she is the one that’s really helped me.”*

6.10.4.4 Those young people that had come into contact with Connexions as a result of a compulsory referral from the Jobcentre spoke much more negatively about their experiences. For example, one young man, who was frustrated that his PA could not straightforwardly get him Jobseeker’s Allowance and a National Insurance number because of his status in the UK, said, *“Connexions is good for many people, but not for me. I do not know why Connexions has not been helping me.”* Those referred by the Jobcentre appeared more likely to see Connexions as a service solely connected with training and jobs and therefore often did not plan to use the service beyond the statutory obligation of seeing them as a condition of benefit.

6.10.4.5 What became clear from the research is that young asylum seekers and refugees are unlikely actively to seek contact with Connexions themselves. This tendency not to self-refer often stems from a lack of knowledge and understanding of the service in the first instance. Outreach work, awareness raising and face-to-face contact with the young people

appeared to be the best ways of advertising the service and steps towards this had already been made, with the aid of translators, in some Connexions Partnerships. However, as one Team Leader suggested, simple publicity material translated into the languages used by asylum seekers and refugees could also be useful in a number of ways; 1) as a record of what the service offers with relevant contact details, 2) to be passed on to others who may be looking for support, and 3) to explain to parents the services available so that they can support their child's involvement. Similarly, several of the peer researchers suggested that the local and national Connexions websites could be made more accessible with an option to display the information on the service in community languages. It would seem that advertising and marketing Connexions to young people (and parents) from different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, is a key step to raising awareness of the service in the community.

6.10.4.6 The development of a trusting relationship between the young person and the Personal Adviser is then crucial. All of the PAs interviewed, who worked directly with young asylum seekers and refugees, stressed the importance of gaining the trust of the young person gradually over a period of time, as this group is often particularly wary of using Connexions and unsure of its links with other government departments, and reluctant to talk about immigration status or disclose personal information. *“Just to even get them to come to see us so that they can just talk about what they want to do if anything at all; that itself is an achievement you know.”*

6.10.4.7 Major breaks in contact with the young person or a change of PA may have detrimental effects on the relationship building process. Similarly, if the Personal Adviser breaks the trust, then continuity of contact beyond the statutory obligations is jeopardised. As one worker explained, *“It is imperative to deliver what you say that you will deliver.”* Young asylum seekers and refugees have often been passed around between many different professionals and agencies trying to find the support they need, before they encounter the Connexions Service. It is crucial that the PA should not make promises that will unrealistically raise their expectations.

6.10.4.8 Communication with a young person who is not fluent in English can clearly be very difficult. Many of the PAs interviewed said that they often used interpreters with asylum seekers and refugees to overcome this difficulty. However in many cases, lack of funding in their Partnerships meant that PAs were not able to use the translating services that they required and hence, relied on telephone interpreting services such as Language Line. This clearly has implications for the dynamics of the relationship and since the same interpreter is not supplied each time, the young person and PA do not have the chance to build up a relationship with the interpreter either. A lack of resources, to use professional interpreters consistently with their clients, will significantly reduce the ability of the PA to develop trusting relationships.

6.10.4.9 It is also important for Personal Advisers to gain the trust of families and carers where appropriate. As one PA who worked specifically with the black and minority ethnic community explained, *“...parents are a key factor in*

a young person's life... I always feel that if a young person is supported by the parents, then life is made much easier. So wherever possible, I try to engage with the parents."

6.10.4.10 The orientations that a young asylum seeker or refugee brings to the relationship are very significant. We could see that outcomes were enhanced if the young person perceived their PA as listening to their most pressing needs and sorting out their immediate practical problems before starting to support them in pursuing their education, training and employment goals. In contrast, one young asylum seeker said that his PA did not understand his needs and instead was inappropriately arranging a college placement. In his words: *"[PA] said me to go to college. But I can't. I have no house and no money. Nobody help me with that. I haven't a mother, I haven't a father."* This young person felt that his PA did not understand his situation and thus when we asked him; *"what would have happened if you had not had a Personal Adviser?"* he replied; *"no difference"*.

6.10.4.11 Another example, where a PA responded to a young refugee's immediate issues of offending, family breakdown, and homelessness, resulted in the young person saying that his PA had prevented him dropping out of school and had put him *"on the right track for the future."* This young person when interviewed in the second phase of the research, was no longer having family problems, had found suitable permanent accommodation, was no longer offending, was sitting his GCSE exams and had secured a place at college to do his A Levels. Sensitivity to the young person's priorities is crucial to enhancing outcomes, despite pressures to progress these young people out of the NEET group.

6.10.4.12 According to one PA of Asian ethnicity who worked specifically with young people in the BME community, understanding is more likely to be achieved if the ethnic and cultural background of the PA are matched to the young asylum seekers and refugees that they work with. In his own words, *"There is more and more a need, especially with asylum seekers and refugees, for someone who can understand... I am almost able to act as a role model to a lot of the BME young people and provide that help and guidance, and at least they can look up and say 'well yes, he may understand me'... We had an issue with a young Asian female and it was a white male (PA) that was liaising with her. He knew that he had to go to the client's house and talk to the father about his daughter going to clubs and stuff like that, and he sort of recognised that there was going to be an issue about a typical white male going to an Asian father trying to say to him, 'this is the way of the western world'. It wasn't going to go down well. So ... I was able to go with my colleague and relate to the father and sort of say 'look I am an Asian, I am being brought up in this country and I know the barriers that we face as the Asian community'. We spent two and a half hours there with the family and actually came away with a great sense of achievement because we had got the father talking to his daughter again."*

6.10.4.13 This empathetic understanding may enhance the development of a trusting relationship. This is not to say that a PA has to be of the same

cultural background as their clients to develop appropriate responses, but that in some cases, it may enhance the process of developing trust and rapport. As the same PA explained *“I am seen as an arm of help for these young people. I am not saying that I am better than any other PA, but at the end of the day it does make a difference when you can relate to a young person... if that relationship is never formed, there is never going to be that change. I hate to say it, but if my culture and the colour of my skin is going to help to make that relationship and I can help that young person, then why not?”*

6.10.5 Assessment and action planning

6.10.5.1 In the small number of cases examined, the research team concluded that APIR assessment processes were in place and being used by PAs that specialised with young asylum seekers and refugees. Many of the PAs we interviewed felt that APIR was a particularly useful interactive tool to use with this risk group, as a way of locating where they are against the different factors, and of helping them look forward into more positive destinations. Those we interviewed thought the APIR wheel to be a useful device for assessing those with limited English, since it provides a visual stimulus. Action planning was also being used and was viewed by both the PAs and the young people as a useful written record of their interactions. However, PAs were anxious to point out that it is crucial not to apply APIR assessment processes too soon, as trust and rapport are needed first.

6.10.5.2 Clearly, asylum seekers and refugees are not a homogeneous group and the main criticism raised about APIR was its inability to take into account cultural diversity. One PA felt that the 18 factors in the assessment are too rigid and do not adequately take into account all the additional and differing needs of such young people. Another felt that the language of APIR, such as the word “transition”, is not always appropriate for young people whose first language is not English. In both cases, the PAs were using their knowledge of the risk group to adapt the APIR assessment process for their clients.

6.10.5.3 The support needs of this group can change quite quickly. For example, an initial pressing need to find housing may become a need for support in getting a job, once the young person is settled into adequate housing. Assessment should therefore preferably take place regularly, and it is beneficial for the same PA to provide support throughout the process, since continuity is very important for people who may have experienced much instability in their lives.

6.10.6 PA deployment and delivery arrangements

6.10.6.1 Positive outcomes appeared to be more frequent when specialist PAs were deployed, with the experience, knowledge and skills to understand the complex needs of young asylum seekers and refugees. For example, Surbjit was seconded to Connexions from the local Race Equality Council. His PA position was jointly funded by Connexions and the local Learning and Skills Council to raise awareness of work based learning within the BME community, particularly in relation to young asylum seekers and refugees.

This PA had a wealth of experience in working with the BME community and was able to utilise his skills in his work for Connexions. His background and experience meant that he had an excellent understanding of the barriers facing young asylum seekers and refugees and he was playing a crucial role in supporting the risk group in his Partnership area.

6.10.6.2 Surbjit explained that the success of his work relied on the strength of his team. *“We have got a good team of PAs in [our area], as is the rest of the PA team who are based out in schools, YOT and things like that. I think the beauty of that is that I feel each and every one of us has a specialist area and that is very useful for the team. It’s like any group, if you have got people who have got the skills in different areas, it makes the job easier...we have got PAs not just deployed in specialist areas, but probably deployed due to their strengths in those areas.”* The strength of this integrated team of PAs was that they were deployed to work in a number of specialist settings, with a range of expertise to draw on within the team to deal with the complex needs of particular risk groups.

6.10.6.3 Arrangements for referral between universal and intensive or targeted PAs (see 4.9) may also enhance impact on young asylum seekers and refugees. Mary was a “universal” PA in a sub-contracted organisation working in an Employment and Training Team. She had a particular responsibility for a section of the JSA claimant file, especially focussing on young asylum seekers and refugees who were NEET. If one of the young people required more specialist advice, then she referred them to the “intensive” PA in her area team. *“If we feel ‘right I’m not helping this young person at all because of the complex issues’, they have got designated Connexions PAs, directly employed Connexions PAs, that are responsible for certain things, so there’s teenage pregnancy, there’s homelessness, there’s refugees and asylum seekers, and they have more time because they don’t have the numbers that we have. So we use a referral mechanism in passing that information forward to them... and they will take over and become that lead person with that young person until such time as they feel that they are ready to go onto training or into work. And then it’s a referral back.”* This organisational process was in the main working well but Mary felt that due to a lack of protocols, referral was often one way and the intensive PAs did not always refer the clients back for advice and guidance when they were ready for the transition to work or training.

6.10.7 Interventions

6.10.7.1 The research team was able to interview a number of differently deployed PAs that specialised with young asylum seekers and refugees in Connexions Centres, schools, hostels and in the community. Generally speaking, the PAs had a wide range of interventions available, directly or through referral. The most commonly used interventions were; outreach work in the local community; intensive advice relating to specific support needs; assisting with accommodation needs, benefit claims and other practical needs such as getting a National Insurance number, doctor or bank account; one-to-one careers advice; referral to an education or training group such as E2E or

English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) courses; activities and group work; and some travel assistance to appointments or interviews. Some of these specialist PAs indicated that there was not enough emphasis on training PAs about the specific needs of young asylum seekers and refugees and that most of the training relating to this risk group tended to be external to Connexions and therefore not as easily accessible.

6.10.7.2 PAs with specialist skills in working with this group of young people could be over-stretched with high caseloads, especially where high numbers were being dispersed to a local area. One young refugee described the difficulty: *“When I want to see her (my PA), she’s hardly ever around. When she is here (at school) then there’s too many people to see her... she’s really hard to get hold of.”* Many PAs suggested to us that more staff should be recruited in such areas with the skills and experience to meet the increasing support needs of asylum seekers.

6.10.7.3 Many of the PAs interviewed said that they liaised regularly with staff from Social Services, Education, the Jobcentre and NASS to provide maximum support to their young clients. Mechanisms in place to identify the key worker appeared in most cases to be clear and working well, since statutory entitlements to support for asylum seekers and refugees are set out by the Home Office (DfES, 2003c, pp.16-18). However, in some areas, Connexions had not yet made sufficient links with local voluntary and refugee community organisations. *“There’s a lot of organisations that don’t even know about Personal Advisers.”* Such organisations have a wealth of expertise to offer Connexions on working with this group and two-way communication is needed to build to provide a more responsive and coherent service.

6.10.8 The impact of Connexions with asylum seekers and refugees

6.10.8.1 It is clear that Personal Advisers can play a crucial role supporting young asylum seekers and refugees in tackling the issues that they face. This section gives examples of both “hard” and “soft” outcomes:

► Support in education, employment and training:

Imran was a 17-year-old asylum seeker from Iraq. He came to the UK in 2002 and had been granted the right to remain until 2006. Imran was currently NEET and saw his PA weekly as a condition of benefit. After initially building up a trusting relationship, his PA used the APIR tool with him and identified his interest in taking training that would lead to employment. The PA spent some time helping him understand the training available and then found a suitable E2E course for him. She helped him fill in the relevant application forms and when Imran successfully secured a place on the course, she accompanied him on his first day to help him settle in. Although the PA had then referred him on to another Connexions PA based at the training provider, she still maintained contact to ensure that he was progressing.

► Helping young asylum seekers and refugees to receive their entitlements:

Another asylum seeker from Iraq had only recently moved to the Partnership area. He was NEET at the time of the interview and had arranged a job for

himself. He was experiencing difficulties in starting the employment since he lacked a National Insurance number and a bank account. His PA was able to help him apply for the NI number and for a crisis loan and to fill in the necessary paperwork to get a bank account.

► Helping with other problems:

Zoran was a 17-year-old refugee from Yugoslavia, who had been living in the UK for five years. He was referred to a Connexions Personal Adviser by his school in Year 11 and now planned to do a Modern Apprenticeship. He found the PA *“very helpful”* in thinking about his options and planned to continue seeing her when he started his college course. What was particularly striking about this young refugee was his knowledge of the holistic nature of the Connexions Service and his ability to utilise its support. When Zoran’s girlfriend was planning to leave home because her parents did not approve of him, *“because I’m different and because I was an asylum seeker”*, he went to his PA to talk it through. He said that they had both found it very helpful to talk to the PA and they had managed to resolve the situation without his girlfriend leaving home. *“She is ... very kind... she talks more like a friend... so you feel free to talk to her... she understands and listens to my problems...it’s good if you have personal issues, then you can go and get help.”*

► Dealing with racial harassment and discrimination:

Another 15-year-old refugee had been experiencing racist bullying at school and had started to truant, missing weeks at a time. In his own words, *“The racism is very bad because of my black hair and I am from Iraq... there would sometimes be twenty people waiting outside of school for me. All bigger than me: not smaller... the teachers would call the police, but the school can’t do much... I have missed school because of the other children.”* He had no family support apart from his older brother and no contact with his parents in Iraq. He came into a Connexions shop with a friend, when he had completely dropped out of school as a result of the bullying and was not receiving any alternative educational provision, and asked to see his friend’s PA. The PA responded immediately by contacting the LEA to discuss the options. By advocating on his behalf, the PA was able to arrange for him to change schools and continue with his education. They still maintained contact over post-school career plans.

► Setting up young asylum seeker/refugee groups:

A buddies club in one area helped address a number of issues including access to leisure activities, particularly sports facilities; shopping and budgeting; how to deal with emergencies, help with claims and benefits and access to support agencies. This new project was set up by Connexions to help young refugees to make friends in their community in a safe environment, feel more positive about their identity, and acquire new life skills. Similar clubs were being set up in other Partnership areas.

6.10.9 Follow up and review

6.10.9.1 Once intermediate outcomes are achieved with a young person, such as referral to an education provider or the start of a new job, it is crucial

for a PA to follow up and review a young person's progress to ensure they have the support needed to achieve their long-term destination goals. Some PAs did have effective systems in place for follow up and tracking at these key transitional stages. For example, one PA used the database to obtain the contact details of those that he referred to ESOL courses and sustained contact by phoning, writing, or texting, to assess whether their support needs were being met. When the "universal" PA mentioned above referred a young asylum seeker across to her "intensive" counterpart for more specialist advice, she not only maintained contact with the young person at regular intervals, but also liaised with her colleague about progress. Another worked with the PA based at the training provider to ensure that young people had settled in and were not at risk of dropping out. In our view, such systems were proving crucial to positive outcomes.

6.10.9.2 However, from the evidence of PAs working specifically with the risk group, even if follow up is in place, some common reasons for loss of contact could be identified. Firstly, the geographical mobility of young asylum seekers and refugees, affects the ability of Connexions to sustain contact. The database systems vary between Partnerships and do not always identify young people who move into the area. Increased compatibility of database-tracking systems might be able to reduce such discontinuities. Secondly, according to one of the PAs we interviewed, it is also common for young asylum seekers and refugees to get lost in the record systems because of similar surnames and a tendency for some minority ethnic communities to use their first, middle and last names interchangeably. *"I find they get lost in the system because of their names. Especially with some of the Muslim names I have found, because it could be Mohammed Ibrahim on the system, but at school, Ibrahim Hussein."* Thirdly, the rejection of a claim for asylum was another common reason for a break in contact with the PA and all other professionals and agencies for fear of being deported from the UK. As one PA explained: *"No sooner have you started doing some good work with them, the Home Office says 'You've got to go back to your country', and you've lost them."* These young asylum seekers may drop out of all official support systems and lose their entitlements to benefits. Lacking income to support themselves, they become more vulnerable to involvement in crime. *"At the end of the day, if you are starving, if you are hungry, you are going to end up in the life of crime and that is where some of them end up."*

6.10.10 Key issues with asylum seekers and refugees

6.10.10.1 It was clear from the research study that Connexions was still very much in the early stages of setting up a service for young asylum seekers and refugees and therefore it might be too early to assess overall impact on the risk group. However the research team did identify a number of examples where Partnerships had already made some positive steps to offer specific support to this group of young people.

- Advertising and marketing Connexions to young people (and parents) from different ethnic, cultural, and linguistic backgrounds, is the first step to raising awareness of the service amongst young asylum

seekers and refugees. This was most successfully achieved through outreach work in the community.

- Referrals from statutory agencies were a successful means of putting young asylum seekers in contact with Connexions, provided the agencies understood the nature of the service.
- Making links with local voluntary and community organisations was an effective way of reaching young asylum seekers and refugees who were NEET and not under the remit of other support services.
- The development of a trusting relationship based on consistency and continuity of PA contact aided disclosure and was crucial to enhancing outcomes with this risk group.
- Outcomes were enhanced where the young person perceived their PA as listening to their needs and sorting out their most pressing practical problems before starting to work on pursuing their destination goals.
- Appropriate recognition should be given to intermediate outcomes such as assisting a young person with their asylum claim or helping them to register with a doctor.
- Assessment processes need to take into account the complex needs and communication problems of young asylum seekers and should be applied cumulatively over a period of time.
- There is a unique likelihood that young asylum seekers or refugees will be “lost” or incorrectly recorded on database systems, because of factors such as mobility, family naming systems or a refusal of application for asylum.
- Our evidence is that impact was enhanced with young asylum seekers and refugees when specialist PAs were deployed, with the experience and skills to understand and deal with the specific support needs of this risk group. Specialist PAs also needed to be able to draw on the wider skills of a team to deal with the full range of need.
- PAs required specific training and support to develop awareness and skills for work with this group.
- The impact of Connexions also depended heavily on an ability to work with other agencies and professionals that were also supporting young asylum seekers and refugees.

6.11 School resisters and truants

6.11.1 Introduction

6.11.1.1 Young people who underachieve are a major target group for the Connexions Service, and those who miss or resist schooling are often not thriving in education. Absence is seen as a major cause of underachievement and Connexions shares with the education services the crosscutting target of cutting the number of missed days of schooling.

6.11.1.2 The issue of defining underachievement is relevant here. It can be used to refer to low achievement according to a universal standard or to achievement relative to each young person’s potential. The former category is enshrined in government targets for proportions achieving at least 5 GCSEs at grades A to C. The latter – a measure of achievement that is relative to the

individual's potential – would appear to be more attuned to the needs of classifying young people for the purposes of Connexions. However, as the earlier sections on the Connexions process and on settings and delivery arrangements have shown, the Connexions Service rarely plays a major part in the early classification of risk in schools and, in some school settings, is little involved in the judgement about which pupils it should target. Early prioritisation tends to have more to do with expected grades than issues of personal progress or potential.

6.11.1.3 We would argue that it may be preferable to see underachievement not as a risk category in itself but rather as a “symptom”, of underlying causes. Without attention to such causes of underachievement (or absence), the Connexions Service may be at risk of simply channelling young people towards conventional destinations, at the extremes of which are post-16 education for the academically able and pre-vocational training placements, such as E2E, for those with few or no qualifications.

6.11.1.4 In this section, the terms “school resister” and “truant” normally refer to young people who have deliberately chosen to miss part of their pre-16 education. We also encountered cases where disengagement was a result of circumstances rather than conscious choice on the part of the young person and these have been included where applicable. The implications of formal or “informal” exclusions are also examined.

6.11.1.5 Although there are differences between “resisters” and “truants” - with the former likely to have less engagement spanning longer periods than the latter - they have been treated here as part of the same risk category because the effects in underachievement are likely to be the same. For the purposes of this discussion, young people who had missed education for weeks or several days at a time and those who had missed particular days or lessons regularly were considered, rather than those who had simply missed the odd day or lesson.

6.11.1.6 Some 209 young people, deemed to be school resisters and truants, were interviewed over both phases of the study, including some with only occasional truancy. Although the researchers visited several schools with a general request for help in identifying this group, it proved difficult to make contact with young people who, by definition, do not attend school or do so only sporadically. Other settings were more productive such as alternative curriculum and E2E providers, where the majority of the interviewees had been underachievers in school.

6.11.2 Some reasons for school absence in the sample

6.11.2.1 It became clear as the research proceeded that school resistance and truancy are often symptomatic of other and more pressing problems. The reasons given by the interviewees for school absence included:

- Not liking the school environment, often with no specific reason
“I went on attendance check for missing classes. I must have missed about 6 months. I didn't like school as a kid, I was just never interested.”

- Experiencing conflict with teachers

“My attendance was 16%... just didn’t like school and most of the teachers didn’t like me. I used to argue with loads of teachers all the time.”

There was evidence that many of the young people whose school experience was marred by conflict with teachers were, nevertheless, able to function in other settings (alternative curriculum, E2E) and able to engage positively with Connexions.

- Conflict with other young people, especially bullying

“It was towards the end of Year 11, and I was getting fed up with the bullying and I wasn’t telling anyone and I started saying ‘I don’t feel well’ and that happened and my mum was quite shocked to find out I was being bullied. I wasn’t telling anyone.”

- Difficulty with certain subjects or unidentified special educational needs, sometimes compounded by unrecognised learning difficulties

“I didn’t want people to know that I was no good at reading and writing and was a bit different. In Year 11, I would go in the morning and get registered and sneak back out and then go back in the afternoon to get my second mark. So the school would think I was in. I would do it constantly, I hated school.”

- Truancing in response to peer pressure

I: What made you ‘sag’?

R: All my mates were ‘sagging’ and I was the only one going in so I thought I might as well ‘sag’ also.

I: ...On average how much did you miss?

R: About half a year in Year 9; in Year 10, three to four weeks in one time and then they told me to come to E2E.

- Truancing related to drug and alcohol consumption

“I was just being stupid really, acting soft. I wanted to go out with my mates and get drunk all the time, my fault really. In Year 10 my mate moved in with me and then we started going out till dead late so we didn’t get up in time for school, then we didn’t see the point in going to school. It used to be the odd day, then weeks and then months.”

- A dislocated or dysfunctional family situation

R: My dad had all these mates staying around in the house and when they stayed around my dad didn’t wake us up at 7.30 to go to school and if he did we would just ignore him and go back to bed, and we got used to it and my dad just stopped waking us up. It got worser and worser (sic)...

I: So why did you leave school in Year 10, was that your choice?

R: It was my own choice, if I wanted to go I would have but at that time I didn’t think like that; I just thought ‘I don’t have to go so I’m not going’.

I: Did the school ever try and get you back in?

R: Yeah, we had the Welfare Officer come around every time I weren’t in school and one day she came around and said ‘You don’t have to come in for your GCSE’s ‘cos you haven’t been coming in.’ So after that I never went back in.

- Peer pressure, especially for young people in care

From the evidence of our interviews, young people “looked after” by the local authority presented particularly poor attendance rates with many resisting school for weeks or even months at one time. These young people talked to

us about an anti-school culture, and about peer pressure and bullying that encouraged this norm.

I: So what were the students like in school?

R: They were OK but they used to take the mick out of me 'cos I'm in care and they have their mum and dad with them. And here as well, at the care home there is five others here that should go to school and 'cos they don't go to school, they don't want me to go... Yeah, I don't have to go to school if I don't want to, like, before two weeks ago I didn't go to school for two months. I just can't be bothered.

I: Would you miss entire weeks at a time?

R: Yes I have done. They'd [the children's home] try and do something about it but I just laughed and walked out.

6.11.3 How Connexions is reaching and working with school resisters and truants

6.11.3.1 As far as we could ascertain, the Connexions Services in the areas we studied did not have explicit policies on truancy or specific interventions designed to deal with this issue in schools. Pupil attendance was seen as a responsibility of the school and was normally dealt with by education social workers (ESWs or EWOs), attendance officers (if the former are not school-based) and, sometimes, learning mentors. As a result, Connexions tended to deal with the consequences of absence (such as low achievement) rather than with the original issues that had given rise to the truanting behaviour.

6.11.3.2 Contact with this group depends largely on the collaboration of the school and the research team found that the Connexions Service often had significant difficulties in contacting school resisters and truants. There were several cases where no contact had successfully been achieved with some young people during the period of formal schooling and the young people interviewed acknowledged that the lack of contact with Connexions was due to their absence from school. The young people were simply not present on the day(s) of their appointment or of Connexions introductory sessions.

6.11.3.3 Absence that is beyond the control of the young person, such as long-term ill health, also disrupts contact with Connexions. We encountered one young person who was out of education for two years waiting for a place in another school after a serious assault, who never saw a Connexions PA during the period of absence, though they did receive help from Connexions around re-integration into the second school. The implication of this is that Connexions cannot rely on solely on planned sessions or appointments if it is to reach the target group. Absence will be a signal worth investigation, though caseloads often militate against such follow up.

6.11.3.4 The lack of a link to Connexions whilst at school places the onus upon the young person to make the initial contact. The research team found that a considerable period of time often elapsed before the young person made contact with the Connexions Service, either through referrals from E2E providers or seeking out assistance themselves. Requests for help tended to

occur during moments of crisis. Interventions therefore tended to be reactive and concentrated upon recovery from “risk” situations rather than prevention.

6.11.3.5 A number of the young people had had no contact with the service, with consequent implications for impact. Resisters and truants who had no contact or little contact also had a very restricted view of the services available from Connexions. Although some of this group had an impression of the service based on their friends’ or siblings’ experiences, many were not able to identify a PA. Informal exclusions often played a part in such lack of contact with the service. We came to the conclusion that successful initial engagement with resisters and truants largely relies upon the policies within the school and the role given to the Connexions PA within its programme.

6.11.3.6 Examples of the interventions initiated by the Connexions Service in conjunction with the schools included one-to-one advice and guidance meetings, reduced school timetables, work-based motivational placements and off-site, alternative educational provision. However, it has to be said that these interventions and alternatives, discussed above in Section 5, were not specific for those who truant; rather, they tended to be the staple diet for those young people considered to be “at risk”.

6.11.3.7 Some of this provision such as reduced timetables or off-site placements appeared to have had a “pressure valve” effect, allowing young people who had strained relations with the school a release from the pressures of the school environment. The more flexible approach of alternative provision appeared to assist a number of young people, who were struggling with the school environment, often because it was more informal and more related to life skills, and had smaller group sizes. Section 5, however, includes the caution that drop out from such provision is high.

I: So what is different about coming here instead of school? You couldn’t stand going to school but you do come here [alternative curriculum provider].

R: I don’t know. I’ve grown up now and we have a laugh here, we are not treated like kids, ‘Sit down on your chair! Don’t move! Don’t speak!’

6.11.4 What worked well and why?

6.11.4.1 “What works” appeared to us to be a service that was person centred, which responded to the young person’s orientations, the underlying reasons for their behaviour and their social context. PAs who were high in the estimation of the young people tended to provide an individualised service based on a good relationship with the young person.

6.11.4.2 According to one PA, who talked to us, Connexions has a “problem-centred” approach that does not easily connect with young people who do not necessarily recognise themselves, or their behaviour, as a problem. Another felt that the service could be accused of individualising the problems, failing to understand the structural contexts in which they arise and expecting staff “to put square pegs in round holes”. However, when PAs worked with ESWs or attendance officers in schools to identify those young people who truant or

resist and have the resources and time to do outreach work, contact tended to be more successful and as a result, positive engagement and progression more likely. According to one PA, there was a clear difference in the engagement success rate in two schools in which he worked. The most successful school provided him with all the relevant attendance data and he was able to work alongside the attendance officer in exploring the reasons for attendance problems and dealing with them accordingly.

6.11.4.3 All the interventions outlined above (reduced timetable, work experience, off-site studying experience) tended to work with resisters and truants by default, because they provided time away from the source of the problem. Other types of interventions we observed that worked well were helping in the process of reintegration into school by physically being in the class with the young person whose confidence and social skills had been affected by the long-term absence; tackling the lack of routine associated with long-term absence; building coping strategies with the young person on the issues they found difficult; helping to rebuild communication skills; acknowledging and rewarding small steps of progress and achievement; and focusing upon the young person's long-term aspirations and goal setting.

"If it wasn't for him [the PA] I wouldn't be doing it. I phoned the school and said I wanted to get back but they never phoned me ... getting started, that was like the hardest part. Like sometimes I stayed off, I didn't like getting into a routine, going to bed early and getting up. I used to get up late all the time, 1 o'clock, and I used to have to get up at 8 o'clock, so I had to change."

6.11.5 Key issues for school resisters and truants

6.11.5.1 In relation to this group central issues emerging included the following:

- Pupil attendance is the responsibility of the school and is normally dealt with by education welfare officers and other professionals. As a result, the Connexions Service tends to deal with the consequences of truant behaviour (such as low achievement) rather than intervening early on the issues that give rise to the behaviour.
- Connexions often has little power in determining which young people will be seen in the school setting. Where coordination between the service and the school was good, the level of contact with truants and resisters increased.
- Connexions often referred young people to alternative educational programmes but rarely delivered them. The relevant key worker at the alternative provision often became the "significant adult" for these young people and the first port of call, even for advice and guidance on careers, education, family and personal problems. Irregular levels of contact with Connexions inhibited rapport and reduced impact.
- Effective strategies included outreach with other attendance related workers and tailored person-centred programmes, which addressed underlying reasons for absence and the resulting lack of confidence.

6.12 Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET)

6.12.1 Characteristics of the NEET group in our sample

6.12.1.1 Young people not in employment, education or training (NEET) can be said to be in a category that is analytically distinct from those considered earlier in the chapter since their NEET status may be primarily associated with one or more of the risks already described. Thus, they may be young asylum seekers and NEET, homeless and NEET, or previously excluded from school and NEET, or any combination of such factors. NEET status may also have a causative effect on such factors.

6.12.1.2 During the course of the study, 116 young people were NEET, aged 16 –19, at the time of their interview. The qualitative data suggest three fairly separate sub-categories, which can be corroborated to some extent by statistical analysis of our sample. First, there are those who are either young parents or are caring for another family member, and are also likely to face some degree of multiple disadvantage arising from their caring role (see for example, 6.5.3.1 above). We interviewed 42 young people in this category, representing nearly 37 per cent of the NEET group (see Table 12 below).

Table 12
Parents and carers in education / employment

Parent or carer?	In Education or Employed								Total
	School	Further Ed.	Higher Ed.	Training	Employed	NEET	In transition state	Don't know	
No	294	69	1	90	14	69	12	1	550
	90.7%	82.1%	100.0%	76.9%	82.4%	60.5%	80.0%	50.0%	81.6 %
Yes	23	12		25	3	42	3	1	109
	7.1%	14.3%		21.4%	17.6%	36.8%	20.0%	50.0%	16.2 %
Don't know	1	1		1		1			4%
	.3%	1.2%		.9%		.9%			.6%
Not asked	6	2		1		2			11
	1.9%	2.4%		.9%		1.8%			1.6%
Total	324	84	1	117	17	114	15	2	674
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %

Note: Although 116 young people in the overall sample were NEET at the time of their interviews, only 114 appear so in Table 12. This is simply because there are some missing data that appear as 'not known' in frequency counts, but are not included for calculation in cross-tabulations. Such small discrepancies may occur with all cross-tabulations.

6.12.1.3 We can also examine these young people's parental or caring status in relation to multiple risks, and educational risks. This shows that of these

parents/carers who are NEET, over 50 per cent have either no other risks or only one other risk factor (See Table G37 in Appendix G). Around three-quarters show either no educational risks, or are at risk on only one educational dimension. Parenting or caring responsibilities appear to be the key factor behind the NEET status (See Table G38 at Appendix G). Whilst, as would be expected, there are also a number of parents / carers who show medium or high level risk (around 24 per cent fall into each group), there is a notable group of young people in the sample who could be said to be NEET primarily because of their responsibilities as a parent or carer.

6.12.1.4 At the same time, this may not lead to Connexions support: some young parents we interviewed had received little or no support, whilst others cited helpful assistance with housing, benefits or plans for education or training. One young woman said that Connexions had enabled her to realise that she could combine being a mother with education and employment. Others had not heard of Connexions or what it provides. Indeed across the whole NEET group, some 30 per cent of young people had received either no support or minimum levels of Connexions support (Table 13)

Table 13
Connexions support level and education / employment status

CNX support level	In Education or Employed								Total
	School	Further Ed.	Higher Ed.	Training	Employed	NEET	In transition	Don't know	
None	65	11		4	2	20	2		104
	19.8%	12.9%		3.4%	11.8%	17.2%	13.3%		15.2%
Minimal	131	31		35	7	16	2		222
	39.8%	36.5%		29.9%	41.2%	13.8%	13.3%		32.6%
Inter-mediate	48	19	1	37	3	19	6	1	134
	14.6%	22.4%	100.0 %	31.6%	17.6%	16.4%	40.0%	50.0%	19.6%
Intensive	61	15		30	4	53	3	1	167
	18.5%	17.6%		25.6%	23.5%	45.7%	20.0%	50.0%	24.5%
Don't know	24	9		11	1	8	2		55
	7.3%	10.6%		9.4%	5.9%	6.9%	13.3%		8.1%
Total	329	85	1	117	17	116	15	2	682
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0%	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0%	100.0 %	100.0 %

6.12.1.5 Where parents and carers are concerned, as Table 14 shows, whilst almost 50% of our sample had received intensive Connexions support, around 40% had received only minimal support or none at all. While these small sample numbers should be treated with caution, this is reflected in the

accounts of several in the sample, who commented that whilst they had heard about Connexions in school, they had either never had any contact, or had attended a single one-to-one meeting with a school PA that focused primarily on careers and further education options.

Table 14
Connexions Support Level: NEET parents and carers

CNX support level	NEET Parents or Carers receiving each level of support
None	9 21.4%
Minimal	7 16.7%
Intermediate	4 9.5%
Intensive	20 47.6%
Don't know	2 4.8%
Total	42 100.0%

6.12.1.6 There are several possible explanations for this. Some of these young people with parental or caring responsibilities, who had no other risk factors, did not discuss their situation with their school PAs, but instead merely focused on career options and thus did not become identified as in need of specific support through this route. It is also possible that young people who later dropped out of school because of parental responsibilities were not identified as likely to do so by school PAs. Young women who have made a firm decision to spend a period looking after a young baby may also become a lesser priority for PAs whose target is the EET destination. Other possibilities could also be postulated, but, whatever the reasons, there was a sizeable number of young parents or carers in the sample who seemed to be in need of significantly more support than they received from Connexions. A few received support from young carers' groups, which provided social support networks, but these lacked the broader support infrastructure that Connexions could offer.

6.12.1.7 A second group of these young people could be said to be in a transitional state between NEET and EET. For example, one young woman was receiving benefits while awaiting her GCSE results, and had applied for EMA (with the help of Connexions) with a view to attending college later in the year. For such young people NEET status may be more to do with the timing of the interview than any other factors. Many young people will find themselves in this position, if only briefly, having finished one stage of their education and waiting to begin work or further learning. If this is correct, statistical analysis of the dataset would be expected to show few if any risk factors in their lives since their status is not related primarily to risk. Of our

NEET sample, about a fifth appear to fall into this category with no or only one risk factor identified (once parental/caring status is discounted). Whilst some of those with one risk might be prevented from becoming EET by that risk (e.g. those with a severe disability or health problem perhaps, who represent 11 per cent of our NEET sample), it seems likely that a significant number are simply in transition. The speed of change in young people's lives (see 6.2.1 above) confirms this likelihood.

6.12.1.8 A third category of NEET young people comprised those who had multiple risk factors. Again, discounting those who are parents or carers, around 40 per cent of these young people were assessed as at risk on two, three or four of the 10 risk dimensions and can therefore be said to be at medium risk. A further 22 per cent exhibited five or more of the risk conditions. These cluster around a combination of being looked after or homeless, offending, emotional or behavioural problems, underachievement or school resistance / refusal. This group may be seen to be at high risk of becoming what Williamson characterised as "Status Zer0" young people for whom profound and complex problems are likely to lead to becoming "lost in the transition from school to work" (Williamson, 1997). Some time previously, Willis also presented somewhat similar arguments that labour market conditions, in one of the areas researched in this study, had thrust the young unemployed into a "new social condition" of "suspended animation between school and work", characterised by isolation, relative poverty, and reliance on family support and state benefits and programmes (Willis, 1988).

6.12.1.9 Two young people with multiple risks interviewed in the east midlands serve as examples. Both were homeless and also presented a number of complicating risk factors - substance misuse, depression, unstable family arrangements. Researchers gained the clear impression in both these cases that these other factors would need to be addressed in order for work to begin on re-entering education, training or employment. Connexions appeared to be making progress with both of these young people by offering intensive support. In one case, the young person felt that Connexions had provided useful help in addressing his drug use and, at the same time, made a referral to E2E; in the other, the PA had helped with advice on education and training alongside support in coping with depression. Both felt that these were helpful initial steps in changing the direction of their lives.

6.12.1.10 For the NEET group, other typical risk clusters occur around pregnancy and homelessness, the end of custodial sentences, and a history of school resistance or exclusion. There were mixed stories to be heard of the help Connexions had provided. Some clearly valued the support: "*the PA ... helped me to get my life on line. [I would] probably have gone downhill ...*" whilst others have had a different experience: "*They [Connexions] weren't quick enough ... [I wanted] a bit more personal attention.*"

6.12.1.11 A fourth group of NEET young people clearly exists but would not show up in our sample. These are the young people, who either from deliberate choice or the degree of turbulence in their lives, are not in touch with Connexions or other helping agencies at all. This group would include a

few, who make their living through illegal means and wish to avoid contact with the authorities, and others whose life circumstances have contributed to a loss of contact in some other way. The numbers of NEET young people are thus underestimated. Connexions Partnerships are charged with reducing the numbers of those whose status is “not known” on their databases but this of itself is likely to increase the proportion recorded as NEET, at least in the short term (SCYPG, 2004b: pp.1-3; NAO, 2004: p.19).

6.12.2 The issue of targets

6.12.2.1 The issue of worklessness and its relationship to the spiral of disadvantage was central to the “programme theories” underlying the Connexions process (see Section 3 above). As Tony Blair succinctly expressed it in the introduction to *Bridging the Gap* (SEU, 1999: p.6), “The best defence against social exclusion is having a job, and the best way to get a job is to have a good education, with the right training and experience.” From the outset, the primary aim of the new service was the reduction of the proportion of young people who were NEET.

6.12.2.2 The imperatives of this target have particular implications for young people who are NEET. Firstly those who for some reason cannot work will inevitably tend to receive less attention. As a team leader explained to us, *“Maybe we have got 20% who are very much not involved in things and need a lot of input to keep them in place. They are the ones who perhaps through illness, pregnancy, caring responsibilities, other reasons, aren’t actually able to be part of the employment market. So it is about saying to them ‘Well we are here if you need us but at the end of the day there is not an awful lot we can offer while you are in that position.’... It’s a sad fact that what gets measured gets done.”* While closure may be justified in some cases, there will be a pressure to close the cases of others who make very slow progress towards EET destinations. *“There has to come a point at which you say, look in order to make most effective use of your time we have got to pull the plug on that one and move on.”* Secondly, the monitoring conventions can mask aspects of the problem. One PA told us that just two days in the EET situation would suffice for recording the change but that in her area, a local college was asking young people to leave their courses after any three days of unexplained absence (with around 400 such cases over the last year) and moreover failing to inform Connexions. Others are affected by the “currency” guidelines. While there is a policy to follow up “not knowns”, the currency guidelines do heavily influence how often PAs have to ensure follow up and for some this reduces pro-active support. As one PA put it, *“technically they never go off the cohorts, they just cease to be completely active for a while.”* Thirdly, the focus of the target is 16 to 18 year-olds and since *“the 19s aren’t part of that, so they slip off a little”* but active protocols and handover systems are rarely in place with Jobcentres and New Deal advisers. Fourthly, these measurable targets tend to encourage fire fighting rather than a preventative approach. As a PA put it explaining her frustration, *“You can’t measure the negative, you can’t prove how many people didn’t become NEET because of our intervention.”*

6.12.2.3 The pattern of our evidence does point to a payoff from attention to “soft” outcomes and the resource intensiveness of persistent contact and availability. The effect is felt in the sustainability of the EET destination and reduction of the wastage of the “revolving door” of referrals to training or further education and subsequent drop out.

6.12.3 What worked well with the NEET group

6.12.3.1 In terms of **making contact** with NEET young people, **Jobcentre referrals are crucial**: *“The teenagers sign on at specific sessions ... and so we ensure that PAs are present at the Jobcentres during those sessions.”* Here some problems arise from the lack of agreed protocols between the organisations, especially around the issues of information sharing or advocacy for young people’s rights. On the plus side, many workers, including some at Jobcentres, recognised the key skills of PAs in dealing with the practical issues for NEET young people such as benefits, or accommodation.

6.12.3.2 At the same time many respondents recognised that Jobcentres or even Connexions centres were not the best settings for establishing contact with many of the NEET group, who may be suspicious or anxious in a formal setting. **An intensive outreach strategy is often required**, as described in Section 5 and echoing the features of reaching particular risk groups discussed above. Young people praised the willingness of certain PAs to meet them outside booked appointments and on their territory and valued the chance to *choose or negotiate* a setting which suited them. The process takes time and patience. One PA, who had used an interest in “drum ‘n’ bass” to build a relationship with a young man *“that’s got a reputation that’s so bad you wouldn’t want to go near him”* stressed to us that it had take a whole year to get him to a point of engagement and willingness to access training courses. Crucially, it was the outreach style of work that enabled this success.

6.12.3.3 **Avoiding an early and exclusive focus on EET outcomes** in the PA’s agenda with young people can be crucial for sustaining the relationship with Connexions. Many NEET young people experience other risk issues that present barriers to EET destinations, and may shift employment and learning down their list of immediate priorities. Young people can experience the concern with hard outcomes as negative. One interviewee summed up the experience of meeting a PA in a Jobcentre; *“They just, I don’t know, try to persuade you into things you don’t want to do in a way. They just, you know what I mean, just talk about it and keep talking about it, and keep talking about it, to try to get you into it like.”* Another young man, who had attended a Grammar School, described the pressures: *“It was horrible. They tend to push everyone to go to university and although it is good for some it is not good for everybody...the teachers were horrendous. I didn’t like it at all.”* The end result was that he stopped attending school in Year 12 and became NEET.

6.12.3.4 We concluded that it is often progress on practical matters and the less tangible **“soft” outcomes** that are the fruits of the PA relationship. This often includes moves to address the loss in confidence that may result from unemployment. It will also include building trust and an ability to be

unshocked by the numerous problems some of these young people present, as one young woman pithily expressed it in describing her PA, “*she didn’t twitch when I talked to her*”.

6.12.3.5 As many of our examples in this section show, ensuring **continuity of contact and availability** is also critical. One young man, having not attended school very much in the last two years and now NEET, had received Connexions support which had enabled him to access E2E, but gave up after two months. The PA continued to help him look for a job and he felt she was “*on his side*”. He said he had “*learnt the hard way*” and was beginning to change his attitude towards education and see its importance. Many who are NEET also face profound difficulties. It is unlikely that successful transition will be achieved in one simple step: progress will not be linear: some aspect of their lives will get sorted out, only for another to go wrong. Where a positive relationship with the PA had been established and contact persistently maintained, the potential benefit were very evident.

6.12.4 Key issues for the NEET group

6.12.4.1 NEET young people share many of the issues that feature with other risk groups in this section. Specific issues emerging from the work on this group include the following:

- Substantial numbers are either in temporary transition or have caring or parental responsibilities. The remainder tend to have complex and multiple risks in their lives.
- Despite the priority target of reducing numbers in the NEET category, approximately 30 per cent of our sample had no contact or only minimal contact with Connexions.
- An over-concentration on this target can have counterproductive effects in loss of contact or a negative reaction to the service.
- There are few effective strategies for handover to post-19 services.
- Flexible approaches including outreach and work on personal development needs are necessary in order to reach this group and help them to progress.
- Advocacy is required to improve the range and quality of provision, and increase retention rates and appropriate learning facilities. In some of the Partnership areas, there has been long-term work with key partners to secure improved facilities, such as work with the local Learning and Skills Councils (NAO, 2004: p. 43).

6.13 Comparing the risk groups

6.13.1 We cannot do justice in this study to the needs of the young people described in this section. Each risk group could occupy a volume and merits much further research on the effects and inter-relationships of risk and means of addressing them. Figure 6.1 below summarises the most striking commonalities around the key themes of this section. The findings are then examined more fully in Section 7 in relation to the hypotheses of the study.

Figure 6.1 - Key factors for the risk groups			Issue		
Risk Group	Trust and orientation	Making contact and identifying needs	Recognising soft targets	Referral routes and inter-agency communication	Follow up
LDD/SEN	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust building with parents also important. • Orientations towards preparing for life-readiness are an important factor. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Many learning difficulties are unrecognised. • Main route for Connexions contact is through school and Section 140 assessments for statemented pupils. • APIR may not suit those with severe learning or communication problems. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connexions contributes to building skills for independent living. Small steps, like using public transport, may be very important. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protocols and statutory responsibilities well known and working well. • Advocacy role significant to improve provision and make other agencies aware of needs and responsibilities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work can extend beyond 19 with this group. • Section 140 assessment covers development needs and goes with the young person at transition points.
Young parents	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trust and rapport crucial; many personal and sensitive issues. • Failures to recognise concerns around pregnancy and childcare severely damage trust. • Intrusive assessment is unhelpful and may alienate. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This group may not see Connexions as relevant if they do not understand holistic nature of service. • Positive referrals from peers and other agencies assist contact. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Childcare may mean young women are not ready for work or training but confidence and motivation need to be sustained. • Isolation is a particular issue for many young parents. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some specialism may be helpful. Inter-agency links very important. • Some overlap with Teenage Pregnancy advisers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High proportion are NEET because of looking after a child but may not be treated as priority to follow up due to nature of targets.
Young carers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Trusting relationship crucial, so that young carer can say if they cannot cope with responsibilities they feel are their own responsibility. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Young carers unlikely to ask for help, not a visible group. • School absence a major problem. • More pro-active attention needed to identify this group and their needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support to help young people simply maintain their education can be significant. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connexions can link carers into group support or respite provision, as well as offering advice and guidance. • Schools and other agencies could refer more effectively. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rebuilding confidence for re-entry into education or work may be needed.

Figure 6.1 - Key factors for the risk groups cont'd.			Issue		
Risk Group	Trust and orientation	Making contact and identifying needs	Recognising soft targets	Referral routes and inter-agency communication	Follow up
Looked after/homeless	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Many find difficulty in forming trusting relationships due to personal history. •Sustaining contact is an outcome in its own right. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mobility exacerbates contact difficulties. •Important to respond effectively to urgent practical needs such as homelessness. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Education and employment often secondary for young people in the face of practical needs. •Emphasis on destination targets may be counterproductive. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Relationships to after-care and housing agencies significant. •Key worker often not clearly identified. •Overlap with leaving care advisers. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Mobility and unsettled lifestyles make follow up very important.
Asylum seekers and refugees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •This group is likely to be wary of official agencies. Trust building is crucial. •Important to listen to orientation and deal with pressing needs. •Resources may be needed for interpreters. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unlikely to seek contact with Connexions for themselves. •Pro-active outreach, and links to other agencies needed. BME community groups assist contact. •Publicity needed in community languages. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Intermediate outcomes such as registering with a GP or getting NI number are key to progress. •Support groups set up in several Partnerships. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Statutory guidance clarifies roles. •Referrals from Jobcentres, SSD etc. helpful provided nature of service is understood. •Specialist PAs function best within wider team support. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Unique likelihood of losing contact with this group. •Follow up and review crucial to ensuring suitability and sustainability of options.
Young offenders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Trust is necessary to aid disclosure. •Orientation and motivation are key to making best use of career plans and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Connexions usually reaches young offenders via the YOT or YOI but offenders may also be reached through school, centres, or outreach. •Risk of duplication of assessment with YOT. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Connexions most commonly takes advice and guidance role, while YOT takes generic role but flexibility is beneficial, allowing more tailored interventions. •Complementary support on personal development and confidence helpful. •PAYP activities are important to prevention. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pronounced multiple risks in this group, especially overlap with drug misuse. •Agreed protocols are critical especially for information sharing and identification of key worker. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Lack of follow up on leaving custody or end of a formal order are common cause of loss of impact. •"Currency" guidance may need review. •Offenders need to be referred back to Connexions at the end of an order.

Figure 6.1 - Key factors for the risk groups cont'd.			Issue		
Risk Group	Trust and orientation	Making contact and identifying needs	Recognising soft targets	Referral routes and inter-agency communication	Follow up
School resisters and truants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Person centred approach to respond to orientations and recognise causes of absence is most successful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Routes through schools for contact do not function well because of absence and lack of referral to Connexions. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Usually necessary to tackle underlying causes. •Absence causes significant loss of confidence in education or employability. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pronounced multiple risks in this group. •Good coordination with the school increases contact and effectiveness with this group. •Joint outreach work with ESWs helpful. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Support for reintegration often necessary once absence is tackled. •Follow up in alternative education or training provision is key. Irregular support inhibited rapport and reduced impact.
Substance misusers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Many accept drug use as normal. •Judging orientation is critical, including motivation and readiness to look at behaviour. •Clarity about confidentiality is key to trust. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Illegality of some drugs and complexity of assessing misuse make needs assessment problematic. •Young people may not see Connexions as a source of help especially if they associate it with jobs and training. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •PA support should address wider needs such as financial or practical difficulties and the need for careers and educational guidance. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Pronounced multiple risks in this group. •Some PAs had poor awareness of referral routes. •Links to YOTs, DATs, treatment and counselling are key. •Active protocols helpful, including internally with specialist PAs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Follow up and complementary support after a referral is crucial.
NEET	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Important to understand orientation. Many are either in temporary transition or have parental or caring responsibility. Remainder usually have multiple risks. •Important to deal with practical presenting needs. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Significant proportion in the study had no contact with Connexions. •An outreach strategy is often required. •Jobcentre referrals are crucial but compulsory element may be experienced as negative. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Avoiding a rigid focus on EET outcomes is often critical to sustaining the relationship. Sensitivity to pressure into EET options. •Personal development often needed to reach and sustain EET status. •Unemployment causes loss of confidence and isolation. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Multiple needs make inter-agency cooperation significant. •Advocacy may be needed to improve quality of provision. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •In the follow up sample, 4 times more young people became NEET as moved into EET situations. •Few effective strategies in place for handover to post-19 services. •Continuity of contact and follow up reduces the wastage of the “revolving door.”

Section 7 – The impact of Connexions: A summary of findings

7.1 The Phase 2 Hypotheses

7.1.1 Specific hypotheses were formulated for the second phase of the study in relation to factors that may increase impact with different groups and the influence of settings and processes. These were derived from the conclusions developed at the end of the fieldwork undertaken during Phase 1 and our interviews with PAs, managers and partners during the early part of Phase 2. There was a continuing process of pruning, refining and narrowing down the focus as Phase 2 developed, as detailed in Appendix D. The study generated an immense amount of evidence, especially in relation to the central hypotheses, and we were also able to arrive at an informed opinion on others.

7.1.2 The Phase 2 hypotheses are grouped under different stages in the Connexions process, as outlined at Section 3 above and shown in Figure 3.1:

- Pre-contact and identification
- First contact and interaction
- Second and further contacts, including their frequency, regularity, continuity and intensity
- Assessment and action-planning
- Interventions and referrals
- Follow up and review
- Exit strategy and closure
- Protocols and service arrangements

7.1.3 These hypotheses are now examined in turn in order to assess how far they are supported by the evidence in the study on young people at risk and the processes and arrangements used by the Connexions Services in the different Partnership areas. Paragraph numbers are given to indicate some of the main cross-references to the body of the report.

7.2 Pre-contact and identification

7.2.1 Hypotheses concerning pre-contact and identification

- 1. The branding and marketing and the physical location of a Connexions Service outlet will contribute to forming expectations of and orientations to what Connexions offers.**
- 2. Contact is most successfully achieved with young people of school age when the Connexions Partnership (through its PAs) and schools work together as an integrated team in the school's internal processes to identify young people at risk.**
- 3. Young people in the highest risk groups will show improved outcomes when the pattern of support offered is intensive, regular, and continuous for a sufficient duration.**
- 4. Positive outcomes are inhibited where there are major breaks in contact over time with the Connexions service.**

7.2.2 Our evidence is that branding and marketing and the overall ethos of Connexions outlets do affect the perceptions that young people hold of the service. As noted in the description of the Connexions process in Section 3, these functions start to affect impact before a young person ever comes into direct contact with the service. It was also evident that a little further on in the process, the vast majority of young people formed their early impressions from presentations about Connexions or small group sessions in school. The overwhelming evidence of this study is that, in most cases, those presentations conveyed an understanding that Connexions is primarily concerned with options around jobs and careers. “Impact leakage” resulted from this perception. (See 3.8.2, 5.5.2 and 5.6.1.) Young people who might have needed or wished to use a wider range of support did not do so because of this perception. Where any degree of success was reported, it was in relation to work with smaller numbers in individual classes or year groups.

7.2.3 The evidence of this study is that the processes in schools to identify young people at risk and engage the support of Connexions for them are often weak. As we have seen at Section 4, a sizeable proportion of young people with multiple risks within the school age band have no Connexions support at all and for others the level of support is minimal. Younger pupils are also significantly less likely to be receiving Connexions support even if they have substantial support needs (See 4.7 and 4.9.10.3.)

7.2.4 In the school setting, we saw some instances of arrangements where Connexions staff were not included in the specific networks involved in assessment, and the design and delivery of the social inclusion curriculum. In these schools, the PAs were not an integral part of the pastoral systems and pupil support arrangements, often leaving them marginalized and isolated. The attitudes within the institution towards the work of Connexions with young people at risk were therefore seen to have a major impact on the way in which PAs could operate. The most positive examples of practice we identified in schools were where a joint school/Connexions approach was adopted to providing individualised programmes for young people most at risk of exclusion that combined personal development, vocational training and an alternative curriculum programme. (See 5.2.3.3 –5.2.3.17, and 5.2.7.2)

7.2.5 Clearly the intensity, regularity and continuity of Connexions contact with young people for the high-risk groups is often linked to improved outcomes. This is related to the issue of establishing trust, to which end both reliability in the relationship and sufficient investment of time are critical. It is also related to the need in many of these cases for attention to personal development issues and urgent practical needs that often need to precede progress to destination outcomes. (See 6.3.2 and 6.3.9.)

7.2.6 Conversely, there is substantial qualitative evidence that breaks in contact with the service do adversely affect the progress young people can make. This is especially so where they do not have an understanding of why the break has occurred and consequently feel that they have been let down. (See 5.4.2.8, 6.2.7 and 6.8.5.2.) We found there were some typical occasions when breaks in contact happened, including when young people move

between areas or leave custody; and when job change, maternity leave or illness occur for the PA. (See for example, 6.8.5, 6.8.7.1 and 6.9.6.)

7.2.7 These observations need to be nuanced in respect of young people with a formal Statement of Educational Need. In those cases we observed, the pattern of support was not generally intensive although it was regular and formalised by statutory duties and responsibilities. Nevertheless parents, special schools and some of the young people themselves still deemed the contact to be of positive benefit. (See 6.4.4.4.) Many SEN/LDD young people do not suffer the degree of social disaffection that affects many high-risk young people and therefore may not require the same degree of close and continuous contact to improve outcomes.

7.3 First contact and interaction

7.3.1 Hypotheses concerning first contact and interaction

- 5. Successful contact with young people at risk can be more easily achieved when young people identify the Connexions Service as a general service open to all young people, not simply for young people with problems.**
- 6. Successful contact with young people at risk can be more easily achieved when young people understand the Connexions Service to be a holistic service and not a service chiefly concerned with jobs and careers.**
- 7. Young people are more likely to experience contact with Connexions as negative if they experience the referral to Connexions as compulsory, for instance as a condition of receiving JSA or other normative functions.**
- 8. Initial contact is less likely to be successful if the young person has prior positive expectations of, and therefore orientations towards Connexions, that are not met in the first contact with a PA. (Such expectations might for instance be formed by publicity, advertising, peer influence or school assembly presentations.)**
- 9. The Connexions Service in schools is more likely to have successful contact and outcomes if it allows young people to drop in outside booked appointments.**
- 10. Successful contact between Connexions and young people at risk can be more easily achieved through self-referral or when positive referrals take place from the range of other organisations/initiatives set up for young people, both statutory and voluntary, or from friends or other trusted adults.**
- 11. Successful contact can be enhanced by outreach to young people at risk.**

7.3.2 A great deal of our evidence strongly supports this group of hypotheses. We have touched repeatedly on the issue of preconceptions in the minds of young people about what the Connexions Service provides. The predominant impression in most people's minds, including the users of the service and adults working in partnership with it, is that Connexions is mainly concerned

with the provision of advice and guidance about careers and the leaving school transition and with entry into training and employment. This view is formed chiefly by the early experience in schools and to a somewhat lesser extent by the marketing of the service and the approach of the individual PAs. Our qualitative evidence suggests that a great many young people with severe or multiple risks in their lives do not consider turning to Connexions because of this perception. The “identifier” of careers advice and guidance appears to be conveyed so strongly that it masks the messages about the role of the Personal Adviser and how to access the wider service. Potential impact is therefore lost for the groups most at risk. (See for example, 5.5.2, 5.6.1, 6.5.5.1, 6.5.6.1 and 6.10.4.)

7.3.3 There is some evidence, but of a less compelling order, that where young people begin to associate the work of Connexions with a stigma of “having problems”, some who might benefit from it will nevertheless avoid contact with the service. (See 5.5.3.)

7.3.4 From our evidence, it would appear that while referrals from Jobcentres do constitute an important route into the Connexions Service, the compulsory nature of the referrals from Jobcentres as a condition of receiving benefit is often a hindrance to the trusting relationship with the PA. While some PAs clearly do overcome this barrier, it means that it is very likely that the young person will associate the referral with the view of Connexions as solely about jobs and training and therefore will be less likely to draw on the service for wider needs. (See 6.10.4 and 6.12.3.1.)

7.3.5 There is ample evidence in support of the benefits of flexibility in the means of contacting young people. Outreach work, work through voluntary organisations and youth projects, and drop in provision in schools or elsewhere are instrumental in helping Connexions to gain access to young people at risk. Indeed, given the difficulties of assessing risk and the apparent problems in referral onwards to Connexions support in the school context, such methods are essential in enhancing the potential impact of the service on young people at risk. (See 5.4.2.13, 6.10.4.5, 6.12.3.2 and 6.3.8.)

7.3.6 Self-referrals and positive referrals from peers or adult workers are particularly fruitful. The young people are coming to Connexions willingly in these circumstances and with a broad and raised expectation of the help that Connexions may be able to give. (See for example, 6.5.5.2.) The corollary of this argument is that attention to these routes for marketing would pay dividends, especially in building the understanding with other agencies of what Connexions can offer. There is some evidence within this study of Connexions staff working in this way where groups were especially difficult to contact, as for example, in the work with community groups likely to be in touch with asylum seekers. (See 5.6.1 and 6.10.4.2.)

7.3.7 Failures to deliver in relation to expectation are very likely to produce negative effects and are often the cause of the young person breaking off contact. Some cases in this study presented an amalgam of disappointed expectations. Connexions was perceived in these instances as having failed

to respond to immediate emergency needs, to be slow in taking action and having insufficient skills to deal with the presenting issues. Very often this was against a background of publicity which had suggested that Connexions could help with issues such as housing, drug misuse, isolation or bullying and that it would provide accurate advice on choices and career paths. (See for instance, 6.2.7 and 6.9.5.7.)

7.4 Second and further contacts

7.4.1 Hypotheses concerning second and further contacts, including their frequency, regularity, continuity and intensity

- 12. Outcomes with P1 and P2 young people are enhanced by a trusting relationship with a PA, in which congruent orientations are brought to the relationship or negotiated within it by the PA and the young person.**
- 13. A trusting relationship will aid disclosure by the young person, which will assist assessment.**
- 14. Positive outcomes will be more likely where young people perceive the PA as listening to their expressed needs and treating those needs as priorities for action.**
- 15. Contact is more likely to be sustained and congruent orientations achieved where young people have chosen a route to contact with Connexions that enables them to select a PA who is credible in their eyes, which may include sharing certain demographic or social characteristics.**
- 16. The motivation and reasoning that young people bring to their interaction with Connexions will affect the outcomes they experience from the process.**
- 17. Successful outcomes are more likely where PAs are differently deployed within an integrated team, being equipped to respond to differing levels of need.**
- 18. The culture and management of target setting will influence the PA's ability to create congruence and manage their workload.**

7.4.2 Hypothesis 12 indicates that positive outcomes are more likely to occur when orientations between the Personal Adviser and the young person coincide, are congruent, or are negotiated to some accommodation within the relationship. As we have set out in Section 4 and Section 6, we see this hypothesis as the cornerstone in an understanding of how the PA's relationship with a young person works to best effect and we believe this is strongly supported from the qualitative evidence. "Orientations" arise out of a person's social background, and include their attitudes to their circumstances and to those who interact with them. It takes us beyond the notion that young people progress best when they have at least one adult whom they can trust and into the territory of how an adult facilitates that trust and negotiates expectations. Young people most "at risk" are highly likely to be suspicious or muddled and may not find it easy to formulate specific questions. Trust building and/or personal development will therefore be all the more relevant to assist in the process of clarifying their needs and understanding their

orientations. However, it also appears to be borne out from our evidence that if there is a specific question of a factual nature or an urgent need, not only is it important to answer it speedily and accurately but damage or negative impact occurs if this does not happen, whether or not the young person is currently “at risk”. Trust does not happen automatically: it is built up through a chain of listening for the orientation, accurate responses, delivery of what is promised and negotiation of what is possible. “Congruence” of orientation is not necessarily present from the start of a relationship, indeed this may be unusual, but it can be negotiated as the two people better understand each other and make compromises to meet their mutual needs. It is these elements of the PA relationship that activate the mechanisms of the Connexions programme; that make the interventions work. Orientations can either get in the way of the triggering of the mechanism or, if congruent, can enhance it. (See for example, 6.3.3 – 6.3.7, 6.5.4.1, 6.10.4.6 and 6.11.4.1.)

7.4.3 Some aspects of the Connexions process and arrangements appear to have a bearing on how easily orientations can be assessed and negotiated. A few of the young people interviewed indicated that they would find it easier to talk to a PA with a certain identity, such as being female or of a particular ethnicity. Several PAs felt that this was an important issue, with implications that some degree of choice for the young person in the allocation of a PA is helpful and that having PAs of different backgrounds and with differing specialist knowledge within an integrated team is also beneficial. (See 5.4.3.5 and 6.10.4.13.)

7.4.4 There is very clear evidence that many of the young people were sensitive to a target driven climate, especially where an emphasis on NEET targets meant that attention to their immediate practical needs was ignored. Targets are a necessary feature of such programmes but they contribute to the orientations of staff and if over-emphasised, they can become counterproductive. As one young offender put it, “*She’s only ... banging on with trying to get me into a placement.*” with the sadly predictable result that other issues were not shared. (See examples at 5.4.3.8, 6.3.9, 6.9.3, 6.9.5.8, 6.12.2, and 6.12.3.3.)

7.4.5 Some of the crosscutting targets, such as those for young offenders or teenage parents seemed particularly onerous. In some cases, Connexions had no role in setting them, baselines are difficult to establish and improvement is hard to measure (NAO, 2004: p.28). The first task may be seeking out such risk groups and establishing contact rather than achieving their entry into employment or training. Such issues may provide some background explanation for the relatively large proportions of negative reactions to Connexions in some of the risk groups. (See 7.4.4 above, and 5.4.2.9 and 6.2.7.)

7.4.6 As discussed at Section 5, the target for reduction in the proportion of NEET young people applies to 16-18 year-olds. We have clear evidence from some of the young people and from PAs and managers that this does influence the responses to clients. It was a particular cause of dissatisfaction

for 19 year-olds in the sample, that they often felt a lack of interest or a cut off point once they reached that age. (See 5.4.3.6 and 6.12.2.2.)

7.4.7 Overall, the most negative reactions to the service found in this study were occasioned by a failure to listen to the needs young people were expressing; a pressure to take up particular options; a perception that bad advice had been given; or breaks in PA contact (especially those that were unexplained). Where young people felt that Connexions had had a significant positive impact in their lives, the most frequent features discernible in their cases were firstly, the relationship with the PA and the trust involved and secondly, that virtually all these young people had experienced impact in more than one area of their lives, usually involving personal development or work on other problems in their situation. A high proportion had also seen positive benefit either in achieving their EET destination or from advice on options working towards that goal. (See 6.2.7 to 6.2.8.)

7.5 Assessment and action planning

7.5.1 Hypotheses concerning assessment and action-planning

- 19. Impact will be inhibited if formal APIR assessment processes are applied too soon in the relationship with the PA before trust building occurs.**
- 20. Outcomes will be enhanced by - a coordinated plan for the young person, achieved when APIR takes place and is shared by a range of agencies and by - an action plan that is negotiated and understood by both the young person and the PA.**

7.5.2 Our findings at the end of Phase 1 were that assessment was a necessary step in the Connexions process. The Connexions APIR process was universally implemented by 2004 but our findings indicate that this does not tell the whole story. It is quite clear that early assessments of risk in the school context quite often miss key issues such as caring responsibilities or bullying. Such needs may never be assessed in APIR if the school does not identify them or the information is not passed to the Connexions PA. (See 5.2.3.11.) Evidence from both young people and PAs also indicates that if this process is carried out insensitively or too early with young people at risk, positive progress may well be inhibited. Many of the risk groups we examined, such as teenage parents, young offenders or asylum seekers, have personal and sensitive issues or fears of official agencies and the need for assessment information has to be balanced against the potential negative effect of over-intrusiveness. (See 6.5.4.6 and 6.9.5.5.) Some young people such as those with language or severe learning difficulties may not understand the process. (See 6.4.3.8 and 6.10.5.1.) PAs need to be allowed to take a flexible approach to judging when to complete assessment, taking sufficient time to build rapport and understand the orientations of the young person in question. It is important that managers should understand and support them in this process.

7.5.3 There are several elements to hypothesis 20. We found limited evidence on the presence of coordinated action plans – few PAs or young people were able or willing to produce them. It was not easy to judge whether this sprang from a distrust of us as evaluators (See B.10.9.), concerns about confidentiality (See 6.7.2.1.) or a simple non-existence of such plans. There was also little evidence of action plans being shared between agencies.

7.5.4 However, there was some evidence that where a young person had an action plan and felt that they had been involved in drawing it up and understood it, then there was a positive effect on outcomes, a strengthened will to make changes and an improved ability to follow up on what had not been accomplished. This point returns to the issue of negotiation, which was made above – the involvement of the young person in decision-making and genuine cognisance of their priorities is absolutely crucial to good action planning. (See 5.2.7.2, 6.4.3.7 and 6.10.5.1.)

7.6 Interventions and referrals

7.6.1 Hypotheses concerning interventions and referrals

(See stages 11 and 14 on process diagram.)

- 21. The outcome of interventions chosen is dependent on the relationship with the PA and on the congruence of orientations within that relationship.**
- 22. Positive outcomes are maximised when interventions take place, which are tailored to the needs and wishes, starting points and capacities of the individual, including their personal development needs.**
- 23. Positive outcomes from tailored interventions are most likely to occur where sustained contact is maintained by the PA, especially at key points such as a job interview or starting a course or activity.**
- 24. Positive outcomes are enhanced if the PA has at his/her disposal a wide range of interventions for consideration.**
- 25. Positive outcomes are maximised where the PAs have training and support to keep them informed of the interventions and referral routes available.**
- 26. The range of potential interventions will be increased, with a consequent increased chance of positive outcomes, where the PA uses brokerage effectively.**
- 27. Financial support to stay in education or training (such as EMA or E2E) will enhance outcomes in terms of continuation rates in training or further education and reducing the chance of NEET outcomes.**

7.6.2 The hypotheses around interventions again centre on the trust between the young person and the PA and the careful negotiation and tailoring of the steps to be taken.

7.6.3 Hypothesis 24 is to some degree self-evident. The wider the range of interventions available, the more accurately tailored the action planning can be. This has to include opportunities for personal development and resolution of underlying personal issues as well as opportunities for continued education, training or employment. Skilled PAs will negotiate with other agencies for particular provision and will intervene to advocate when such opportunities are not working out for a discernible and controllable reason. (See 6.4.5, 6.10.2.2 and 6.12.4.1.)

7.6.4 PAs did put forward a number of interventions they felt were absent from their repertoire or desirable in their area. Those highlighted, which had resonance in several areas, included the need for more supported employment for young people with learning difficulties; adventurous activities for young people (particularly outdoor activities); better supported work placements; provision of emergency funds and vouchers to give to young people for food or clothing etc.; more emergency accommodation; better access to mental health services; and more community based support groups. (See 6.4.4, 6.4.5 and 6.9.5.7.)

7.6.5 Hypothesis 25 underlines that, no matter how adequate the available interventions may be, the PAs need to be aware of the resources they can draw on and have readily usable ways of accessing them. There was some evidence from the work on the risk groups that awareness of routes to obtain help and the nature of other agencies' provision was insufficiently developed, for example, in the areas of homelessness and drug misuse. (See 6.9.5.7, 6.7.3.2 and 6.7.3.3.)

7.6.6 Hypothesis 26 highlights the need for brokerage. The concept of brokerage assumes that the provision is there somewhere to be brokered, adapted or arranged for the young person. At this stage, we would also want to highlight the role of advocacy, or in other words of working or "*battling*", as one PA termed it, for better provision and negotiating for new ways of working. There are inequalities between areas not only in their structural and economic conditions but also inequalities in the provision available to young people that might combat those conditions. There are gaps in the range of provision that is desirable for particular risk groups. Connexions has a positive role in advocating for improved provision and working with partners to secure it. (See 2.3.16, 6.4.5, 6.4.6 and 6.12.4.)

7.6.7 We saw some positive examples of individual PAs taking the messages about the needs to their managers and partner agencies. We were also aware that in some of the Partnership areas, there has been long term work with key partners to secure improved facilities. There is scope for further development of advocacy for the needs of particular groups. (See 6.12.4.1 and 6.4.5.)

7.6.8 Amongst the range of interventions are the arrangements for financial support. The Education Maintenance Allowance was being piloted in some areas when the study began and was rolled out to all areas during 2004. Considerable numbers of the young people in training provision were in receipt of E2E (Entry to Employment) allowances, which were introduced in

2003. Both systems support continuation in education or training. Some other forms of support may be made available through Connexions such as travel costs or help with special benefits. If a young person's question is primarily about urgent financial need, then relevant interventions such as EMA or E2E or benefit advice become important as a first step to later development and trust building. Low income was a problem for many and survival was more important to the young people we interviewed than their plans for education or employment. The national evidence suggests that other factors are also influential on participation rates in a local area, such as parental education and local unemployment rates. (See 6.2.4.)

7.6.9 There is little doubt that both EMA and E2E have been widely taken up and that they have encouraged young people to stay in education or training. Our main reservation in relation to these provisions is that without follow up, the improvements for individuals in continuation and EET status may be only temporary. The visits to E2E schemes in particular suggested that once the young person was placed in the training, follow up visits by the PA were the exception rather than the rule. (See 5.2.6.2, 5.4.3.9, 5.6.1 and 6.3.12.)

7.6.10 Our secondary reservation in relation to financial help is that it cannot be assumed that it is always helpful to young people's development or to the avoidance of NEET outcomes. There were some curious instances of benefits and allowances being applied to certain groups in ways that (presumably inadvertently) discouraged them from actively seeking work or training. One example was that after a period working, it is apparently so difficult to restore the Disability Allowance that young people (and their parents) may be unwilling to seek employment. (See 6.4.4.6.)

7.7 Follow up and review

7.7.1 Hypotheses concerning follow up and review

- 28. Contact is most successfully maintained when there is an effective system of follow up and tracking within the working arrangements agreed between the school (or any other partner) and the Connexions Service, to trace where young people are and their progress.**
- 29. Geographical mobility of young people will impair the ability of Connexions to sustain contact and increase positive outcomes.**
- 30. Assessment will most effectively enhance outcomes if it is cumulative over a period and periodically reviewed (as opposed to a once only meeting.)**

7.7.2 Some of the most glaring discontinuities in the Connexions process appeared to us to occur at the follow up and review stages. Young people with the most severe risks will need sustained support over time and loss of contact tends to damage their progress and their confidence in Connexions. In keeping with our arguments elsewhere, it must be acknowledged that resource issues affect the ability of the service to allocate sufficient staff time

to follow up but some of the patterns of practice may nevertheless be amenable to change.

7.7.3 The points where young people leave school, move schools or enter alternative education are critical stages for “impact leakage”. In our experience, not only does geographical mobility make follow up more difficult but there are inadequate procedures for handover. We encountered, for example, many young people in alternative education who had known a PA in school but now had no contact with Connexions. Staff in these establishments told us that in some areas if the alternative provider was not in the same geographical catchment area for a Connexions team as the original school, then there was no mechanism for passing cases to another Connexions team. Frequently, the weak links between the school based PAs and community based PAs also contributed to loss of contact when a young person leaves school. It seemed to us that often it was a case of initiating a new contact, when a young person at risk had left a mainstream school, and starting again from scratch. (See 5.6.1 and 5.2.7.1.)

7.7.4 College education and training placements showed a similar pattern in our study. The eagerness to place young people into an EET situation was not matched by follow up and review to ensure that it was suitable, that they were continuing and that they had their next move planned. (See 5.4.3.9, 6.12.3.5 and 6.13.1.)

7.7.5 The same principle applies to other settings, sometimes even more acutely. Young people leaving custody are very often “lost on the radar”, at a time in their lives of maximum vulnerability. Young people coming to the end of a formal court order with Youth Offending Teams will cease their obligation to attend the YOT but are often not referred back to Connexions for continuing support. (See 6.8.5.4 and also 6.10.6.3.) Others who are in drug counselling or treatment are not followed up and several PAs in our study seemed reticent to keep in touch and offer continuing support, possibly from a lack of skills or confidence. (See 6.7.3.4.) Homeless young people and those leaving care are well known for their mobility and instability of accommodation and sometimes of their accompanying relationships. (See 6.9.6.)

7.7.6 We came to a conclusion that amendment of some of the management guidance on follow up periods could positively affect this situation, as issues of “currency” and the prescribed lengths of time for PA follow up may account for some of these patterns. It is understandable that PAs who have heavy caseloads will normally not follow up clients where they are not asked to do so and in some cases we encountered, they were clearly discouraged by managers from going beyond the basic requirement. The concept of “currency” may be masking the actual proportions of young people who are NEET. The time prescriptions for follow up may serve as a rationing device for staff time but may not be in the best interests of particular risk groups. (See 6.8.5.3, 6.12.2.2 and 6.3.12.)

7.7.7 Follow up and review do need to be regular and frequent. The rate of change in young people’s lives is enormous and severe risks can arise from

one day to the next in the very nature of adolescence. Ideas about educational and career pathways are only partially formed and young people can very easily enter unsuitable destinations, which are then not sustained.

7.7.8 For all these reasons, encouraging outreach and drop-in contact with Connexions becomes all the more important. We concluded that the messages that “you can come back at any time” and “drop in on us, if we accidentally lose touch” should be an important part of marketing and directed especially to the most mobile groups. With their local presence often over a long period, community based and voluntary sector agencies have an important role to play in maintaining contact with vulnerable local young people. (See 5.4.2.3 and 5.4.13.12.)

7.8 Exit strategy and closure

7.8.1 Hypotheses concerning exit strategy and closure

- 31. Pro-active attention to an exit strategy will increase successful outcomes and/or help to avoid loss of impact already achieved.**
- 32. Over-dependence on PAs may lead to limitation of successful outcomes.**

7.8.2 We gathered only fragmentary evidence on these hypotheses but are left with a strong impression that “exit strategy” is a crucial issue. We met a few PAs and young people who seemed to have a relationship verging on inter-dependence, and some PAs were concerned about the potential for generating dependency. (See 6.9.4.2.) In some cases, a belief in the paramount place of trust is converted into an inability to release young people into independence from the relationship. In other more common cases, there was an abrupt release at 18 or 19, often without explanation at least as we understood it from the young people’s perspective. (See 5.4.3.6.) We found few instances of steady and systematic planning for the ending of the PA relationship. Similarly there were few examples of any handover to other agencies that might continue support to young adults.

7.8.3 The issues of closure and exit from relationships are crucial points for young people’s learning. Our view is that not only was damage done by the sudden fracture of some of the relationships but that a major learning opportunity is lost if time is not taken to work at exit plans.

7.8.4 It was this issue more than any other, which drew our attention to the need for good management support and supervision. When and how to conclude the relationship with a young person is a very fine judgement. It has implications not only for the young person but also for the PA, on such matters as time-management and the emotional and personal issues involved.

7.8.5 In general, our perception was that management supervision and support for PAs was weak and in some cases, there appeared to be no recognition of its necessity. Traditions of supervision may be stronger in social and youth work professions than they were in the former Careers Service and

this may have had a carry over effect into the ethos of Connexions. There are numerous points where a flexible, supportive style of management supervision could assist PAs and might well ultimately improve outcomes. These not only include the work on exit strategy as above, but also the judgements about how and when to undertake assessment, the pressures and risks of outreach work, managing relationships with partners, how to advocate for better provision or when to stop following up. We are aware that training in management supervision has been introduced in the service but the evidence suggests that further action is needed on this issue. (See 5.6.1.)

7.9 Protocols and service arrangements

7.9.1 Hypotheses concerning protocols and service arrangements

(Protocols and Service Level Agreements are not confined to any particular stage. They govern and clarify roles and responsibilities between agencies at various stages such as referral to or from Connexions, assessment, interventions, specialist support, monitoring or exit from the Connexions process.)

- 33. Outcomes will be enhanced if protocols or service level agreements are in place describing the role of Connexions and its partner organisations and roles of the PA and other key staff.**
- 34. Positive outcomes will be enhanced when specialist PAs are deployed to deal with specific risk groups of young people.**
- 35. Positive outcomes will be enhanced if there are mechanisms in place to identify and agree between agencies the key worker for each P1 young person facing multiple risks.**
- 36. For all specific risk groups, positive outcomes are more likely where the PA has the experience and skills to deal with particular risk situations/young people with specific risks, utilises relevant interventions and draws on external expertise. Such an approach is likely to be the subject of protocols and strategies setting out these relationships.**
- 37. For impact to be fully monitored and recorded, processes need to be in place, which give appropriate recognition to the range of potential outcomes, including intermediate outcomes and distance travelled (such as increased personal confidence.)**

7.9.2 There is an evident need for clarity in relationships between organisations in such a complex multi-agency partnership arrangement. We met instances where new protocols between Connexions and agencies, such as the Drug Action Teams or the Youth Offending Teams, did appear to have improved partnership working. (See 6.8.2.8 and 6.7.3.8.) In educational settings, there was some evidence that school or college partnership agreements were integral to the work of Connexions in this context. In general, such agreements were viewed positively but it was clear that they were most effective when understood and valued by all parties and regularly reviewed. (See 5.2.4.1 and 5.2.4.2)

7.9.3 Regrettably, most of our evidence pointed to a lack of protocols or a lack of awareness of their existence at operational level. PAs often did not know where to find the protocols or SLAs or had not read them and their potential benefit was lost. Sometimes this appeared to be because such matters were dealt with at a higher level in the management chain and communication to fieldwork practitioners had not followed. (See for example, 5.6.1.)

7.9.4 There was overwhelming evidence that the issue of which worker takes the leading role with a young person is critical. Despite the fact that the Connexions initiative was designed to address the fragmentation of services to young people and coordinate the different professional interventions, the problems are all too often still evident. Young people we met were often either bewildered or angry in the face of these multiple interventions in their lives and this did diminish potential positive impact. If a young person has multiple workers all requesting disclosure, interventions will have diminished effectiveness unless clarity is achieved about a key worker role. Establishing the key worker role appears to be a crucial stage in the Connexions process. Establishing the genuine consent of other partners to its necessity is a continuing agenda. (See 5.2.5.6.)

7.9.5 The partial exceptions to this picture occurred where statutory responsibilities have defined the lead and the agency responsibilities. Section 140 provisions for young people with Statements of Educational Need are one such example. In our evidence, schools and other partners were particular clear about the role of Connexions with SEN clients. (See 6.4.3.2.) It is also clear that the Youth Offending Teams lead for young people who are on formal court orders and to some extent, the arrangements for young people leaving care in the Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000 have the potential to clarify the way in which agencies relate to this multiple-need group. (See 6.8.2.6, 6.8.2.9 and 6.9.1.2.)

7.9.6 We do not wish to imply that statutory obligation is necessarily the only way to deal with inter-agency responsibilities but these examples serve to underline how clarity in such matters can improve impact. Further work is needed on the roles and relationships of agencies in relation to many other of the risk groups we examined; a real willingness to make the interests of individual agencies a lesser priority is required; schools need to be brought into the loop; and the communication to all parties and reinforcement of understanding is key.

7.9.7 In relation to the role of specialist workers, our evidence was not conclusive. We encountered instances where expert knowledge held by PAs in specialist roles, for example of issues for teenage mothers, disabled young people or asylum seekers, was proving to be a real asset. If a young person has very specific needs, then “specialist” help and information is likely to be necessary to get them the provision they need. PAs cannot be expected to have expertise on every issue. We also met examples where specialist PAs are not receiving referrals or being well used or where other PAs avoid issues because there are “experts” to deal with them. (See 6.7.3.5.)

7.9.8 On balance, what appeared to us important was not whether PAs were deployed as “specialists” or not, but rather firstly, whether generic PAs had sufficient awareness of the particular issue to operate effectively and refer appropriately; secondly, whether the referral routes were easy to access; and thirdly, whether the nature of specialist help available from PAs in specific roles or from other organisations was familiar to all staff. Amongst other things, these factors will affect the speed and accuracy of responses when a young person has an urgent practical need such as homelessness. It also has clear implications for training of PAs in general awareness of issues such as drug misuse and in up to date information on the assistance available, how it works and how to access it.

7.9.9 Hypothesis 37 concerning the importance of recognising “soft” or intermediate outcomes resonates with many of the issues we observed with the risk groups and in particular settings. Several individual PAs or Partnerships were undertaking specific work to devise ways of recording and measuring “distance travelled”. (See 2.3.11.) In the light of our evidence, this seems eminently desirable, provided as the National Audit Office express it that “the burden of measurement” remains reasonable and duplication is avoided (NAO, 2004: p.44). Recording should not become an end in itself. Young people who have been damaged by their experiences will almost universally require intermediate steps of confidence building and personal development before they can consider coping with training or a job. Indeed many PAs suggested to us that for the most severely alienated young people, the creation of a trusting relationship and maintenance of contact should be recognised as an outcomes in their own right. (See 6.9.3.) We have highlighted above how an over-emphasis on NEET outcomes can become counterproductive or drive young people away from the service. In the accounts of work in the voluntary and youth sectors and in outreach, we have seen how an inflexible approach to targets adversely affects the work with socially excluded young people. Recognition of the intermediate outcomes and management support to PAs working to achieve them with young people at risk are absolutely essential. (See 5.4.3.8.)

7.10 Continuity and discontinuity in the Connexions process

7.10.1 Having set out the conclusions about the groups of hypotheses, the remainder of this section will now return to the themes of the study outlined at the end of Section 4. The central theme was concerned with the relationship of impact to continuity and discontinuity in the Connexions process, and the major factors that influenced the extent to which impact was achieved. Two major factors were identified for the second stage of the enquiry. The first was the influence of settings and delivery arrangements (such as resource allocation and modes of PA deployment) on the Connexions process. The second was the influence of organisational structures and processes (such as assessment or referral). The task of this part of the report is to draw out of the detail reported above the broader picture of the Connexions process and the main factors creating continuity or discontinuity.

7.10.2 In doing this, a distinction can be made between two different characteristics of the Connexions process, which can create continuity or discontinuity. If the process is seen, in a simplified way, as a series of stages linked together, then discontinuity can arise as a result of either *stage failure* or *linkage failure*. A stage failure occurs when a defined stage of the process is either not carried out, or is carried out inadequately. An example of this might be a failure to assess needs and risk. A linkage failure occurs when one stage of the process is not then linked to a subsequent phase, which is necessary if impact is to be achieved. An example of this might be when an assessment of need is made, but there is then a failure to link this to the provision of appropriate support. Continuities exist, and the potential for impact is enhanced, where different stages of the process are well linked together, and where each stage is carried out effectively. Discontinuities, either as stage or linkage failures, can arise out of the characteristics of particular settings, or result from aspects of organisational processes, or from a combination of both setting and process. The following summary is organised in relation to the logical stages of the Connexions process. At each different stage, the setting and/or the process can give rise to discontinuities.

7.11 Key points of discontinuity

7.11.1 Continuity is achieved between **PAs and young people** where contact is made, a relationship is developed and sustained over an appropriate time, trust is created, and where the orientations of the young person are understood by the PA and matched by an equivalent understanding of the role of the PA and the wider Service.

7.11.2 The key discontinuities here occur when:

- There is a failure to make contact;
- Contact is not sustained or is interrupted;
- The orientations of the young person are not correctly identified;
- The PA's understanding of their role or of the service is inconsistent with the young person's understanding of Connexions.

7.11.3 The **matching of need to support** involves the processes of identifying risk, categorising risk, and providing appropriate support. Continuity is achieved when risks and needs are identified, properly understood and prioritised, *and* the assessment of need is then linked to the provision of appropriate support.

7.11.4 The key discontinuities occur when:

- Risks and needs are not accurately and fully identified;
because the PA's role or position in the service does not enable this to happen,
or because there is resistance to the use of assessment systems,
or because the PA is denied access to assessment processes,
or assessment procedures are used inappropriately and insensitively,
or because there is no effective referral route for specific needs emerging from assessment,

- or because the resources are not available to carry out an assessment.
- Appropriate support is not provided;
 - because the PA's role or position does not enable this to happen,
 - or because the resources or time are not available to provide support,
 - or because there is no effective referral route to the type of support required.

7.11.5 We defined impact earlier in the report as the difference in immediate and intermediate or destination outcomes, attributable to Connexions. The process of **achieving impact** therefore includes different types of outcome for the young person. These can be best summarised as two types of outcome: "**soft**" outcomes, broadly concerned with the personal development of the young person, with issues underlying their risk status and with immediate practical needs; and "**hard**" outcomes, broadly concerned with learning and employment (EET) destinations.

7.11.6 Three main factors influence the likelihood of impact being achieved, namely continuity in the Connexions process, the effectiveness of interventions, and the structure of opportunities open to young people outside of Connexions itself.

7.11.7 The key discontinuities in soft outcomes occur when:

- There are discontinuities in the Connexions process;
 - where targets are identified solely or chiefly in terms of hard outcomes,
 - or where the PA's role or position in the Service does not enable attention to development needs,
 - or where there are inadequate resources or ineffective referral routes for soft outcome support.

7.11.8 The key discontinuities in hard outcomes occur when:

- Soft outcomes are a prerequisite for the achievement of hard outcomes but have not been given the necessary attention;
 - because targets are identified strongly in terms of hard outcomes,
 - or because the PA's role or position in the service does not enable the attention to soft outcome development needs,
 - or because there is no effective referral route to appropriate soft outcome support,
 - or because the resources for soft outcome support are not available or inadequately tailored to need,
 - or because of discontinuities occurring in the Connexions process as above.
- Hard outcomes are available but young people are not steered towards them or are given incorrect or inadequate advice;
- Hard outcomes are unavailable because of a shortage of jobs, training or education opportunities.

7.11.9 The role of the PA, the existence of effective referral routes, and the availability of resources are influenced by the relationships and arrangements *within* the Connexions Service, and *between* the Connexions Service and other agencies and partners

7.11.10 Dealing firstly with **the relationships and arrangements *within* the Connexions Service**, all these elements are influenced by the interface between targeted and universal provision and the pattern and style of work within each of them.

7.11.11 Key discontinuities occur in these internal arrangements when:

- Overall resources are inadequate to meet Connexions targets;
- Resources are not deployed appropriately between the two types of provision;
- The mix and balance of provision is not matched to need or demand;
Between the universal and targeted provision,
Within the universal provision, in relation to deployment in types of provision (such as school-based deployment, centres, shops or mobiles) or in methods of approach (such as individual advice and guidance, group work or IT based information).
Within targeted provision, in relation to deployment with different risk groups, in different methods of working, and in different settings.
- Effective referral arrangements within or between the types of provision do not exist;
- There is resistance to the holistic role of the PA.

7.11.12 Secondly, turning to the **relationships and arrangements *between* the Connexions Service, and its partners and other agencies**, the role of the PA, the existence of effective referral routes, and the availability of resources are all influenced by the ethos and style of relationships and working practices.

7.11.13 Key discontinuities occur in these external arrangements when:

- Overall resources are inadequate to meet Connexions targets;
- Protocols and service level agreements;
Do not exist,
Are not explicit, specific, or detailed,
Are not operationalised.
- The PA's position is inappropriate to the task;
PAs lack power and influence in the host agency,
PAs do not have access to information,
PAs do not have access to other assessments of young people,
Serial diagnoses of young people's needs are carried out by different people.
- The working model, and its degree of integration within the host agency (integrated, neutral, external) is inappropriate;

- The mode of PA deployment (secondment, paired working etc.) is inappropriate;
- Effective referral routes between partners do not exist or are not well used;
- Lines of accountability are not clear;
- There is tension between organisational cultures, and mistrust between staff.

7.12 The complexity of the Connexions process

7.12.1 What can be seen in this highly codified summary are the major influences on continuity, discontinuity, stage failures and linkage failures in the Connexions process, and indications of the ways in which settings and delivery arrangements, and organisational structures and processes influence the achievement of impact on young people.

7.12.2 Although this overview of continuity and discontinuity in the Connexions process is deliberately lacking in detail, what can immediately be appreciated is its enormous complexity. It extends across many different agencies and organisations, and over different kinds of workers. It involves different stages and many potential linkages, and it is addressed to many different groups of young people with very different needs. Achieving continuity under such circumstances is almost an infinitely complex task. It is all the more complex when the three very simplified elements of the work of PAs with young people, the matching of needs and support, and achieving impact are translated into real world events and processes. The scope for discontinuity is enormous. Achieving continuity *at all the different levels* will be needed and this will be demanding on managers, administrators and practitioners alike. The complexity of the overall arrangements and the difficulty of *making things work* should be recognised when making assessments of effectiveness and impact at this stage in the relatively early historical development of the Connexions Service.

7.13 Four key tensions in the Connexions process

7.13.1 Finally, it is possible to identify certain key tensions in the Connexions process, which will influence the successful achievement of impact. In many ways, these tensions are not peculiar to Connexions, they are tensions found across many large organisations, especially public services serving large populations. They are to some degree implicit in organisational arrangements.

7.13.2 *There is a tension between the needs of the Connexions Service and the needs of its client group.* To be attractive and accessible to young people Connexions needs to lean towards informality and flexibility in presentation and practice. However, the more it does this, the greater the difficulty it will have in functioning as a rational public service able to account for its activities and achievements. It works at the interface of highly formalised bureaucratic procedure and a relatively unstructured client group, with a tendency to prefer informal ways of behaving. This is an interface where the interests of the service and those of the client group will often not coincide, and where the

practice and procedures of the service may well be at odds with their preferred style. There is no final resolution of this tension. It needs to be recognised, however, in order to achieve some balance between these divergent needs.

7.13.3 There is a tension between the Connexions Service and local practice.

This partly arises from the first tension, but it also reproduces the tension between centralisation and devolution found in all large organisations. As a large scale organisation attempting to address multiple needs for a large target population, and needing to be accountable to central government for resources, Connexions would be expected to have a strong centralising tendency. This has its associated characteristics such as an emphasis on tracking, recording of information and targeting. However, for practitioners who want to work effectively with their clients, these requirements may often create difficulties or erect barriers which hinder rather than support their practice, as they see it.

7.13.4 There is a tension between the past and the present that is highly evident in Connexions. This can be seen in the structure of provision itself in the form of the universal and targeted parts of the service. It can be seen particularly in the attitudes and working practices of many staff whose experience, training and professional aspirations pre-date the Connexions Service and the Connexions ethos.

7.13.5 There is a tension between two types of outcome that are often inter-related. Targets are identified primarily as EET destination targets, associated with groups of young people assessed as potentially liable not to achieve such destinations. Formulating targets in this way has two consequences for the work of the service. First, it constrains Connexions to focus on EET destinations, particularly those it can realistically offer, rather than focus on the transition needs of young people. To some extent this is probably another unavoidable tension. However, there is a second aspect to this, which is potentially damaging to the real effectiveness of Connexions. The emphasis on EET destinations, which in principle are easily measured and can be linked to specific target setting, diverts attention and resources away from other outcomes, particularly soft outcomes concerned with personal development and underlying needs, *which young people may need first* in order to be able to achieve the harder outcomes. This has emerged at many points in the preceding discussion.

7.15 Looking forward

7.15.1 These tensions, and the mapping out of continuities and potential discontinuities in the Connexions process, will all have implications for the design, development and delivery of service for young people. The final section of this report will take these as its point of departure in looking forward to future service structures and processes appropriate for young people.

Section 8 – A broader agenda: some implications for youth policy and the design of youth related services

8.1 The potential for learning from the evidence

8.1.1 In the last section, we examined and summarised our evidence about the impact of Connexions with young people at risk against our hypotheses. There is much in these findings, however, that could improve interventions and consequent outcomes with young people more generally. The analysis of “what works, for whom, and in what circumstances” can be used to refine organisational processes and operational practice. In the discussion below, we examine these implications for the wider design of services for young people, including Connexions.

8.1.2 Within the foreseeable future, Connexions will have to find its place within a new configuration of services for children and young people that will emerge from the Children’s Bill and the government’s expected “youth offer”. This study has not examined the impact of Connexions in its “universal” advice and guidance function for young people not at risk, nor was it intended to do so, and we cannot comment in any detail on this aspect of its work. What we have learned about how Connexions can work most effectively with young people at risk is, however, considerable and highly relevant to the current changing landscape of provision.

8.1.3 The functions Connexions currently fulfils are clearly related to the underlying assumptions that lay behind its inception. It is still aimed at increasing the skills and achievements of young people in order to create a flexible workforce for a healthy economy, and at reducing their non-participation in learning and employment, as a key contributor to adult unemployment and its attendant social and economic costs. In order to do this, it is charged with reaching out to young people, especially those most at risk of underachievement and disaffection, and providing a network of Personal Advisers who can build trust and act as a consistent point of contact for their clients. It still also has a remit to reduce the fragmentation of services to young people and to monitor and respond to trends in the destination patterns of the youth population. It aims in its own words “to give all young people the best start in life, helping them to become well-rounded adults who are committed to learning and development” (CSNU, 2002: p.4). The key priorities of the service are to reduce the number of 16-18 year-olds not in education, training or employment and to contribute to wider government targets on youth crime reduction, improved outcomes for black and minority ethnic young people, and other issues such as teenage pregnancy or the learning needs of young offenders.

8.1.4 Our work has shown up many examples of the positive impact of Connexions on young people. We have seen how, given the right support, young people have been enabled to achieve improved outcomes, despite the complexity of the risks they face and the many setbacks they experience. The study has also shown up key discontinuities in service that reduce impact and identified ways in which these might be addressed. An argument that

improvements can be made does not amount to an argument that the type of provision for which Connexions was set up is no longer needed. Whatever the configuration of services, the task of helping young people surmount the difficulties they encounter and reach their maximum potential remains a valid policy objective and it is worthwhile continuing to explore how best to meet the needs of those most at risk.

8.2 How Connexions can best respond to young people at risk

8.2.1 However Connexions and the functions it performs are organised in the future, this study provides useful pointers about the essential elements required to assist young people at risk most effectively.

8.2.2 The underlying assumption of Connexions that young people flourish and develop best when they have at least one skilled and knowledgeable adult whom they can trust has not been contradicted by this research. Indeed, it features so much as part of our findings that we are in constant danger of repetition. The building of trust and the real understanding of young people's perceptions of the world (their orientations) are the cornerstone of impact. The relationship between the PA and the young person is central.

8.2.3 Those young people most in need of that trusting relationship and the interventions of the service need to be brought into the Connexions process as sensitively and as early in their "risk career" as possible. This is predicated upon an appropriate and well-timed assessment of risk and priority, and a deep understanding, on the part of those who work with them, of the nature of the risks they face to their health and well being.

8.2.4 Appropriate and effective support then needs to be provided, in a manner that responds *in the round* to their development needs en route to becoming well functioning adults. The holistic view of young people's development is needed for interventions to have maximum impact and our analysis has also identified the key influencing factors that make for effective and timely intervention.

8.2.5 As we have argued earlier, the overall pattern of impact appears to be largely determined by the level of resource allocations to Connexions and how they are deployed. There is little doubt that resources are inadequate in relation to the targets of the service. The numbers of Personal Advisers at the time of the study were approximately half of those envisaged when the original estimates of risk in the youth population and required staffing levels were made (National Audit Office, 2004: pp.31-32). This clearly puts limits on what individual staff and the service as a whole can achieve. For a full and proper response to the needs of young people at risk, Connexions and related services require adequate resources.

8.2.6 The other main influence we could see was the quality and quantity of other service provision for young people. PAs cannot offer job opportunities to young people, where employment has not been generated in the local economy; they cannot offer training provision of high quality where such

programmes do not exist; they cannot refer drug users with complex needs to dual diagnosis or multi-agency treatment services if this level of provision has not been developed or is not available locally, and so on through many other examples. Some initiatives such as financial support packages clearly do influence take up of education to some degree but they may be limited in overall resource or confined to certain areas. This spotlights the role of the Connexions Service in litmus testing the adequacy of responses to young people's needs, advocating for improved provision and pro-actively working with partners to achieve it.

8.2.7 All this still implies coordination of services to young people. Whether or not Connexions has fulfilled this aspiration, or indeed been allowed to fulfil it, this need for coordination remains. For the most effective response to young people at risk, a strategic role is required to integrate the efforts of the different services and reduce the splintering that so easily defeats young people's efforts to find help.

8.3 Implications for the design and delivery of services to young people

8.3.1 We are confident in the light of our findings that these elements identified above are the principal strands required for the effective delivery of Connexions. They serve the vision of the government for improving outcomes for children and young people so that they can be healthy, stay safe, enjoy and achieve, make a positive contribution and achieve economic well being (DfES, 2004a: p.25). We believe they also illuminate the broader issues of policy and service design for young people and will tentatively set out some of their implications in the next part of the discussion.

8.3.2 Provision for children and young people cannot stand still. It cannot be argued that services are adequate either for children in need of protection or for adolescents at risk, who may also have need of protection in some circumstances. Wherever Connexions itself is located or the types of service it currently seeks to provide are offered, there are implications from the findings of this study for the planning and articulation of the range of provision.

8.3.3 Drawing on the conclusions of our research, we would argue that certain key functions need to be provided in services for young people, including those at risk. Our evidence also points up a great deal of information about the manner in which those functions should be delivered. It also contains signals about the flow of organisational processes and where the stage failures and linkage failures occur most frequently in the implementation chains of youth related programmes.

8.3.4 A preliminary list, and not an exhaustive one, of key functions in services to young people would include in our view:

- The function of attention to **policy formulation and the planning of delivery for young people**, as opposed to services simply for children. Young people are not children: their physical, emotional and social development is at a different stage. The risks they face change in

character with that development, with their new physical maturity, increased purchasing power for some, moves towards independence, and changes in the nature of adult exploitation.

- The function of **providing a range of services for young people** including their education, advice and guidance, opportunities for constructive activities and for personal and social development, and particular responses to risk conditions and behaviours.
- Within that overall range of provision, the function of **direct work with young people**, including those at risk, to promote the cognitive, emotional and attitudinal development processes that lead to changes in behaviour, and the social interaction that leads to improvements in confidence and self-management.
- For those who will not easily access such support, which will include those most at risk, **pro-active outreach is needed** to ensure that the services are known and accessible.
- There will be specific provision required in **response to specific risks**, whether in additional educational support, counselling, treatment, protection from abuse, or the need for practical and material resources, such as shelter or food.
- Similarly within the range of interventions, there is **the function of “advocacy”** to press for changes in the way young people are dealt with and for measures to address the structural inequalities they face. Workers with young people need to recognise their positive role as “change agents”.
- The function of **assessing priorities for action** must be undertaken. This includes the **assessment of the current risk situation** in a young person’s life and its potential seriousness.
- Individual workers or even agencies cannot do all that is necessary through their interactions with young people, whether individually or in groups: **measures to achieve economic and social regeneration** are also required. The study demonstrates that the best efforts of individual workers are constrained by context and structural conditions. The most efficient processes in the programmes for young people are similarly limited in their effectiveness by external factors. The needs of young people need to be integral to action planning for regeneration.
- And finally, there is **a resource allocation function**, to determine priorities and deploy available resources efficiently. Resource allocations need to be proportionate to the needs of children and young people. Improved staff skills, partnership working and organisational processes are insufficient of themselves to address the issues. Without reasonable resources, the strain on committed staff working to address risk is untenable and individuals or agencies are unfairly blamed for failures.

8.3.5 There is nothing startling or new about such a portfolio of functions. Indeed, the Connexions Service was set up to provide many of them directly, and to improve coordination with other services in the interests of young people. What is new, however, is the detailed insight this study provides into how these functions are currently performed, the levels of effectiveness achieved, the variation in practice, and the outcomes that are both positive

and negative for young people. For this reason, they deserve close attention. It is not so much a matter of innovation as of embedding what we know about “what works”.

8.3.6 **Firstly**, in relation to “**what works**” about the manner in which workers carry out their functions with young people, this study has underlined the significance of holistic approaches. This is particularly crucial for young people at risk, many of whom have severe and multiple risks. Within our sample, there were many cases of damaged young people trying to cope with numerous issues affecting their lives simultaneously. Major impact was very rarely achieved with such young people without a trusting relationship with a worker(s) and sustained interventions addressing a range of risks over a substantial period of time. Single-track interventions that did not take account of the range of needs were less effective. Workers who embrace the holistic philosophy of work with young people can more easily relate to others in the field and position their role in relation to other functions.

8.3.7 An effective holistic approach is made more likely when certain elements are present in the relationship between adult workers and young people. We have spelled out these issues in this study in relation to the work of Personal Advisers. They include taking the time to build trust, ascertain the young person’s standpoint and understand their motivation and readiness for change. Assessment is needed but the procedures must be sensitive to the stage in the relationship and the young person’s abilities, readiness and situation.

8.3.8 Adolescents will face many dilemmas as they grow up. We have seen the need for dealing with specific questions swiftly and accurately and for conveying the message that it is possible to come back without remark or stigma when any other issue arises. Marketing needs to be aimed at forming positive perceptions in young people’s minds of a wide-ranging service, offering support to which they can turn or “re-turn” at any point. For the full range of enquiries to be dealt with, this must assume the availability of specific sets of expertise at some point in the chain and their active use by other staff. It also implies a need for well-defined referral routes open for typical urgent risk related problems, such as homelessness. A quality response needs to be offered. Standards of delivery are highly significant: the trust is fragile and promises must be kept.

8.3.9 **Secondly**, the learning from this study points up issues about “**what works**” in the manner in which services for young people relate to each other.

8.3.10 Whatever the configuration of services to young people, there will be a need for both universal and targeted provision, even if they are contained within integrated services at the interface. We have been able to see from our data that where services are concerned to provide for those at risk, there has to be a relationship with other universal services. Where there are sharp divisions and poor communication systems, impact suffers for all young people. Those in universal roles need to see it as part of the job to identify

risk, refer appropriately and cooperate in follow up and reintegration as necessary. Those occupying specialist or targeted roles cannot afford to divorce themselves from the issues of organising and developing mainstream provision. The dilemmas of service provision are all inter-connected.

8.3.11 The key role of schools in that inter-connected web of provision needs to be recognised. Schools are the gatekeepers of much of the information on children and young people pre-16. Their work can facilitate the interventions of other services in protection or in addressing risk or it can frustrate them. Control of the processes either by schools, or by another agency or partnership external to the school, does not of itself address the problem. Pro-active cooperation both ways between schools and other agencies working with young people is needed to underpin improvements in services.

8.3.12 We have set out above a number of other key issues for Connexions that apply equally to all other agencies dealing with young people. These include the need to secure the key worker role for young people with complex and multiple risks; the need to sustain follow up for young people at risk rather than simply making isolated interventions; the need to avoid creating dependency; the need for work on exit strategies and finally, the need to make working links with other agencies to ensure sustainability and continuation of support.

8.3.13 We also feel that there is evidence in this research of certain dangers inherent in a target driven organisational culture. Such an approach can restrict flexibility in reaching young people most at risk and with many individuals in our study, it also proved counterproductive. In cases where young people were severely damaged by their experience, the willingness to relate to an adult with some measure of trust could be regarded as an outcome in itself. Some means is needed of recognising intermediate outcomes and recording "distance travelled" in terms of individual development. In arguing this position, we recognise the need for priorities and targets to guide the work, and the need for accountability in public services. However we do feel that a better balance could be achieved between the need for flexibility and responsiveness, and the potential and actual rigidities, which target driven cultures can create.

8.3.14 Finally, our evidence impressed upon us the importance of support and supervision for staff. We would wish to pay tribute to the many highly committed and hard working staff we met from many different agencies, including Connexions. Not only do they need regular personal support but good managerial supervision is also necessary to assist the complex judgements they make throughout their work about matters such as priorities, internal communication, referral, partnership working, and choice of interventions. If the repertoire of interventions is not to become stale, the stimuli of supervision, exchange with other staff and training opportunities are essential inputs. However dedicated or experienced the worker may be, the length and complexity of the decision making process pertaining to young people at risk, mean that it is not amenable to a single-handed approach.

Good training and supervision are not simply devices for regulation of working practice but routes to service improvement.

8.3.15 **Thirdly**, our examination of the Connexions process and the way Connexions works in different settings has indicated **points where “impact leakage” typically occurs in services for young people and how it could be reduced** and the potential for positive outcomes increased.

8.3.16 Loss of impact occurs when the relationships between staff with a “universal” and a “targeted” role, or between those with a holistic role and those with a specialist role, are tense or unclear. Well-understood two-way communication is needed and a climate of mutual respect, regardless of the historical traditions of the different contributing services.

8.3.17 There are gaps and discontinuities in youth provision at both ends of the age spectrum. We found little preventive work with younger pupils at the lower end of the Connexions age range in schools, and there was also a real absence of exit strategies or handover for those at the upper end of the range. Not only is there ambivalence towards 19 year-olds seeking help from the service but we found very few well developed links to other agencies serving young adults to whom referral could be made for continued support.

8.3.18 Discontinuities causing impact leakage were a significant feature of partnership working. Protocols and service level agreements are required, which should not be regarded as mere paper exercises. They can be a means of building trust between professional groups, clarifying roles and improving service delivery. They need to be revisited constantly.

8.3.19 Inadequate follow up of young people at risk is also a key point of weakness and discontinuity. In the face of the evident rate of change in their lives and the acute need of many for some stable and trusting relationship, it is clear that greater attention to follow up could pay dividends in improved impact. There are breaks and dislocations in the Connexions process and other provision for young people that exacerbate this situation.

8.4 Conclusion

8.4.1 Services to children and young people are on the cusp of further change and development. As we have tried to show in this section, the implications of this research are germane to the many choices about policy and structure. The original thinking that informed the development of Connexions included the holistic approach to young people’s life chances and attention to their learning and employment options, within services for all, differentiated by need. For the sake of young people at risk, whose needs have moved us so greatly throughout the course of this study, we feel strongly that this ethos should not be lost but should remain as a central principle informing the design of services for children and young people.

Appendix A - The Realist Approach and its application to the study

A.1 First principles: Realist and cognate approaches to evaluation

A.1.1 This study explores an intricate range of policy and practice issues in respect of the Connexions Service. This research went through a lengthy commissioning process and a number of methodological iterations before the final design was settled. This appendix is designed to explore the methodological approach in more detail and in a way that might be useful in future evaluations attempting to get to grips with complex programmes and services. In the early stages of planning the research, and in response to its commissioners, its orientation moved from being a study combining qualitative and quantitative methods to one primarily based on qualitative methods, before finally settling on a 'realist perspective'. These notes describe and explain some of the key points in design and analysis.

A.1.2 The realist approach is a member of a broader family of 'theory-driven' perspectives on evaluation. The current research drew its inspiration from a number of key ideas from that family, including some use of the 'theory of change' and 'complexity theory' models. Rather than sticking doggedly to a preconceived blueprint for realist evaluation, the approach that emerged comprises of a mix of sampling, design and analytic strategies. We feel that this approach fits with a growing consensus in the evaluation community that the appraisal of complex programmes can only be conducted using a pluralist strategy.

A. 1.3 Realist evaluation takes the form it does in an attempt to mirror the characteristics of the particular programme under study. Seven such features are noted here:

- The intervention is a **theory or theories** – that is, the policymakers and managers who introduce a complex intervention make assumptions about how it will affect people and organisations (and hence bring about change). Connexions is composed of a whole series of such theories about the needs of disaffected young people, about joint working to overcome multiple disadvantage, about targeting of specific sub-sets of services to subjects at different risk-levels and so forth. These programme theories are regarded as the subject matter of the evaluation.
- The intervention involves **the actions of people** – so understanding human intentions and motivations, what stakeholders know and how they reason, is essential to understanding the intervention. Connexions offers various resources to young people, but whether they are accepted and acted upon is a matter for their volition. Understanding the choices involved is crucial to understanding whether a programme works.
- The intervention consists of a **chain of steps or processes** that feed into, and back onto, one another. At each stage, the intervention could work as expected or "misfire" and behave differently. Young people find their way into Connexions via quite different (formal and informal) systems of

referral. They then face a whole series of potential destinations in terms of education, training and employment. An important evaluation question is to understand the efficacy of the different conduits.

- These **chains of steps or processes are often not linear**, and involve negotiation and feedback at each stage. Key agents in the Connexions intervention are tasked with performing a specific role in 'youth support'. But how practitioners handle that role will differ according to their background, custom and practice, and new norms that develop as problems arise. Recognising such flows and blockages is an important part of the evaluation.
- Interventions are **embedded in social systems** and their working is shaped by this context. The effectiveness of Connexions depends ultimately on circumstances, contexts, agencies and events over which it has little or no control. The interface with schools will depend on how schools manage careers advice, discipline, record keeping, pastoral care and so on and there is no reason necessarily to expect consistency on any of those fronts. The successful promotion of education, employment and training opportunities depends on the extent and quality of the openings available, and these vary over time and by locality. An important task for the evaluation is to understanding the efficacy of different components of the intervention as played out in different contexts and circumstances.
- Interventions are **prone to modification** as they are implemented. To attempt to "freeze" the intervention and keep it constant would miss the point, since this process of adaptation and local embedding is inherent and necessary to successful implementation. A new service like Connexions will always bed down slowly and unevenly. As far as implementation goes, there will be differences school by school, PA by PA, office by office, project by project and region by region. Political changes, of course, can alter or curtail the entire service. In these circumstances it is important to include contextual comparisons in the evaluation (including longitudinal ones).
- Interventions are **open systems and change through learning** as stakeholders come to understand them and 'play the system'. There are perpetual changes brought about by recruitment and promotion through the service. There is a constant 'comparing of notes' between PAs, offices and regions (a process that is accentuated through training, conferences, and quality inspection). Connexions is 'work' to many of its practitioners. And work routines such as managing workloads or meeting targets can become an integral part of programme delivery. Evaluation needs to monitor how the implementation process bends under self-scrutiny.

A.1.4 The above elements describe some of the initial layers of complexity that are part and parcel of the Connexions Service. Most models of evaluation are constructed on the basis that programmes are new and finite 'treatments' introduced afresh to a well-defined group of subjects. Connexions is best understood as a complex delivery system developed amidst an already complex youth, education, training and welfare system. It operates by making a thousand fold revision to that system. 'A system under perpetual

adjustment': that is the nature the 'programme' being analysed here. A diagram, produced to guide our initial deliberations on method, is reproduced on the next page at Figure A1 and summarises the web of influences that condition the impact of the Connexions Service. Note that it captures just some of the influences described above and introduces further immediate contingencies like the parallel introduction of EMA - yet another feature that conditions the efficacy of Connexions.

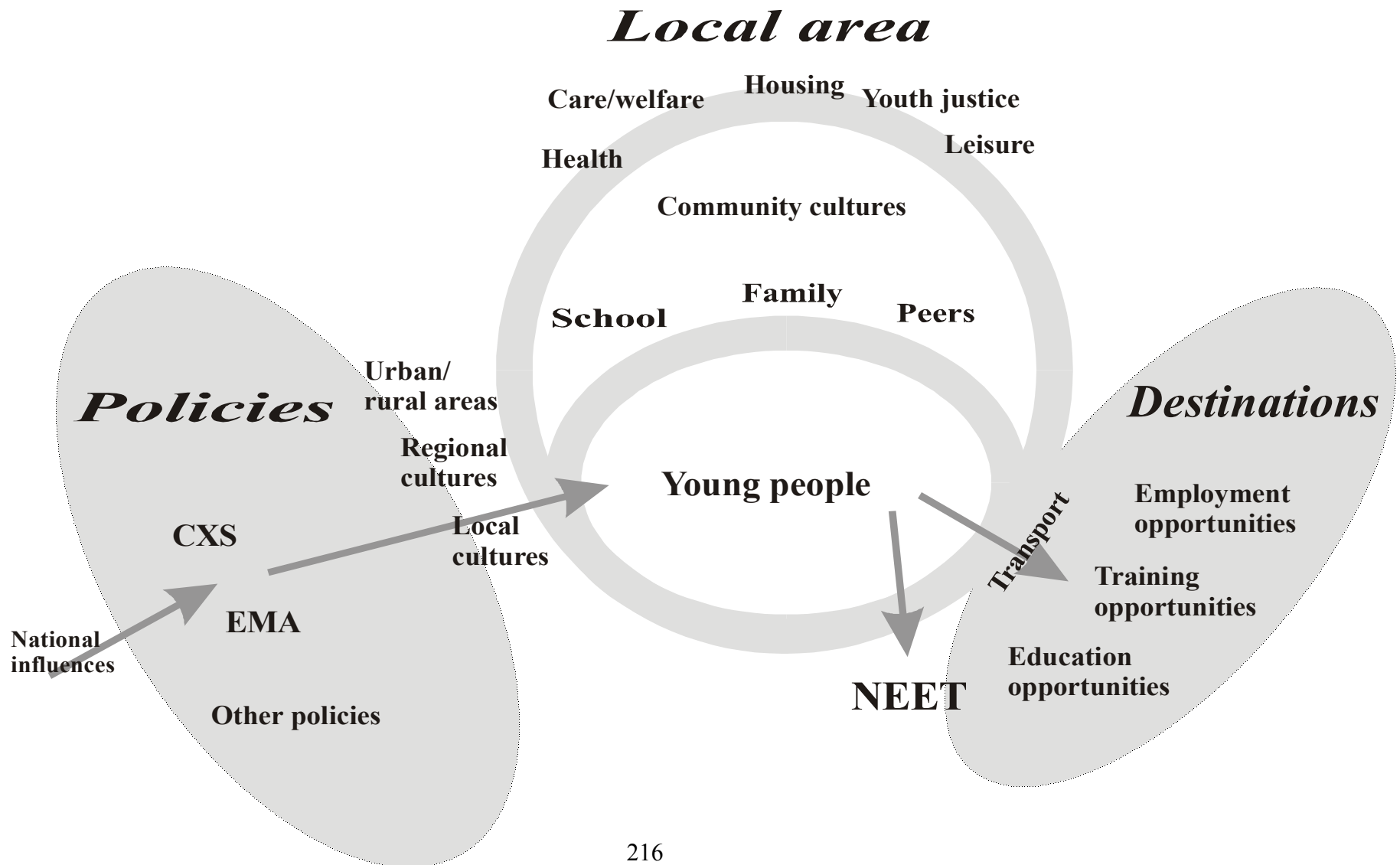
A.1.5 Through such an analysis of programme ontology, it becomes possible to see which evaluation methods are plausible and which are foreclosed in the evaluation of the Connexions Service. The most obvious limitation is that it is impossible to engage in a randomised controlled trial of Connexions, or with any of the quasi-experimental alternatives. It is totally unfeasible to engineer a policy on / policy off comparison for a universal service such as Connexions. In effect, no control groups can exist because all young people should potentially have some exposure to the service.

A.1.6 What is more, on the basis of the points in A.1.3, we find enormous variation in the experiences of those young people who do come into contact with Connexions. No two subjects are processed in exactly the same way. Attempts to measure 'whether it works' using the conventional armoury of outcome analysis will always end up with the homogenised answer 'to some extent' and 'sometimes', but this is of little use to policy makers or practitioners because it provides no clue as to why the interventions sometimes work and sometimes do not, or in what circumstances or conditions they are more or less likely to work, or what can be done to maximise their chances of success and minimise the risk of failure.

A.1.7 These dilemmas provide us with the starting point for the present analysis, namely realist evaluation. The core principle is that we should make explicit the underlying assumptions about how an intervention is supposed to work (this is what is called the 'programme theory'), and should then go about gathering evidence in a systematic way to test and refine this theory. Rather than seeking generalisable lessons or universal truths, it recognises and directly addresses the fact that the 'same' intervention never gets implemented identically and never has the same impact, because of differences in the context, setting, process, stakeholders and outcomes. Instead, the aim of realist review is explanatory – 'what works for whom, in what circumstances, in what respects, and how?'

A.1.8 The following points describe how these first principles are turned into a workable model of design and analysis. The initial step involves no particular methodological maxim or technical trick but simply concerns the prioritisation of issues for the inquiry. We have already described the multi-agency, multi-site, multi-stranded, multi-goal nature of the service. A young person's involvement with Connexions can stretch over months and years, any passing interaction may be quite decisive, any outside influence may throw the process 'off track'. It is impossible, therefore, to scrutinise every aspect of such complex programmes. The evaluation hypotheses must be prioritised.

Figure A1: Model of Main Influences Determining Policy Impacts on Young People



A.1.9 There is an emerging literature on the evaluation of complex, emerging systems and we have used some of this in prioritising elements of our inquiry. Pawson (2003) has outlined some potential strategies:

- Mapping and monitoring the process of the programme so as to identify the key decision points and the main flows and blockages in the system. The evaluation is used to check the throughput of subjects and levels of capacity building.
- Articulating and reality testing the underlying *formal* programme theories. Does the intervention correspond to how it was designed, in its developmental and legislative documents?
- Acknowledging that a single evaluation cannot cover everything and concentrating effort on those components of the programme which may be judged: most likely to affect overall outcomes, or novel to the programme, or about which least is known.
- Involving the stakeholders in choices about where the concentration of the study should lie, perhaps drawing on those areas where they may have most leverage to create change.
- Comparing a selected portion of the process or implementation chain across a limited range of programme sites. There will be varying success in the process for the different groups or at different locations and that will illuminate the types of clients best suited to benefit or the arrangements that most aid effectiveness.
- Aiming for insights that can assist programme building and alert policy makers and managers to the problems in the implementation chain, how they may be able to deal with them and what might sustain the programme. The end product should not be a pass/fail verdict but a greater understanding of how the programme works to produce different effects.

A.1.10 This study is no exception to this rule that there are always too many issues clamouring for the evaluator's attention. We attempted to use a balance of the above principles in settling on the principal hypotheses to guide our inquiry and these are set out in at Appendix D. Here, we re-emphasise to the reader that 'narrowing focus' is an inexact science. And whilst we believe that we have chosen features with significant import, there can be no guarantee that our focus has not omitted some noteworthy features.

A1.11 This research is thus based on the evaluation of selected key components of the Connexions Service. The hypotheses interrogated are constructed in two slightly different ways, the first borrowing from 'realist evaluation' and the second from the 'theories-of-change' approach.

A.2 Realist Designs

A.2.1 Realist evaluations seek explanations in terms of Context, Mechanism, Outcome configurations (CMOCs). (Pawson and Tilley, 1997) This terminology has been used widely throughout the report and its background and derivation is explained more fully here.

A.2.2 *Context* refers to aspects of the environment, including community structures, for example, or the policy environment created by multiple operational policies working on the ground, that are relevant to the ways in which programmes produce effects. Programmes do not have fixed effects; the outcomes of programmes are always contingent on context, which may include local environmental conditions, interpersonal and social relationships and the characteristics and circumstances of the clients themselves. The variations in context will mean that some clients may respond better to a programme or that some organisational arrangements work better than others.

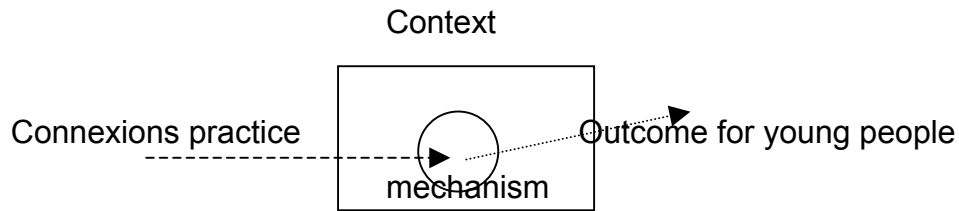
A.2.3 Interventions do not normally work as simple doses of a programme applied to passive clients. Rather, programmes and clients interact. Through this interaction mechanisms are activated. "*Mechanism*" refers to the ways in which the interventions bring about change. These mechanisms ultimately work through individuals, encouraging them to change their behaviour. Programmes offer resources to individuals but whether or not these resources are taken up depends on the reasoning of the client. It is not the programmes themselves that work, it is the choices and capacities they present and how the client reacts to them.

A.2.4 It may be useful for the purposes of this study to distinguish two types of mechanism. There are *social mechanisms* at work in the social world, which produce the underlying social and behavioural conditions to which Connexions and other such multi-level intervention programmes are an institutional response. There are also *programme mechanisms* at work within these social programmes. These are the ways in which a programme such as Connexions influences the choices and actions of its clients through the reasoning and resources it can make available to them. In doing this, Connexions is using programme mechanisms to counter the social mechanisms, which are tending to create adverse outcomes for the young people. Identifying these programmes mechanisms and establishing the extent to which they counter the other social mechanisms is a key task for realist evaluation.

A.2.5 Programme mechanisms always exist in a context - a social context and an institutional environment that also contains its own values, beliefs, relationships and constraints. Some contexts will enable mechanisms to work - to be triggered successfully, or fired, within the operation of the programme. Other contexts may inhibit the activation of a mechanism. A central question for realist evaluation lies in identifying the *trigger* that switches on a mechanism under certain circumstances, but not others.

A.2.6 The *outcome* is the difference made when the mechanism becomes operational. Realist evaluation seeks to explain outcomes that occur as a *result of the mechanism being triggered within the intervention* in an environment or range of environments (contexts). Programme outcomes will follow from the triggering of mechanisms in particular contexts.

A.2.7 A simple representation of a **Connexions context, mechanism, and outcome (CMO) configuration** would take this form:



A.2.8 To give a mundane example of the variety of CMOCs that can surround even the simplest point of intervention, let us imagine that a PA is offering advice on education and training options. Pupil A might come to such session and receive clear and helpful advice on how to pursue an interest in IT. In which case, we might have a mechanism (M_1 – signposting), which chimes with a context (C_1 – lack of knowledge) going on to produce a sustainable outcome (O_1 – realisable first-step). Pupil B might turn up with ambitions to be a vet. In which case the same mechanism (M_1 – signposting) and the same personal context (C_1 – lack of knowledge) might go on to produce an unsustainable outcome (O_2 – failed application) without, for instance, sufficient warning of the high entry barriers (C_2 - oversubscribed training path). Pupil C might come along because the time spent will be a ‘good doss’ instead of that afternoon’s double maths (C_3 – education disaffection) in which case the same mechanism (M_1 – signposting) would be met with bogus interest and only sustain further drift (O_3 – lack of direction). Pupil D might come along faced with a severe family crisis (C_4 – inability to engage) in which case the same mechanism (M_1 – signposting) would be irrelevant (O_4 – unrealisable first-step).

A.2.9 This is, needless to say, a highly simplified example but it begins to show the various pathways through a programme - both intended and unintended. And it shows the need to ask repeatedly of different processes and measures within a programme – for whom does it work, in what circumstances, in what respects and why?

A.2.10 The realist approach to evaluation is about testing and refining CMOCs such as the above. The vignettes above represent four pathways onwards from a single point of interaction in the programme. The move from conjecture to research occurs when the evaluator tries to discover - if these are typical consequences? - which are the most common? – is there a pattern to them? - are there other significant upshots of such advice? There is no single research design that equates to this task. In the words of Pawson and Tilley, “Realist evaluation is not a research technique. It is a ‘logic of inquiry’ that generates distinctive research strategies and designs.”

A.2.11 A particular design will typically include some of the following:

- Realist evaluation normally begins by eliciting and formalising the programme theories to be tested. It begins with a tentative picture of some of the potential winners and losers, highways and byways of

programme (as in the vignettes above). The purpose of the research is to refine the crude conjectures – polishing the understanding of relevant sub-groups, better understanding their different destinations, unpicking the different measures on offer in the programme, following through their intended and unintended consequences.

- Realism seeks to incorporate the perspective of the practitioner in evaluation. In particular, it would generally seek out the views of practitioners about “what works”, asking them to articulate their “theories” or hunches about what it is that makes the programme effective and how it works for particular groups. These “theories” are important to the process of building and refining the hypotheses for testing.
- Realism is eclectic in the use of research methods: it can draw on both qualitative methods to understand how programme subjects make their choices. It can use quantitative methods according to follow sub-group differences in outcomes. It will also draw on documentary analysis and management information to seek programme theories or patterns in output and outcome data. The crucial point of the strategy lies not in the types of data collected and used, but in the ways in which particular data are defined as relevant to the enquiry and the ways in which those data are then used to test hypotheses and further develop understanding.
- The method may be used prospectively (in formative evaluations), concurrently (in summative evaluations) or retrospectively (in research synthesis). Realist evaluation, moreover, has no particular preference for either quantitative or qualitative methods. Indeed it sees merit in multiple methods, marrying the quantitative and qualitative.
- Realist evaluation is developmental. It seeks continually to increase its explanatory power through the cyclical testing and reformulation of more detailed hypotheses thereby creating an increasing robustness in understanding.

A.2.12 In terms of its overall ambitions, realism is concerned with the fine-tuning of programmes and with providing a clear indication of particular points of their success and failure and why they have come about. It will not produce a fool-proof recipe for a social intervention but it can provide understanding that can make a programme more effective in its targeting and its organisation, and insight about the ways in which the programme begins to work actively for groups of its clients.

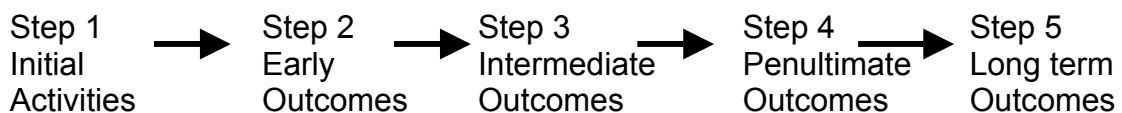
A.2.13 The specific characteristics of the realist approach make it particularly suitable for application to the evaluation of a new universal policy measure such as Connexions, which has been implemented in differing circumstances across the country and with different groups of young people with varying degrees of risk in their lives. It is precisely in a more detailed understanding of the differences and in how they operate that we will be most likely to be able to contribute to improving the effectiveness and impact of the service.

A.3 Theories-of-Change Evaluation

A.3.1 Our study also adopted elements of the theory-of-change strategy. This approach was developed by Connell et al (1995) for use in the evaluation of 'comprehensive community initiatives'. These programmes share with Connexions a structure in which different stakeholders are empowered to shape and reshape the programme as it passes through their respective hands. Another typical feature is that the chain of command is often particularly long, again as with Connexions, in which young people may be agency-referred or self-referred, and where many different workers are assessing and intervening in their lives at different points in the process.

A.3.2 Connell et al thus recommend that a process of 'theory mapping' be put in place in order to identify the key intervention milestones under conjecture within the initiative, as a prelude to having them tested. Their basic claim is that, 'using a theories-of-change approach to plan and design the initiative should increase the likelihood that the stakeholders in the initiative will have clearly specified its intended outcomes, that the initiative will be implemented, and that it will be responsive to context and changing conditions'. The recommended research process begins with 'surfacing and articulating' the working assumptions about how the programme will lead to the proposed goals, filling in a grid as in the following Figure A2:

Figure A2: Theories of change - the implementation chain



A.3.3 There will be dozens of these theory strings within a complex initiative. Each process itself is likely to have a number of stepping-stones. Accordingly, a theory 'grid' is produced in enormously high resolution, which lists requisite attitudinal shifts as well as measurable activities en route to the chosen objective. Our version of the Connexions theory-of-change is reproduced in Section 2, which describes potential 'immediate', and 'intermediate' and 'destination' outcomes and in the 17-stage model at Section 3, illustrating some of the major milestones of the process.

A.3.4 The goal here is to generate a theory-of-change model that is viewed by all stakeholders as a 'plausible' representation of the working programme theory. Having all of the stepping-stones specified 'up front' helps to strengthen the scientific case for ascribing subsequent changes in outcomes to the activities included in the initiative. While this strategy cannot eliminate all alternative explanations of a particular outcome, it aligns the major actors in the initiative with the standard of evidence that will be convincing to them.

A.3.5 This evaluation logic can be used in a variety of ways. It can address the classic outcome question – did the programme work? If the long term outcomes do occur as per theory, one has a strong case for attributing the change to the programme, because one can check through the data on the intermediate milestones to verify that they were in fact in place. In the case of Connexions we attempt to show that many of the assumed linkages do not work in the intended fashion, or had simply not been planned and catered for. Using the notion of ‘impact leakage’, we suggest that impact is typically weakened at particular points in the organisational process.

A.3.6 Connell also recommends that the method can also be used developmentally, in something like the classic action research mode. That is to say, one can inspect the programme as it builds for weaknesses and indeed breaks in the chain. If an initiative moves smoothly from A to B to C, but some intermediate objective D fails to fire, then the evaluators and participants can re-examine this initial segment of the programme theory, attempt to fathom its misconceptions, suggest remedies, and try them out in practice. Whilst we have not had such a participatory role in this particular evaluation, we consider that some of our observations can assist in future developmental schemes for young people.

A.4. Applying the model to the work of the Connexions Service

A.4.1 This final section of the appendix places the above methodological themes back in the context of the Connexions evaluation and affirms some of our main design decisions.

A.4.2 Connexions is still a relatively new measure and it works alongside many other social and educational initiatives. These further interventions sometimes dovetail and sometimes result in friction with Connexions, but they always condition its effectiveness. What is more they, too, are under constant evolution. No evaluation can take cognisance of this entire policy-superstructure and, significant as it is, we have considered such macro-analysis beyond the subject matter of this investigation.

A.4.3 In the main, this study takes a more detailed and micro-viewpoint. It seeks to examine the impact of the Connexions Service only in the identified transactions, and from the viewpoint of the client in particular, in order to illuminate what the local impact is and under what circumstances positive impact is most likely to result. Connexions is sometimes considered within a family of interventions centred on personal support, including mentoring, and we thus consider that many of the key atoms of evidence will lie at the point of interaction with clients.

A.4.4 The outcomes of Connexions are monitored in relation to the national targets but these data are unlikely to yield conclusive evidence of whether the programme as a whole is “working” and can say nothing about how it works, or for whom. Even if the desired targets are achieved overall, such as the reduction in the proportion of young people not in training, education or employment, there is still wide variation in success between Connexions

Partnerships and between different areas within each one. The characteristics of the area, the organisational arrangements of the Partnership, the numbers, skills and qualifications of the staff and the needs of the young people themselves will all vary and a single-minded attention to overall outcomes will not reveal the extent to which the programme works, how it works, or for whom it works.

A.4.5 A public service like Connexions is not amenable to classical experimental models. As we have argued above, no control groups can exist for a universal service and the variations within the experimental group are so considerable that it is not possible to conceive it as a single treatment condition.

A.4.6 Connexions sets out to provide a tailored service for a volatile group of clients aiming for a range of outcomes. For these reasons the realist approach using detailed Context, Mechanism and Outcome configurations is a highly relevant and valuable approach to an evaluation of its impact.

A.4.7 For Connexions, relevant *contextual variation* may include the demographic and labour market conditions of the area, the structures of the Partnership itself and the other policies, benefits, provision and partnership arrangements that surround the service. It may also include the social circumstances of the young person, their own context of family, ability/disability, ethnicity, gender, social class and locality. The context question is about understanding *for which kinds of young people and in what situations does Connexions work best?*

A.4.8 This study came to a view that the relationship between the Personal Adviser and the young person is the main locus for activating the programme mechanisms offered by Connexions. These mechanisms may be activated in the interaction between PA and the client, the choices presented may be picked up and the interventions may become effective in creating change or on the other hand the mechanism might remain inert. The questions are then *what is it about the PA's intervention that made the programme work and also why did Connexions make this difference for this person at this time? What made the relationship with the PA effective with this particular young person and ineffective with that one?*

A.4.9 *Outcomes* are the changes occurring as a result of the Connexions intervention - they are the difference Connexions makes. In this study a core question is *what happened to the young person? This can be seen in two different ways. One way is in terms of the ultimate destination they achieve. The other is in terms of the development they experienced along the way.*

A.4.10 In terms of ultimate destinations, young people may enter training, further education or employment on leaving school. Alternatively they may fail to arrive at any of those destinations and in the usual Connexions terminology they become NEET. Young people may also move between these destinations over time and to capture this movement a longer-term view of destinations is necessary beyond simply monitoring the next step for young

people at the point of leaving school. Outcomes may also be in the form of development along the way. These intermediate outcomes help towards achieving ultimate outcomes and they lessen the risks of various forms of non-achievement. Examples of intermediate outcomes, including the personal development of young people, are described at Section 2. There was relatively little opportunity to follow clients through to final destination given the duration of this inquiry, and in any case even so called ‘final destinations’ can prove transitory. The study therefore concentrated mainly, in theories-of-change fashion, on understanding progress through a range of immediate and intermediate steps.

A.4.11 In terms of the initial theories unpacking the nature of impact, the typology offered by Morgan and Hughes categorising the different purposes of intervention in such programmes was also helpful. They identify three different purposes concerned with prevention, recovery or re-integration. (Morgan and Hughes, 1999) Similar purposes can be seen for the Connexions Service and have been used to inform our analysis, as described above in Section 2.

A.4.12 Another basic conceptualisation that led our inquiry focused on ‘need’. Impact will be achieved through changes in the reasoning and resources of young people that lead to differences in behaviour that will enhance their educability or employability. Section 2 described the nature of Connexions’ impact on young people more fully. It distinguishes impact in four different “areas of need” – the need to know what the Service offers, post-transition needs, personal development, and dealing with risk conditions and problems in life circumstances. PAs can employ a wide range of interventions to address these needs and this may lead to immediate, intermediate or destination outcomes.

A.4.13 *Impact* occurs when the outcomes, whether early, intermediate or ultimate, are changed by the Connexions intervention: that is when a causal relationship can be shown between the Connexions intervention and the outcome. In other words, the core question is *what difference did the work of Connexions actually make to the intermediate outcomes for the young person?* The impact on the outcomes for young people, which arise from the interventions of the Connexions Service, is the primary focus of this study.

A.4.14 This discussion has identified the concepts of contexts, mechanisms, outputs and outcomes, as related to the Connexions Service. The specific hypotheses, which have informed the development of this research, are set out in Appendix D and the conclusions are structured by the methodological themes discussed here.

APPENDIX B - Detailed methodology of Phase 1 and Phase 2

B.1 The Connexions Partnerships in the study

B.1.1 The seven Partnerships in the study were selected as set out below mainly because, with the exception of Nottinghamshire, they were all Phase 1 Partnerships with a period of implementation that might afford a fruitful examination of impact. While there has been a continual need to offer explanation and reassurances at all levels of the Service, these Partnerships were pragmatically able and willing to cooperate with the research, despite the additional demands it presented. In addition, the early negotiations about the choice of Partnership included the design considerations that the sample should include a mix of regions across the country, both rural and urban settings, both populations with substantial minority ethnic communities and more homogeneous populations, and some that were involved in the Education Maintenance Allowance pilots and others which were not part of the pilot.

B.1.2 The seven Partnerships finally selected were:

- The Black Country
- Cheshire and Warrington
- Greater Merseyside
- Lincolnshire and Rutland
- Nottinghamshire
- South Yorkshire
- West of England

B.1.3 A brief outline of the characteristics of each area has been prepared, including its demographic profile and labour market conditions. These profiles are set out at Appendix C. They provide basic contextual information about the seven partnerships to inform the research.

B.2 Young people in the Phase 1 sample - sample characteristics and sample distribution across Partnership areas

B.2.1 At the point of implementation of the new Connexions Service, the Connexions Service National Unit gave guidance to the Connexions Partnerships indicating a pyramid of need and how to categorise priority groups (DfES, July 2001 and October 2001). This informed planning and resource allocation. The first, Priority Group 1 (P1), denotes those facing substantial multiple problems preventing them from engaging with learning, who are likely to be involved with a number of different professionals engaged in education, social welfare, health and housing. It is deemed that these young people need “intensive support”, with PAs to take effective action on their behalf to help them gain access to a range of specialist services and ensure that barriers are addressed in a coordinated way. It would be expected that the PA would maintain contact over a period of time to support progress. This group also includes especially gifted young people.

B.2.2 The second, Priority Group 2 (P2), includes those who are at risk of not participating effectively in education or training, whose aspirations do not relate to their abilities. They may not attend school regularly, have learning difficulties or disabilities or be unlikely to achieve to their full potential. It is assumed that these young people would need in-depth guidance and support to help them address barriers to learning and fulfil their potential.

B.2.3 The third, Priority Group 3 (P3), are deemed to need minimal intervention with general advice and support at key periods where information and guidance are needed on educational and vocational issues to help them make decisions about their future.

B.2.4 The guidance recognises that there are no absolute definitions of the boundaries and that young people move between categories at different points in their lives. Both the definitions and the fluidity of the categories leave the Partnerships with a major task in assessing need and considerable room for variation in judgements about that assessment. Terminology for the priority groups also varies between Partnerships.

B.2.5 Although P1 young people were always seen as a priority, Connexions was also always seen as a universal service - a service for all young people. In development to date, the groups outside of P1 have commanded a higher proportion of resources than originally expected. An impact evaluation which did not include this side of the service would, therefore, not only exclude a significant proportion of the work of Connexions, it would also exclude very large numbers of the young people with whom the service works, a proportion of whom may have become high risk without its support.

B.2.6 The Phase 1 research concentrated on interviews with young people within the Connexions age range (13-19), with the main sample focusing on young people aged 14-15 in the pre-16 compulsory education age group. The samples in the study were created in recognition of the ways in which resources have been used in relation to the different priority groups, the interleaving of P1 and P2, the fluidity of the boundaries and the movement between the two risk categories. The samples were designed to include a balanced focus on both P1 and P2 young people, and the research design enabled movement between P1 and P2 by young people to be examined.

B.3 The scheme for defining the Phase 1 samples

B.3.1 The scheme adopted for defining samples, sub-samples, and their distribution across the seven Partnerships is set out below. The description of the samples was derived from the main research design, amendments which reflected the development of the design, and requests from DfES to extend the scope of the sampling. The extension in scope brought in some additional young people who were NEET and who had had some contact, or who were out of contact, with Connexions. The additions were incorporated into the NEET sample C.

B.3.2 This section describes the characteristics of the main samples and sub-samples; illustrates how the distribution of the sub-samples varies between different areas and shows how the design across the seven areas includes all the sub-samples. The Main Sample (A) of at risk young people includes particular education related risks. The sub-samples pick up status-related risks and behaviour-related risks. The EMA Sample (B) draws out some young people in receipt of EMA in the pilot areas. The NEET Sample (C) includes both young people who are NEET and known to the Connexions Service and young people who are NEET and not in touch with Connexions at all.

B.3.3 The approximate target numbers set out below for each part of the sample are for each of the seven Partnerships. They combined to provide an overall spread across the whole sample of characteristics in terms of different risks, different stages in school and post-school transitions, and the degree of contact with Connexions. Across the sample design, account was also taken of gender and ethnicity.

B.3.4

A. Main sample: At risk category P1 and P2 aged 14 and 15, receiving differing levels of support from Connexions: target number 60.

The main sample and the sub-samples together amount to an original average target of 60 young people per Partnership.

A(i). Core sample

Education related

Core sample a: Young people likely to underachieve

Young people aged 14 or 15 who are not expected to achieve any GCSE A-G grades, or who are identified in other ways as likely to underachieve.

Core sample b: Young people with learning or related difficulties

Young people with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities (LDD), Special Educational Needs (SEN), or who have other literacy or numeracy difficulties.

Core sample c: Young people who refuse or resist schooling

Young people who are permanently or temporarily suspended from school; young people who are not suspended from school but not attending for other reasons; young people who are persistent truants but who are expected to pass some GCSE A-G grades; young people with difficult school relationships who are not in other core or sub samples.

A(ii). Sub-samples

At risk: status related

Sub-sample 1: Young people with parental and caring responsibilities

Pregnant teenagers; teenage parents supporting own children; teenage carers supporting family members or others.

Sub-sample 2: Young people looked after or homeless/no stable accommodation

Young people looked after/in care; planning to leave care; with current or previous significant experience of care; young people who are homeless or with no fixed abode

Sub-sample 3: Young people with poor health or disabilities

Young people with physical or mental health problems; young people with disabilities

Sub-sample 4: Young people who have recently arrived in the U.K. or who have language difficulties

Young people who are recent arrivals, asylum seekers, or refugees; young people whose first language is not English or who have related language difficulties.

At risk: behaviour related

Sub-sample 5: Young people who misuse substances

Young people who are involved in substance misuse or who have been supported in relation to substance misuse, where misuse is seen as a significant risk factor. This includes misuse of drugs, alcohol, volatile substances such as glues and fuels, and other relevant substances.

Sub-sample 6: Young people and offending behaviour

Young people who have been convicted of an offence; young people who are at risk of offending or re-offending; young people who are in trouble with the police.

Sub-sample 7: Young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties

Young people with emotional or behavioural difficulties or disorders, which are seen as significant risk factors.

B.3.5

B. EMA sample: First year of post compulsory education (PCE) aged 16+: target number 20.

Young people in PCE, who have had differing levels of support or involvement in Connexions and who are signed up for Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA).

If EMA was not present in September 2002 in any part of the Partnership area, this sample was transferred to increase the NEET sample.

B.3.6

C. NEET sample

C(i). Main NEET sample: In first year of NEET aged 16+: target number 20

Young people 16+ who finished compulsory education in June 2002 and who are not in education, employment or training, who are known to Connexions, and who have received levels of support ranging from none to intensive.

C(ii). Supplementary NEET sample: Young People who are NEET: target number 15

Young people who are NEET and who have had little or no support from Connexions, who may or may not be known by the Service.

B.3.7 There may be some overlap between the supplementary NEET sample and the main NEET sample, but they have different purposes and the ways in which they were involved in the research differed. The main NEET sample was intended to explore NEET outcomes in relation to variations in Connexions support. The supplementary sample was intended to examine young people who have remained marginal to the Service or who have, for whatever reasons, slipped through the Connexions net altogether, and then become NEET, and to explore how they became NEET and the reasons why no significant relationship with Connexions was established.

B.3.8 All categories of the Phase 1 sample amounted to a target of approximately 700 interviews with young people. Towards the end of Phase 1, this target was reduced by agreement with the DfES to a total of 500, which in the event was somewhat exceeded (573).

B.4 Details of the Phase 1 sample achieved

B.4.1 The analysis of the Phase 1 cohort can be seen chiefly in the various tables set out at Section 4 above. A total of 573 young people were interviewed. Most have characteristics that fall into more than one category of the intended sample characteristics.

B.4.2 To some extent the analysis and categorisation of the risk conditions and behaviours of the young people had to be a judgement on the part of the interviewer. Young people were naturally not always clear about their circumstances or the question may not have been fully dealt with in the interview. A summary table of all interviews achieved in the risk groups throughout the study is set out Table B1 below.

B.4.3 It should be noted that an individual young person may display more than one risk and be counted in more than one category. Individuals who were followed up in Phase 2 are counted once only for each risk that occurs. Overall a sufficient spread of characteristics was achieved to ensure that the needs and characteristics of the identified risk groups were reflected in the Phase 1 sample and further explored in the Phase 2 research.

Table B1
Sample achieved for young people by risk group

Risk group	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
Parent/carer	91	18	109
Looked after/homeless	65	28	93
Disability/health problems	63	19	82
Asylum seeker/refugee	9	7	16
Substance misuse	83	29	112
Offending/at risk of offending	117	33	150
Emotional/behavioural problems	175	29	204
Underachiever	177	43	220
LDD/SEN	96	20	116
School resisting/truancy	169	40	209
NEET	74	42	116

B.5 Issues of defining risk categories

B.5.1 The totals reported in this study for each group or characteristic represent the numbers of young people in each group coded as having that characteristic by the researchers. In some cases this is a reasonably straightforward matter, such as age or gender categories. In all cases, however, these figures should be treated with caution. This is firstly because they are based on the self-reported account given by young people at interview and secondly, because for many of the characteristics of risk, the interviewers had to form judgements from what the young person said about which categorisation was appropriate. The method followed was semi-structured interviewing and the questions were not formulated solely for coding purposes. These definitional problems arose in relation to many of the risk groups, especially in matters of degree. The detailed issues relating to key categories are set out below.

B.5.2 Considerations about the data in relation to SEN/LDD

B.5.2.1 There are many considerations about the interviewing process with young people who fell in the SEN/LDD category and its analysis. Firstly, the young people themselves were often not best placed to recognise their risk status and to tell researchers about it. Sometimes they described experiences of the Connexions process that suggested they had a clear understanding (such as accounts of annual reviews with Connexions and their parents) but even where they did not recall such processes, this could not be taken to mean necessarily that they were not SEN/LDD.

B.5.2.2 Secondly, many of the physical and mental conditions that give rise to SEN/LDD status require sophisticated knowledge, diagnostic ability and/or a long-term relationship with the young person in an educational setting for an accurate categorisation. Researchers met none of these conditions in the first phase of the study, basing their judgements on a single interview. As a result,

it is perfectly possible that the numbers with SEN/LDD in the sample are underestimated.

B.5.2.3 Thirdly, some of the young people selected with SEN/LDD had severe associated communication impediments (due to cerebral palsy, a range of conditions in the autistic spectrum etc.) that complicated the exchange with the research team. Eliciting appropriate information in order to assess the impact of Connexions in their lives was problematic. Telephone contacts were a particular difficulty and a number of parents were sensitive about the capacity of their children to cope with the interview situation.

B.5.2.4 These issues were recognised during the first phase of the study. To improve the quality of information gathered in the second phase, the research team focussed their interviews with young people within schools, colleges, or training provision, so that they were able to speak to the staff concerned, better understand the roles of various professionals in relation to the young person and develop a greater understanding of some of the information provided by the young people.

B.5.3 Considerations about the data in relation to substance misuse

B.5.3.1 The question of whether the young person was using, misusing or not using substances could not always be easily answered. Such an answer was needed, however, in order to relate the apparent needs of the young person to the help available through Connexions. The judgement about categorisation had to be made by the research team and was sometimes not in line with the young person's perception of their situation or, which is of even greater significance, how the young person's needs were perceived by their PA.

B.5.3.2 PAs were generally uncomfortable with the idea of identifying "substance misusers", on the grounds that definitive categorising of young people into risk groups was not always possible, or that use of substances did not necessarily mean "misuse". Therefore, even in the case of referrals from PAs, the research team was often unaware of the detailed situation of the young person, or indeed whether they were within the risk category at all. Further, and unsurprisingly, given the problems surrounding assessment, in some cases the young person's status could not be determined beyond dispute even after a research interview with the young person.

B.5.3.3 In making an assessment, the research team had to rely chiefly on information the young person disclosed during the interview. Young people were not always in the position to distinguish between substance use and misuse and this made the categorising of individual cases for statistical purposes very difficult. In particular, these difficulties are reflected in the fact that there was not always a correlation between whether the young person admitted to using substances in the interview, and whether they were classified as a substance "misuser" by the researchers. "Use" was not necessarily interpreted as "misuse" by the research team: nor would their judgements necessarily have coincided with those of PAs, teachers or youth

workers concerned with the young person. All distinctions made by the research team, who were not skilled in making professional assessments, were, therefore, impressionistic in nature and no claim is made here for the validity of such distinctions. In deciding how to categorise each young person's situation, the research team was taking into consideration such criteria as frequency of use, amount of substances, and the young person's perception of these, in the light of the Health Advisory Service guidelines. As a matter of principle, therefore, these categorisations should not be seen in either moral or definitive terms. This simply confirms and illuminates the difficulties faced by PAs, who are not drug treatment experts and are often solely reliant on young people's own disclosure and perceptions of their risk situation, in assessing the needs of young people who use drugs.

B.5.4 Considerations about the data in relation to young offenders

B.5.4.1 Our data on young offenders are likely to have been influenced by a number of factors. First, young people's agreement to take part may indicate that these young people were more engaged with the helping services or that they felt more confident to talk in an interview situation than other young people. It seems likely that the most disengaged individuals would either not be in contact with services or would have chosen not to participate in the research. Some PAs also suggested that it would not be appropriate to interview certain individuals because of the young person's circumstances at the time.

B.5.4.2 Second, our data include only those young people who chose to acknowledge their offences. During the interviews several young people indicated that they had been in trouble with the police but did not want to give details. Reasons for this included embarrassment, saying that they had moved on from that time in their life or just not wanting to discuss it; making comments like "*Next question*" or "*I'm not telling you*". It is also possible that some had been in trouble with the police but chose not to disclose it at all. Clearly, this places limitations on our data and means that numbers of young offenders in the dataset may be underestimated. It is much less likely that young people invented offences and inflated the figures.

B.5.4.3 Many young people admitted to offending behaviours but had either not been arrested or had received a warning. These were not classed as "young offenders" in the data but were recorded as "at risk of offending" and clearly had similar offending related needs. It may also have been the case that the young person's PA was unaware of their offending.

B.5.4.4 Finally, in relation to understanding the nature of interventions, many young people were unable to say from which organisation an adult worker came, and this seemed to be particularly relevant for young offenders who often had several workers involved in their lives. This made it difficult for the researchers to distinguish between the different agencies and interventions involved.

B.5.5 Considerations about the data in relation to asylum seekers and refugees

B.5.5.1 As discussed at Section 6, some young asylum seekers may be suspicious of research and its purposes (particularly if they are in a state of uncertainty about their status in the UK during the asylum seeking process). This had implications for conducting interviews with the risk group. Despite the best efforts of the researchers to explain the research study, many of the young people showed signs of confusion during the interviewing process, not fully understanding the purpose of our interview questions. This suspicion of the research and in particular its potential links with other government departments such as the Home Office, clearly influenced the interview data by making some of the interviewees appear defensive and reluctant to answer some of our questions. Interview data therefore often lacked the detail that was gained in the interviews with the other risk groups.

B.5.5.2 Communication during the interviews also proved to be difficult. In many cases, the English language skills of the young asylum seekers and refugees were quite poor and this made asking all but the most basic of questions very difficult. In other cases, whilst comprehension of English was good, young people found it difficult to articulate their answers back to the researchers. In some cases, also, translators were used to assist with the interview process.

B.5.5.3 The interviews conducted with Connexions Personal Advisers and other adult workers from organisations working directly with the interviewees proved an effective strategy for improving the quality of the data and providing a supplementary context to the young people's answers. All interviews also took place in the setting through which the young people were contacted, therefore allowing the interviewees to feel safe in familiar environments and also allowing the research team to form a better understanding of how Connexions was contacting this group.

B.5.5.4 There were particular difficulties in contacting this risk group. Firstly, the initial contact lists, provided by the seven Connexions partnerships involved in the research, did not have any contacts for young asylum seekers and refugees. Secondly, when we approached Connexions managers, team leaders and PAs to provide us with contacts for young asylum seekers and refugees, many were unable to do so, saying that they had no young people from these groups on their caseloads. Thirdly, many of the local agencies said that the young people would not be willing to talk to us. Unfamiliarity with research (and its purposes) along with lack of English became recurring reasons given to us for the difficulties in contacting this risk group.

B.6 Sampling by risk level

B.6.1 It should be noted that one change made to the original sampling procedure was that sampling was to be based on risk level but not on the level of support provided by Connexions. The intention was to ensure that the interviewed samples contained young people distributed across different

support levels. Generally, the focus was on young people assessed as P1 or P2, who may have received minimal, intermediate or intensive support (the actual terms used may vary). This change was introduced because it cannot be assumed that if the Connexions Partnership defines a client on their database as P1 or P2, the young person will automatically be receiving intensive support or even will necessarily be in touch with the Service. When sampled by risk alone the distribution of support levels found in the lists and in the interviewed samples should therefore probably reflect the general pattern of contact with P1 and P2 young people for the Partnership as a whole. The sample will not be focused solely on the more intensively supported young people.

B.7 Distribution and interlocking of samples and sub-samples

B.7.1 The core samples for Phase 1 were included in all Partnership areas. In addition, three sub-samples were included in each Partnership area. The sub-samples were distributed across the seven areas so as to ensure that the different sub-samples received adequate coverage in the design as a whole. In addition to the samples shown, each Partnership area also contained an EMA sample, if applicable, and the main and supplementary NEET samples.

B.7.2 The “in principle” distribution across Connexions Partnership areas provided notional totals. Even with the over-sampling employed, in practice, it was not always possible to obtain exact numbers of contacts with young people in each group or their consent to be interviewed. The researchers did not know what they were going to encounter in the interview and risk factors were often impossible to gauge until well on in the interview process. Moreover, in reality a number of different risk characteristics were often overlapping in a young person’s life.

B.7.3 The choice of sub-samples for the different Partnership areas was determined with regard to the prevalence of the “at risk” condition in the Partnership area, the extent to which the Partnership had responded in terms of support for particular groups and the need to achieve a balance across the seven areas.

B.7.4 The samples were concentrated in each area in two different ways. Firstly, all areas identified geographical catchments within the boundaries of the Partnership to make interviewing more practicable and to pick up particular characteristics such as rural deprivation. Secondly, the sub-samples listed above were selected according to the nature of the youth population and any special initiatives the Partnership had used to reach at risk groups. The details of how samples were concentrated in each Partnership area are set out in Appendix C.

B.8 Identifying, contacting and interviewing young people for Phase 1

B.8.1 To identify young people for inclusion in the samples initially, the Partnerships were asked to provide lists of young people known to them, and having risk level P1 or P2. The database samples provided by each

Partnership were the primary source of contacts with young people during the early part of the Phase 1 research.

B.8.2 The Connexions Services sent out initial letters to the young people on the database lists inviting participation or opt-out. For those under 16, a letter was also sent to the parents or carers. If the young person did not opt out, they were contacted again, normally by phone, and if they were still prepared to participate, a time and place for the interview was agreed.

B.8.3 At the request of the Department, for those under 16, the letters to parents and young people invited the parent or carer to be present in the home or in the interview itself. It can be assumed that if an interview was agreed, the young people under 16 had agreed to this condition or had been instructed to do so by their parent or carer. Interviews also took place in hostels, schools, training schemes and public venues such as libraries or youth clubs. At the start of each interview the process was fully explained, a written summary was provided and the young person was asked to sign giving their informed consent. They were also given a leaflet with information about how to contact Connexions or other helping agencies if they wanted further support.

B.8.4 The issues of obtaining informed consent and of maintaining confidentiality have been given priority throughout the study. It should be noted that where names or details have been included in the body of the report, pseudonyms have been used and details have been anonymised.

B.8.5 In practice, difficulties in gaining interviews with the target group emerged during the early phases of the research. In view of this, additional measures were introduced to improve contact and interview rates with young people. The Chief Executives of the Partnerships were kept informed of progress and there was local negotiation about the most appropriate approaches in each area. Team managers were also made aware of the potential approaches to young people or to PAs. A continuous process was needed of explaining the study to the staff of the Service at all levels.

B.8.6 One main problem in relation to gaining access to interviewees lay in the use of the database lists for sampling. Interviewing started in April 2003. The start had been considerably delayed amongst other things by the time taken by the Partnerships to draw up the sample lists and complete the opt-out procedure. The problems with the sample lists then received from the Connexions Partnerships centred mainly around the accuracy and completeness of the lists. For example, contact details such as phone numbers might be missing, incomplete or incorrect. In some cases addresses were found to be incorrect but since follow up letters produced no response, there is no evidence on the degree to which this applied throughout the samples. Out of a total of 771 from all lists provided, 443 could not be contacted (57%). This includes those who failed to reply to repeated messages left with relatives or on the answer phone. A very small number of those referred by the PAs were similarly not contactable because of incorrect details. Further problems with the sample lists concerned the allocated risk

category and the extent of the contact with Connexions, as in some cases it was difficult to discern why the young people had been categorised as P1 or P2 and substantial numbers had very little contact with Connexions.

B.8.7 During May and June 2003, the Project Management Group and the Project Steering Group considered proposals to rebalance the approach to sample creation, relying less heavily on the database samples from the Partnerships and drawing more on other sources such as Personal Advisers, youth and community workers and other agencies working with young people. Limited interviewing in schools was also introduced. It is evident that this approach did improve the rate of achieved interviews, though it took some considerable time to build up the right contacts in some areas. This was a continuing process throughout the study to identify and build relationships with key individuals in the Connexions Service and other partner agencies.

B.8.8 In addition, after the first few months of the study, the young people were offered a small in-kind incentive to encourage their participation, in the shape of a token given or sent after they attended interview to the value of £10, for a commercial outlet or service agreed with the Connexions Partnership in question. (Those interviewed in the early stages were sent the token retrospectively.) Researchers reported that this incentive improved the interview rate.

B.8.9 The second main problem of access to interviewees was the number of young people who refused to be interviewed. This was high but understandable in view of the intensive nature of the interviews and their length. The vast majority of these cases (95 or 12% of the total sample list) who declined to arrange an interview in response to an individual contact were from the database lists. There were some specific reasons for refusal at times (such as exams, going on holiday or a family bereavement) but it would seem that the majority of those who refused an interview just did not want to get involved. The most common reasons given for refusal followed similar lines, such as, "*I'm not interested.*" or, "*I am too busy.*" or simply putting the 'phone down. In addition, some parents/carers refused to allow the young person to participate in an interview, a few of whom were concerned about the capacity of a young person with a disability or learning difficulties to respond to the interview. A number of young people also agreed an interview appointment and simply did not arrive for the meeting, without any prior notice or information as to the reason, requiring rearrangement or replacement with another contact.

B.8.10 Overall, contacting young people through groups in youth related agencies was far more productive of achieved interviews. This method avoided the problem of incorrect contact details or non-response to messages and in many cases, the young people had already met the researchers informally. In most situations, proportionately fewer young people refused to participate if they met the interviewers through group situations. It was also easier to identify particular target groups of young people at risk by this method. The support of the teacher or worker concerned also assisted in

building up trust. Once the researchers gained access to groups in this way, the logistics of setting up the interviews were easier and less time consuming.

B.8.11 The additional measures agreed to supplement the database lists included identifying young people through PAs and other youth related agencies (e.g. Youth Service, Youth Offending Teams, voluntary sector projects, health projects, leaving care teams, foyers). Some contacts were made through the young interviewees themselves (snowballing). A balance was sought, avoiding approaches solely through Personal Advisers because of the possibility of bias creeping in. It has been made clear throughout that the research was not looking simply for “success stories” but also for the challenges for service delivery, so as to try to identify what aspects of the situation affect the likelihood of a positive impact.

B.8.12 The interviews themselves followed a qualitative and semi-structured format, with the researchers working in pairs gathering certain basic data about the background of the individual and progressing to questions about how they had experienced their contact (if any) with the Connexions Service. The interviewers were free to follow lines of discussion as they presented themselves with the aim of making the interview develop a conversational style, picking up on the young person’s situation and perceptions. Unless the young interviewee requested otherwise (2 cases in Phase 1), the interviews with young people were digitally recorded and indexed for a central archive. A very small number of interviews were not recorded either because of technical failure or because it was a telephone interview. Generally, interviews lasted between 40 minutes and 1 hour.

B.8.13 One small group interview took place in Phase 1 (asylum seekers) and two more were undertaken in Phase 2 (NEET), where it was necessary to use a group approach to achieve access.

B.8.14 The interviews have succeeded in gaining an in-depth insight into the experiences of the young people and the issues they face in their daily lives. Many are extraordinarily moving as young people recount the multiple difficulties they have faced, the set backs they have encountered and their perceptions of the efforts to help or all too often the lack of support available. They have provided a very rich vein of qualitative information.

B.9 Initial discussions with Service Managers and Personal Advisers

B.9.1 In each Connexions Partnership, some Personal Advisers were interviewed during Phase 1, giving a total of 65 PA interviews. Many discussions also took place with the local Partnership managers in the course of setting up the study. The Chief Executive and the Divisional Managers or former Divisional Managers from CSNU were also interviewed (6 interviews.) The purpose of this part of the research was not to examine interventions with individual cases but to gain some understanding of the operational issues affecting the service and to gather early indications of practitioner “theories” about “what works”. The findings from these interviews and the service

issues they point up are discussed in Section 3 above. The points raised were also used to inform the hypotheses used in the first phase analysis.

B.10 The Phase 2 research methodology

B.10.1 The second phase of the research was more diversified. The core of the design was a sharper focus on the Connexions process. This, essentially, is the process by which young people come into contact with Connexions, are engaged by it, in which assessments are made, support provided and impact achieved. The diagram in Section 3 above sets out the various stages of this process. From the work in Phase 1, it was clear that young people make their way through this process in different ways, their experience of Connexions differs, and different types and levels of impact are achieved. It was also evident that how the process worked in practice often differed from the formal models and procedures in service guidance. The two key contextual parameters appeared to be the setting in which delivery takes place, and the model of PA deployment used in that setting.

B.10.2 The basic design was developed around these four factors - the Connexions process, how different groups and sub-groups of young people experience it, and how this is influenced by setting and staff deployment. The overall research design used different combinations of setting and deployment, and examined how the Connexions process works in practice in these different arrangements and for different groups of young people. This went some way towards a design appropriate for examining “what works, for whom, and under what circumstances.” The research design also enabled attention to two major concerns emerging from Phase 1, namely the continuities and discontinuities in the Connexions process, and the matching of support to need.

B.10.3 The settings in which Connexions provision is offered were shared amongst the research team and explored in particular examples, concentrating on:

- schools, colleges and training providers, including LDD/SEN in special schools;
- multi-agency teams;
- Connexions centres and shops;
- outreach settings;
- statutory and voluntary youth organisations;
- specialist agencies.

B.10.4 The aim was to examine at least 18 different settings, allowing comparisons of different arrangements, protocols, partnership arrangements and PA deployment and focusing particularly on good practice. In practice, over the course of the study a much larger number of settings were visited as set out in Table B2. For this purpose each setting visited was counted once, regardless of the number of visits. It should also be noted that interviews were also carried out in young people’s homes, and public venues such as

libraries, parks and cafés. Information was also gathered about settings from individuals outside those particular venues.

Table B2 Coverage of settings		No visited in Phase 1	No visited in Phase 2	Total visited
Secondary Schools		15	9	24
Special Schools		3	4	7
Alternative Education		3	6	9
Training providers	(including E2E)	11	4	15
FE Colleges		5	2	7
Specialist agencies	Foyers; hostels; young parents' groups; DATs; drug treatment; YOTs; YOI; offender orgs; leaving care; Jobcentre etc.	15	23	48
Yth.clubs/projects	(All youth clubs, projects, outreach and drop-in centres both voluntary sector and Youth Service.)	15	13	28
Connexions Shops & Centres		17	16	33

B.10.5 The models for reaching and working with particular groups of young people at risk were also examined, concentrating on:

- young people at risk or underachieving in mainstream education and training, especially LDD/SEN and school resisters and truants;
- young parents and carers;
- young people looked after or homeless;
- asylum seekers and refugees;
- young offenders;
- substance misusers;
- NEET, both in contact with Connexions and with no contact.

The total interview numbers for young people in Phase 2 are included at Table B1 above.

B.10.6 As in Phase 1, the early work included interviews with PAs and their managers to elicit their views about effective methods of work that might increase impact with young people at risk and what approaches and needs should be considered in relation to particular risk groups. Specific hypotheses were formulated about what increases impact with different groups and the influence of settings and processes. The hypotheses and a description of the process of refining them are set out at Appendix D.

B.10.7 In Phase 1, the majority of the data collected was from interviews with young people themselves. These data are qualitatively rich in terms of young people's perceptions but are often limited in terms of the light they can shed on the Connexions process, the institutional arrangements or the interventions used. Young people often did not fully understand or remember what happened in their encounter with Connexions and theirs was only one, albeit important, viewpoint on what was intended and its outcome. In Phase 2, the research design broadened the sources of data. This was a response in particular to the emerging need to fill in the picture in more detail, both in general terms and in respect of certain individual cases. Several variations were introduced in the data collection to meet this need, namely: follow-up interviews with young people from the first phase to trace progress and contact over a period; more interviews with adults from Connexions and other agencies to gain a general understanding of the processes at work; a number of interviews with adults who had worked with particular young people to seek some triangulation of the data; and further exploration of management and administrative data.

B.10.8 The interviews for triangulation of specific cases were the most difficult to achieve, partly because of the practical difficulties of finding the relevant adults and also because many of the respondents had anxieties about confidentiality or about offering more detailed explanations of their actions and methods. The young people were asked to give their permission for the adults concerned to discuss their case and for access to documents such as their Action Plan (if available.) Adults were only asked to give an interview when that permission was in place and clear reassurances were given that while the separate perceptions would be gathered, no information given in one interview would be passed to the adult worker about the young person or vice versa. The purpose of the methodology was to see how the Connexions process worked from different standpoints and to understand the reasoning behind the choices of interventions. It afforded not only the PA viewpoint but also the perspective of workers in partner agencies. It was neither to check up on the accuracy of statements given by the young person nor to disclose information gathered in confidential interview about them. In some cases, the young person and the worker were very happy to discuss their situation together and allow the interviewers full access to documentation. The majority of workers found the process more difficult even in the knowledge that young people had given their permission. This may reflect the fact that some issues such as drug misuse are particularly sensitive but may also be an indication of how rarely workers have to articulate their thinking and interventions with individual cases: a point which may have significant implications for training and supervision as well as for this study.

B.10.9 Most of the face-to-face interviews with young people and adults in Phase 2 were again digitally recorded. A small number were not recorded for the reasons stated above at B.8.12. A similar interview format was used of semi-structured questioning, normally with two interviewers. Nine adults refused to be taped at interview in Phase 2 but no young people. This appeared to be mainly occasioned by anxiety or by hostility to research in general. A few of the interviews were not coded and do not feature in the

statistical data provided in the study. This was either because they were interviewed in a small group, or in a brief telephone interview or in a short discussion to follow up particular points.

B.10.10 Interviews were further supplemented by examination of administrative data and by observation in order to understand further the processes at work and to triangulate more fully. Such sources included:

- Connexions records (by negotiation);
- Service plans;
- Notes of meetings with service managers;
- Inter-agency protocols;
- Partnership agreements;
- Individual action plans;
- Observation in informal settings e.g. youth club or voluntary organisation.

6.10.11 The purpose of using such administrative data and management information was firstly, to increase the understanding of Connexions processes such as the use of assessment systems or protocols. Secondly, it was used to seek corroboration of the other sources of evidence. If researchers are describing the situation correctly from the qualitative and internal cohort data, it should leave a "footprint" or "signature" elsewhere. To give a simple example, if it is argued that a number of young people are lost to the Connexions system because they drop out after first contact, it would be expected that the Connexions management information or administrative records might in some way confirm that. This is not to argue a causal link. Macro data can only be contextual information and there are too many variables to allow for control groups or full comparisons. The evidence should, however, point in the right direction. It should confirm and corroborate. Wherever possible administrative data of this type were sought to compare with the trends emerging from the qualitative data.

B.11 The Phase 2 interview sample and data collection

B.11.1 The targets for the Phase 2 sample, in terms of interviews, were as follows:

- 175 follow up interviews of the original Phase 1 sample (25 in each Partnership, including both 2nd and 3rd interviews); these were predominantly face-to-face or but in some cases were carried out by telephone.
- 189 interviews of adults in the Connexions process (27 interviews in each Partnership from amongst PAs, managers, teachers, parents, youth workers etc); firstly, to develop theories/ hypotheses about "what works" in different settings and groups and secondly, to develop a triangulated picture about the Connexions process in general terms. Again, these were mainly face-to-face interviews but could be by telephone.
- 77 new interviews of young people in the risk groups above, or second

- intensive interviews from Phase 1 interviewees (11 in each Partnership).
- 154 interviews of two adults, normally including the PA concerned, for each of these 77 young people for specific triangulation on the processes and outcomes in their case (a target of 22 in each Partnership). Where this could not be achieved, perhaps because of lack of cooperation from agencies or individuals or difficulties in tracing the relevant professionals, then interviews of other adults not particularly connected to the 77 individual young people above could be substituted.
 - 30 interviews of young people who were currently NEET, both in contact with Connexions and not in contact with the Service. This could be either in a small group or an individual interview.

The total interview target for Phase 2 was therefore 625, including both young people and adults. In the event, this total was exceeded (655).

B.12 The total interview sample achieved

B.12.1 In the event, an overall total of 1299 interviews was conducted across both phases of the research as shown at Table B3. Interview data were coded for 843 of the young people (with the second interview for those who were followed up) and 372 adults (Phase 2) for statistical purposes.

Table B3	Phase 1	Phase 2	Total
Total interviews			
Young people – Phase 1	573		573
Of whom, young people – followed up		161	161
New young people interviewed in Phase 2		89	89
Young people – NEET Phase 2		32	32
PAs and other adults	65	372	437
Managers at DfES	6	1	7
Total	644	655	1299

B.12.2 Those young people from the Phase 1 cohort who were interviewed a second time for follow up purposes had already been categorised in terms of risk and while their situation might have changed somewhat by the second interview, this did not substantially alter the proportions of young people at risk in the samples overall. The interviews with new young people did however add somewhat to the coverage of risk groups for the whole study. The total numbers in each risk group in both phases are set out at Table B1 above.

B.13 The role of the peer researchers

B.13.1 One particular feature of the research methodology was that it involved a small panel of peer researchers in each Partnership area to enable young people themselves to contribute their own perspective to the research

design and progress. The young people were brought together for training as a united team across the study and were offered both a small payment. A number of these young people used their involvement in the research as evidence in support of an Open College Network (OCN) qualification, which was designed specifically to accredit their contribution to this project. The young people helped the research team with local knowledge and offered important feedback on several key aspects of the work.

- Commenting on aspects of the research design and materials, especially “theories” about what works and how Connexions affects the different sub-groups of young people.
- Commenting on characteristics of their area and how to operationalise the research design in that context.
- Commenting from their own perspective on how Connexions was marketed, branded and presented in their area.
- Acting as a reference group offering insight in relation to the area and its youth population, local issues and sub-cultures, and commenting on the emerging research conclusions.

B.13.2 It was no easy task to keep in touch with young people across the seven regions and as is usually the case with youth participation approaches, some of the young people dropped out of involvement because of pressures in the family or in school, took up new courses or jobs or lost interest. The process of offering them accreditation was also time consuming. Philosophically the participation of young people in research was something that the team wished to model and the effort has been instructive in understanding first hand the problems of keeping in touch with mobile adolescents and the difficulties in sustaining their long term commitment to involvement and learning – all problems which face the Connexions Service on a daily basis.

B.13.3 Notwithstanding the practical difficulties of the approach, a number maintained their commitment throughout the programme and several other young people were also involved in the research at various points. Their insights are reflected in the findings, especially on the issues of how Connexions is publicised and explained to young people.

B.14 Methods of analysis

B.14.1 The majority of the analysis was qualitative examination of the recorded interviews. The researchers were looking for evidence for or against the hypotheses and identifying examples of some of the particular themes emerging in the study such as trust, orientation, or how the PA/ young person relationship was experienced. A summary sheet was compiled of the main issues arising in each interview.

B.14.2 In addition, each young person interview was coded for demographic characteristics and for a number of key questions, such as the level of contact with a PA or employment/education status.

B.14.3 The adult interviews in Phase 2 were similarly coded on selected issues such as whether or not they were a Connexions PA or from another agency or previous professional background and training.

B.14.4 In order to understand the characteristics and patterns in this large body of interviews, the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyse trends within the cohort. The tables in the report result from such analysis.

B.14.5 It should be specifically understood that there is no claim in this study to statistical significance. The samples are neither random nor representative and therefore statistical generalisations cannot be made from the findings about the population as a whole. The figures can however be validly applied to look at overall patterns or compare different groups within the cohort.

B.14.6 The majority of the interviews were digitally recorded but were not fully transcribed. However, a small number of interviews from Phase 2 were selected and transcribed in full. These were chiefly from the triangulation interviews, selected on a judgement that they were examples of a high level of positive impact and/or good partnership working, or dissonance in partnership arrangements. They also illustrate how the different parties to the PA relationship may have very similar or quite different interpretations and perceptions about how it is working or should work.

B.15 Limitations of the design and methodology

B.15.1 All research studies are designed to answer certain types of questions. They can answer the questions they were designed to investigate but not others, which lie outside the scope of the enquiry. It is important to recognise the limitations, which follow from the design of this study.

B.15.2 This is primarily a qualitative study, drawing on other data as appropriate. Realist evaluation seeks evidence from a variety of sources including qualitative, quantitative and administrative data. This study uses the insights drawn from intensive interviews with young people and staff of Connexions to explain causally how impacts are achieved, the processes which produce them, and the contexts in which they occur. It seeks to unpack the realist questions of what works, for whom and under what circumstances. This design does not use control groups from outside of Connexions in order to explain impact through inference, but looks instead for causal relationships through the work processes of Connexions.

B.15.3 The sampling of young people has been purposive rather than random and focused on smaller rather than larger samples. For these reasons, as explained above, the samples cannot be seen as statistically representative of any given population. The sample should nevertheless be sufficient to produce “practically adequate” explanations about their experience of Connexions and comparisons between groups within the sample.

B.15.4 This study was not designed to be a full process evaluation. It can identify ways in which organisational arrangements or aspects of service structures influence impact with young people but it did not set out to be a process audit. Comments on matters such as the institutional arrangements for partnership working or for exchange of data between agencies or for use in assessment procedures are drawn from the qualitative interviews of clients and staff. They are not the result of systematic audits of processes at work in the Connexions Partnerships although at certain points the work processes of Connexions were examined in order to explain their influence on patterns of impact. (See also Appendix A.)

B.16 The application of a realist approach

B.16.1 The study has sought to apply the main elements of a realist approach to evaluation.

- It has taken a developmental path from the first to the second phase.
- It has to a certain extent been able to test hypotheses at each stage.
- It has involved the stakeholders, practitioners and clients in creating an understanding of how the Connexions process works.
- It has drawn upon different research methods and different forms and sources of data.
- It makes comparisons between sub-groups and different locations to identify what is working effectively and for whom.
- It has looked for the “triggers” that activate the successful working of the programme and the conditions that inhibit the activation of its mechanisms.
- It has not sought a summative verdict on success or failure of Connexions but rather to explain how it might be improved to work more effectively.

B.16.2 The changes to this piece of work from a qualitative *and* quantitative study to one which was primarily qualitative, within a realist approach, were made after the initial design work had been completed. Ideally more time would have been spent at the beginning of the research on eliciting theories and developing testable hypotheses before finalising the early design. Nevertheless the data have already yielded substantial insight into the work of Connexions and a rich archive source has been created for potential future work.

Appendix C - The Partnership areas and focusing the samples within those areas

C.1 The choice of the Partnerships

C.1.1 All the Partnerships selected for this study, with the exception of Nottinghamshire, commenced implementation in Phase 1 from April 2001. Nottinghamshire is a Phase 2 Partnership and began its implementation in December 2001. The Partnerships were selected by the Department for Education and Skills from the early phases of implementation to allow for the maximum length of time for impact to be felt and for pragmatic reasons of capacity and willingness to be involved in the research. A brief outline of the characteristics of each area follows below and the sampling focus for the study within them is also set out for each one.

C.2 The Black Country

C.2.1 The demographic profile

C.2.1.1 The Black Country is located in the centre of the West Midlands, consisting of the four metropolitan boroughs: Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and the City of Wolverhampton. The four local authorities operate separately; though recently there have been increasing examples of Black Country collaboration taking place. The strategic and delivery structures within the Black Country reflect a four-area approach. The two boroughs selected for the Connexions Impact Study were Sandwell and Wolverhampton. The reasons for this selection are highlighted in the following borough profiles.

C.2.1.2 Wolverhampton had a total population of 236,582 at the Census in 2001, and a 13-19 year old population of 21,877. Wolverhampton accounts for the smallest population of the four Black Country boroughs. 16% of the population in Wolverhampton are from minority ethnic communities, with a significant number belonging to the African Caribbean ethnic group. Wolverhampton also has a growing number of asylum seekers and a traveller community. Wolverhampton has 1,200 asylum seekers, which is the highest representation amongst the four boroughs (National Statistics on Line). 41% of the population in Wolverhampton live in wards ranked amongst the most deprived 10% in the country (Index of Deprivation, 2000³).

C.2.1.3 The borough of Sandwell had a total population of 282,904 at the 2001 Census and a cohort of 13-19 year olds numbering 24,979. The number of asylum seekers in Sandwell is 170, which is the smallest figure for the four boroughs⁴.

C.2.1.4 Sandwell is the most densely populated borough in the Black Country, but like other areas in the West Midlands, has experienced a net depopulation in the 10 years prior to 2001. The 2001 resident population of

³ Patterns of Deprivation in the West Midlands

⁴ *ibid.*

just over 282,900 represents a decrease of over 7,000 since the 1991 population of 290,090⁵. Within Sandwell, the Soho and Victoria ward is in the 100 most deprived wards in England (92nd), with several other wards in the borough being clustered near the top of the list⁶. 46% of the population in Sandwell live in wards ranked amongst the most deprived 10% in the country (Index of Deprivation, 2000⁷)

C.2.2 Employment and the local economy

C.2.2.1 Employment in the Black Country sub-region falls into four broad sectors, which account for four fifths of all employment (manufacturing: distribution, hotels and restaurants: public administration, education & health: banking, finance and insurance). Employment throughout the region as a whole is divided between the sectors as follows:

Employment Sectors (Nov 2002)⁸

Manufacturing 23.9%

Distribution, Hotels & Restaurants 21.0%

Public Administration, Education & Health 23.3%

Banking/Finance & Insurance 11.4%

C.2.2.2 In Wolverhampton, the average unemployment rate is 7.6% as compared to 5.2% throughout Great Britain. The rates for males and females throughout the area are 8.1% and 7% respectively (Source: local area labour force survey Mar 2002-Feb 2003). In the Blakenhall ward, unemployment is at 13.9%⁹. Whilst the majority of both men and women employed in Wolverhampton are in fulltime positions, the percentage differs significantly between the sexes (88.6% men / 54.7% women). The number of male full-time jobs has decreased by 8% since 1999, whilst male part-time positions rose by 18%. The largest employment sector was 'Public Administration, Education and Health'. This accounted for over 1 in 4 local jobs and had risen by 7.5% (nearly 2,000 positions) since 1999. Over a third (36%) of female full-time jobs were in this sector. This contrasts with just over a tenth (12%) of male full-time jobs. The largest proportion of male full-time jobs (34%) was in manufacturing, however the total number of manufacturing jobs fell by 22.6% (over 6,000 positions) from 1999¹⁰.

C.2.2.3 In Sandwell, in 2003, unemployment stood at 8.7%, 10.5% for males and figures unavailable for females (Source: local area labour force survey Mar 2002-Feb 2003). In the Soho and Victoria ward, unemployment was at 20.3%.

Sandwell's economy continues to be disproportionately reliant on the manufacturing sector, particularly metal manufacturing, and on medium sized

⁵ Sandwell Website: Population and Households, 2001 Census

⁶ Index of Multiple Deprivation, 2000

⁷ Patterns of Deprivation in the West Midlands

⁸ 'Quick Guide to the Sub Region' January 2003

⁹ Nomis

¹⁰ Wolverhampton Council Information and Research Briefing June 2003

firms. However, the number of jobs in the area rose significantly during the 1990's, mainly as the result of increases in service sector employment. Sandwell has the 8th highest proportion of long-term unemployed out of the 36 metropolitan districts outside London¹¹.

C.2.3 Education and achievement

C.2.3.1 According to the Wolverhampton LEA Inspection Report, May 2004, Standards of attainment in the schools across the local education authority (LEA) are below average overall. In 2003, performance in the three core subjects at Key Stages 1, 2 and 3 and for students achieving one or more A*-G grades in the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE), were all below national averages. The performance at five or more A*-C grades in the GCSE improved and was in line with the national average. When compared to statistical neighbours, schools consistently perform at least in line and or better across Key Stages 3 and 4, with a varied picture across Key Stages 1 and 2. DfES figures show that in 2001/2002, there were 10 permanent exclusions throughout Wolverhampton, and the same number again in 2002/3¹²

C.2.3.2 According to the Sandwell LEA Inspection Report July 2002, standards remain below national and statistical neighbour averages in all Key Stages. The Council and the recently restructured Education and Lifelong Learning Department recognise this and are striving in partnership with schools to raise aspirations and expectations. The last two years (2000-2003) have seen attainment improve more quickly than the national rate for 11 and 16 year olds. DfES figures show that in 2001/2002, there were 10 permanent exclusions throughout Sandwell, increasing to 80 in 2002/3¹³.

C.2.4 Youth provision

C.2.4.1 Wolverhampton has established a Children and Young People's Strategic Partnership, which represents key agencies such as Connexions, Sure Start and the Children's Fund, plus agencies within the voluntary sector¹⁴.

C.2.4.2 Via the Wolverhampton Council website, there are links to various local youth clubs, to their Community, Play and Youth site and to *Streetwise* 'the essential guide for all young people' published by Wolverhampton City Council. This magazine available in print or on-line includes details of Youth Services (including Connexions); Leisure and Recreation; Education; Employment, Training and Unemployment; Benefits and so on.

C.2.4.3 Wolverhampton council also is involved in initiatives such as their partnership with Health services. The Wolverhampton HAZ website (Health Action Zone: Promoting the Social Inclusion of Young People) deals with

¹¹ Sandwell Trends

¹² DfES

¹³ DfES

¹⁴ Children and Young People in Wolverhampton: A Strategy for Interagency Working

issues such as Teenage Pregnancy, Housing, Work in Schools, Mentoring, Ethnic Minorities. Links are provided to various projects and organisations (e.g. 'Supporting Young Dads'), or contact details for agencies to approach for advice¹⁵.

C.2.4.4 The most popular advice and support centre for young people in Wolverhampton is Base25. This organisation aims to offer young people up to the age of 25 advice on health, benefits, jobs and training etc through trained advisers or a drop in facility.

C.2.4.5 Community and Youth Services in Sandwell, managed by Education and Lifelong learning, are organised on a six-town basis, which aims to provide a range of neighbourhood community work within each "town". This includes a network of Youth Clubs, School Based Clubs, Detached Youth Work, Cyber-cafes and Youth Forums. The Borough Council's Education and Lifelong Learning Department has established a Youth Service Plan, set within a national and local context, and developed in partnership with Connexions, the Voluntary Youth Sector and the Sandwell Youth Forum¹⁶. One of the main aims of the plan is to reduce the high teenage pregnancy rate in Sandwell. While there is a downwards trend (conception rates for under-16's fell from 15.2 per 1,000 girls between 1995 – 1997 to 13.1 for 1998-2000, in 2000, the equivalent figures were 8.5 for England and Wales and 9.6 for the West Midlands. The Sandwell Plan target is to reduce the under 16-conception rate to 6 per 1,000 girls by 2005¹⁷. The Council has made a commitment to increase 'Things for Young People to do'; this year has seen an increase in Youth Arts, Outdoor Pursuits & Sports Activity for Young People. The Council actively encourages participation by Young People in every aspect of its work, and has established the Sandwell Youth Forum, a Youth Council in each town, Young SEMUF (Sandwell Ethnic Minority Umbrella Forum), Young Women's Forum and the Mixed Young People's Committee (sic) (forum named by young people)

C.2.5 The nature of the Partnership

C.2.5.1 Black Country Connexions (BCC) came into operation in April 2001. As indicated above, the Black Country is composed of four separate local authorities and Connexions has established a Local Management Committee in each of the four areas. The organization is based on a sub-contracted model, with Prospects Careers being a main contractor for Connexions and the approach taken with Prospects being used as a template for other sub-contractors. BCC proposes a range of branded connexions centres across the region, in order to meet the universal, specialist and geographical requirements of young people. At least 7 centres in each borough, will offer one stop support by 2005¹⁸.

¹⁵ Wolverhampton HAZ

¹⁶ Sandwell Youth Service Plan 2005-2005

¹⁷ *ibid.*

¹⁸ Black Country Connexions Business Plan 2002-2005

C.2.5.2 The planned staffing resource for Black Country Connexions as at March 2003 was for 276 full time Connexions staff, plus a total of 121 from partner organizations, making a total of 397. Of these, 179.5 were to be Connexions personal advisers, plus another 63 from partners and other organizations (totalling 242.5). The planned distribution of PA's was for 52.6% to be deployed with young people aged 13-16 in education, 2.8% with young people aged 13-16 not in education, 4.8% with young people in employment and the remaining 39.8% with NEET young people¹⁹.

C.2.6 Current priorities

C.2.6.1 The strategic priorities for BCC for the period 2002-2005 include the following points:

- Developing the partnership board: clarification of roles and responsibilities
- Redefining relationships between strategic and operational structures at regional, sub-regional and levels: making key relationships such as that with Prospects more transparent.
- Developing network of Connexions across the Black Country
- Clarification and implementation of management structures²⁰.

C.2.7 Focusing the sample in the Partnership area

C.2.7.1 In the Black Country Partnership area, two of the four local authority areas were selected for attention: Wolverhampton and Sandwell. The choice of area was partly affected by five other research projects on young people taking place at the same time as the Connexions Impact Study. For reasons of practicality, the team chose the most deprived borough in the Black Country, Sandwell, and the authority with the highest rate of unemployment, Wolverhampton.

C.2.7.2 The Phase 1 sub-samples particularly targeted from these two areas were parents/carers, asylum seekers and young people with disabilities. These groups were chosen, in consultation with the Partnership, mainly because it was felt that access would be most feasible for these categories.

C.2.7.3 In Phase 2, further attention was given to the issues of parents and carers and asylum seekers. In terms of settings, there was a focus on outreach settings, statutory and voluntary youth organisations and specialist agencies. Generally speaking, relevant settings were uncovered through Internet searches, or more fruitfully through word of mouth and 'snowballing' thanks to various individuals and agencies.

¹⁹ *ibid.*

²⁰ Black Country Connexions Business Plan 2002-2005

C.2.8 References

Base25

www.BASE25.INFO

Black Country Connexions Business Plan 2002-2005

Black Country Chamber

<http://www.bccbl.com/desktopdefault.aspx?tabIndex=0&tabId=631>

Children and Young People in Wolverhampton: A Strategy for Interagency Working 2003-2006

<http://www.wolverhampton.gov.uk/NR/rdonlyres/0DF0BF3E-D1D3-41B1-8DE6-05233FFF6639/0/complete.pdf>

Community, Play and Youth (Wolverhampton)

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

DfES Number of Permanent Exclusions

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C.3 Cheshire and Warrington

C.3.1 The demographic profile

C.3.1.1 The area of Cheshire and Warrington is predominantly rural in character, covering 2,257 square kilometres, with a total population of 861,411. There are around 90,000 people in the 13-19 age group, split almost equally between the 13-16 and 17-19 age groups. (OFSTED Report 2003: 1). Overall, the population of the area is predicted to grow by 3.6% by 2006, 4.9% in the 16-18 age range and 7.8% in the 19-24 age range. As of 2002, it contains 45,543 young people aged 13-16 and 44,442 aged 16-19.

C.3.1.2 The non-white population is estimated to be 0.9% (based on 2001 Census data), the highest proportion being in Crewe and Nantwich (1.2%). The largest proportion of non-white residents is Chinese.

C.3.1.3 The City of Chester and Warrington Town are the largest urban communities. Other major towns are Ellesmere Port, Crewe and Macclesfield. Otherwise the population is spread across a rural landscape, making geographical access to services an issue with certain sectors of the population.

Cheshire County Council and Warrington Borough Council are the first-tier local authorities in the area. The local Learning and Skills Council for the Partnership area is based in Middlewich.

C.3.2 Employment and the local economy

C.3.2.1 In 2002, the rate of unemployment was 1.1% in Cheshire rural areas, in compared to 2.1% in the urban areas of Warrington. Vale Royal District is the exception, with higher unemployment rates than the urban average. Those under 25 constitute 26% of the unemployed. Ellesmere Port and Neston have the highest proportion of youth unemployment at 28.9%.

C.3.2.2 In line with national trends, business opportunities are predicted to grow in Cheshire and Warrington in banking/finance, distribution, hotels and catering. Decline is expected in agriculture, construction, utilities and manufacturing. However, these industries will continue to play a major part in the economy because of the demand for staff in these areas to replace those leaving or retiring, particularly as these industries have an older than average workforce. Cheshire is predominately a dairy-farming county and suffered an estimated loss of between £15 and £19 million from the economy because of foot and mouth disease.

C.3.3 Educational and achievement

C.3.3.1 According to the local Learning and Skills Council's assessment of achievement, in terms of national learning targets, 2,500 young people in Cheshire and Warrington have not achieved a Level 2 qualification by the age of 19 (OFSTED report 203: 1). This is despite the percentage of young people gaining 5 GCSE's at grades A*-C in Cheshire and Warrington being above the national average of 50%.

C.3.3.2 Approximately 11,500 young people leave school in Cheshire and Warrington each year (in 2003 this figure was 11,345). Although 89.5% of young people chose to continue in learning after leaving school, 5% enter employment without training. Connexions Destination Data for 2003 confirms that 6.1% of Year 11 school leavers do not continue in any form of learning after leaving school. (Available on [http://www.connexions-cw.co.uk/uploadarea/School%20Leaver%20Destinations%20Totals%20for%200C&W%20revised\(2\).doc](http://www.connexions-cw.co.uk/uploadarea/School%20Leaver%20Destinations%20Totals%20for%200C&W%20revised(2).doc))

C.3.3.3 The Connexions Partnership judges that 8.4% of 13-19 year olds experience multiple problems preventing them from engaging in learning, 14% of whom have some specific barriers to overcome (OFSTED Report 2003: 1).

C.3.3.4 As at 2000-1, the various constituencies of young people in Cheshire and Warrington presented a number of educational challenges:

- There were 96 young people aged 16-19 with a custodial sentence.
- There were 146 teenage mothers in the area.

- 140 young people aged 13-18 had been identified as substance misusers.

C.3.3.5 There are 101 schools and other education establishments in the area covering provision for 11-19. These cover a range of special schools and units, including secure provision for young people at risk. There is also young offenders' institution with 316 places, with a throughput of 1,500 per annum.

(Source: Cheshire and Warrington Connexions Partnership Local Delivery Plan (2003-2004))

C.3.3.6 The Partnership did not have the Education Maintenance Allowance in operation until September 2004.

C.3.4 Youth provision

C.3.4.1 Cheshire and Warrington appears to be relatively well served. The Connexions Partnership for Cheshire and Warrington has been operational since 1st April 2001 with a remit to provide a universal service of guidance and support for 13 – 19 year olds through a network of personal advisers. Equally importantly, the Government has made it quite clear that the success of the Connexions Service is dependent on robust and complementary youth work as an additional service to young people. As part of its commitment to the Connexions strategy Cheshire County Council transferred funding for fifteen youth workers to the new partnership on 1st May 2001.

C.3.4.2 In March 2001 the Government published 'Tomorrow's Future: Building a strategy for Children and Young People'. This sets out the role of the Children and Young People's Unit and its place within the overall social inclusion strategy. Part of the unit's role is to oversee efforts to ensure that young people have a real voice in government and in developing the services which affect their lives. Similarly the DfES is developing and supporting projects, which promote active citizenship: e.g. Millennium Volunteers, the Summer Activities scheme and the UK Youth Parliament. A mix of statutory and voluntary organisations is in a strong position to sustain all of these developments, working in partnership for the benefit of young people.

C.3.5 The nature of the Partnership

C.3.5.1 The Cheshire and Warrington Connexions Partnership was established in April 2001 from the initial transfer of two careers companies, Cheshire Guidance Partnership and Career Connections, along with a number of staff from the two local authority youth services. It is a company limited by guarantee operating on the direct delivery model.

C.3.5.2 There are five delivery areas: West Cheshire, Vale Royal: Macclesfield and Congleton, Crewe and Warrington. An Area Connexions Manager is responsible for co-ordinating each of them. The county is divided

into three local areas, West Cheshire, Warrington and the rest of Cheshire, each with a Local Management Committee.

C.3.5.3 There are currently 180 employees, including 150 Personal Advisers and another 36 PAs appointed as trainees. There are two types of personal advisers: PAs (Education), often school based, and PAs (Community) supporting young people identified as requiring the most help.

C.3.5.4 The Partnership uses a different vocabulary from P1 and P2 to describe levels of need, using “intensive, medium and low” to refer to categories of risk.

C.3.6 Current priorities

C.3.6.1 Cheshire and Warrington Connexions Partnership has worked with partners to determine a joint approach to the deployment of services for young people. The current Business Plan reflects certain partnership-wide targets and priorities based on a local needs assessment exercise.

C.3.6.2 According to the 2003 Ofsted Report, the Cheshire and Warrington Connexions Partnership is good at meeting its national and local targets, providing a high standard of guidance and support for young people in schools, colleges and the community, enabling young people to achieve and make good progress, expanding opportunities for learning and development and involving young people fully in informing strategy and shaping services. In particular, the 2003 Ofsted Report singles out the clear direction provided by senior management and the board for praise. However, the same report picks on a number of issues that the partnership could improve to make its service more successful. These points include the accessibility of services to young people in rural communities, arrangements for the supervision and monitoring of the workloads of PAs and the implementation of the equal opportunities policy, among others.

C.3.7 Focusing the sample in the Partnership area

C.3.7.1 The sample for this study was drawn from rural Cheshire and urban Ellesmere Port. These areas represent different LEAs and local authorities and come under different Connexions delivery areas. The sample of young people was taken from particular clusters of schools in both these areas. The NEET sample was drawn from the areas served by these same schools.

C.3.7.2 The rural sample is of particular interest, as the rural nature of the area is believed to be a significant factor in youth unemployment. Cheshire communities in particular have poor or costly transport links between centres of population and employment. The Index of Multiple Deprivation shows that 14 wards in Cheshire are in the top 10% of wards in England for deprivation in relation to “Geographical Access to Services”. Of the three schools in rural Cheshire, one has a significantly high number of pupils with special educational needs, some 10% above the national average of 22%.

C.3.7.3 Overall, Cheshire and Warrington are relatively prosperous. However there are pockets of deprivation, particularly in Ellesmere Port, which had 11 of the most deprived wards in England according to the Index of Deprivation in 2000. Thus, taking samples of young people from this area contrasted well with the Connexions Partnership area as a whole and with those of rural Cheshire.

C.3.7.4 During Phase 1, the Partnership itself was focusing on young mothers as a group and managers thought it would be an appropriate group to target for one of the sub-samples. They were confident that they could also identify young people for this sub-sample and for the sub-samples of homeless/looked after and for those with health problems/disabilities.

C.3.7.5 In Phase 2, the work mainly concentrated on young people in school settings and training provision, including special schools. The target groups of particular interest were those young people underachieving in school and young people with learning difficulties and special educational needs.

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C.4 Greater Merseyside

C.4.1 The demographic profile

C.4.1.1 Greater Merseyside is one of the UK's most densely populated urban areas, with over 1.5 million people living in six districts - Halton, Knowsley,

Liverpool, Sefton, St. Helens and Wirral - covering an area of 729 square kilometres. Like other older urban industrial areas, all districts within Greater Merseyside experienced a fall in population of 3.2% between 1991 and 2000. The total population figure currently stands at 1.3 million people (Census 2001). Greater Merseyside has a marginally younger population than the English average with 22.9% of the population being aged 0-19 (ONS 2001). As for 13 to 19 year olds, the total population in this age group is 138,471 (Connexions Greater Merseyside OFSTED Report, 2003:1).

C.4.1.2 In terms of minority ethnic breakdown, the figures suggest the area is considerably more homogeneous than the broader pattern for England and Wales, with the white population making up to 98.8 % of the total. Only Liverpool has a white population of less than 95 per cent. The rest is made up of 1.1 Asian, 1.2 Black and 1.6 per cent Chinese (Neighbourhood Statistics, 2001). There were 2,167 asylum seekers in Greater Merseyside in July 2001 and there were estimated to be 100 people with refugee status of whom 71 reside in Liverpool.

C.4.2 Employment and the local economy

C.4.2.1 In 2001, 6.2% of the labour force was claiming unemployment benefit, a figure twice the average rate for the UK. The economically active section of the labour force is 71% (compared to 79% in England and Wales).

C.4.2.2 Youth unemployment is particularly high in Halton and Knowsley, where 34.6% and 32.1% of claimants are aged under 25 respectively; compared to an average of 26.1% in England. (Source: Unemployment datasheet, Jan 2003, LSC, Greater Merseyside.)

C.4.2.3 People are, on average, unemployed for longer in Greater Merseyside, where 19.7% of claimants have been claiming benefits for more than one year, compared to 14.6% of claimants in England, and more significantly, 24.5% of Liverpool and 20.6% of Sefton claimants have been registered unemployed for over 12 months. The proportion of males who have been unemployed for more than one year is 21.2% in Greater Merseyside, compared to 15.8% in England. (Source: Unemployment datasheet, Jan 2003, LSC, Greater Merseyside.)

C.4.2.4 The public sector and the service industries are important economic drivers in the area, in particular tourism and call centres. It is expected that Liverpool's status as the European capital of culture in 2008 will generate 14,000 new jobs and bring £200 million in tourism to the area over the next 5 years.

C.4.2.5 Greater Merseyside presents a typical picture of post-industrial decline. This has implications for the situation of young people in the area and presents serious challenges to the work of Connexions.

C.4.3 Education and achievement

C.4.3.1 Approximately 20,000 young people leave compulsory schooling in Greater Merseyside each year. Overall, 82% of young people continue in some form of learning at the end of their compulsory education. However, about 18 % of 16 year olds drop out of education annually. Equally, 25 % of 17 year olds are not engaged in employment or in education. Only 41% of 19 year olds achieve a level 3 qualification, compared to the national rate of 51%. (Source: Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Local Delivery Plan 2002. Provision for young people and relevant policy initiatives.)

C.4.3.2 As of 2000-1, these were some of the educational challenges presented by the various constituencies of young people in Greater Merseyside:

- There were 7,288 offenders in Greater Merseyside aged 13-18 of whom only 72.86 % were in employment, education or training.
- There were 540 16-19 year-old mothers in the area; only 26 % were in employment, education or training.
- 2,390 people aged 13-18 had been identified as substance misusers; only 55 % had been referred to a specialist service.
- There were 900 nineteen year olds leaving care, only 25% were in employment, education or training.

(Source: Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Local Delivery Plan 2002 Provision for young people and relevant policy initiatives.)

C.4.3.3 There are 148 Secondary Schools in the area, including 39 special schools. Of the 109 mainstream schools, 72 have sixth forms. There are 33 faith schools providing 16-18 education.

C.4.3.4 The Education Maintenance Allowance was only available in Liverpool and the Wirral until September 2004, before it was rolled in every area of the country.

C.4.4 Youth provision

C.4.4.1 The National Youth Agency, North West Regional Youth Service Unit, UK Youth, Youth Federation and Greater Merseyside Connexions, all seem to have an implantation in Greater Merseyside. UK Youth and Connexions appear to have a partnership national programme for particular categories of disengaged and disadvantaged young people that comprises a Specialist Youth Work Component, (for young women, carers and parents,), a Participation Component aiming to develop young people's abilities to be involved in democratic decision-making processes and an Accredited Training Component. (see UK Youth on:

<http://youthwork.ukyouth.org/index.php?module=pagesetter&func=viewpub&tid=10&pid=1>)

C.4.4.2 Another area of provision that seems particularly successful in Greater Merseyside is Positive Action for Young People (PAYP). Provided in all six areas of the Connexions Partnership, PAYP is a cross-departmental initiative between the Home Office, Youth Justice Board, the Department for Education and Skills, Department for Media, Culture and sports, and New Opportunities Fund. Connexions, as lead delivery agency, has provided 29 PAYP advisers supporting more than 500 young people at any one time, with good results. As at 2/4/04, 41.5% of young people who joined the programme as NEET had progressed to EET at some point during their time on the project (Connexions Greater Merseyside: PAYP provision. Available on <http://www.connexions-gmerseyside.co.uk/payp/downloads.htm>)

C.4.5 The nature of the Partnership

C.4.5.1 Greater Merseyside Connexions is a company limited by guarantee formed from the three previous Careers Service companies (Career Connections, Career Decisions and St. Helens Careers Service Partnership). It is a direct delivery model. The Board of Greater Merseyside Connexions has all the key agencies on it and each borough has a Local Management Committee (LMC) with membership of local partners.

C.4.5.2 As at 31st March 2003 the company employed 320.1 Personal Advisers (PAs) and 95.8 other staff, totalling 415.9 staff. The 2003-2004 business plans included staffing projections by March 2004 to be 341.6 PAs and 91.9 other staff, totalling a figure of 433.5. It is important to note that these figures do not include any staff transferred into Connexions from Halton Youth Service as this process was still being negotiated at the time of publication of the 2003-2004 Greater Merseyside Connexions Business Plan (pg 107, Appendix 8).

C.4.5.3 The Connexions Service has developed a pattern of delivery drawing together the support for young people into multi-disciplinary teams. Membership of the network varies according to the institution or community in which they are based but can include all statutory and voluntary agencies offering support to young people. This generally includes links into learning (with schools, FE colleges, work-based learning providers and Job Centre Plus services) and links into the community (Youth Service, community networks, community links).

C.4.6 Current priorities

C.4.6.1 Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership and the Learning and Skills Council have worked together to determine a joint approach to the deployment of services for young people. The current Business Plan reflects certain partnership-wide targets and priorities based on a local needs assessment exercise. These are the reduction of young people who are NEET, increases in the proportion of various risk groups in EET (16-19 year

olds with SEN/LDD, teenage parents, care leavers and young offenders), an increase in the number of referrals to specialist support of young people with a substance misuse problem, significant reductions in the conception rate of under 18s and improvements in the educational achievement of 16 year olds at GCSE level (pp. 11-16).

C.4.6.2 According to the 2003 OFSTED Report, the Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership is good at meeting its national and local targets, providing good practice that raises the learning of young people, especially the most hard-to-reach and priority groups of young people, provides a good range of inter-agency work and involves staff at all levels in developing its strategic direction. However, the same report picks on a number of issues that the partnership could improve to make its service more successful. These points include an increase in the involvement of young people in the governance and management of the service, an improvement in the provision for minority groups and better deployment of PAs to support the needs of all young people in their progression from Entry to Employment (E2E) and work-based learning activities (p. 3).

C.4.7 Focusing the sample in the Partnership area

C.4.7.1 In Greater Merseyside, two distinct areas, South Liverpool and Wirral, were selected from which to take the sample. Although both are urban areas with significant social and educational deprivation, there are some contrasts between the older inner city housing in Liverpool and the somewhat newer outlying council estates in Wirral.

C.4.7.2 The districts of St. Helens, Halton and Sefton were excluded from the study because they did not have EMA, unlike Liverpool and Wirral. Moreover Wirral and Liverpool have the highest concentration of minority ethnic communities in Greater Merseyside. Chinese, Arabic and Somali speaking communities are largely located in Liverpool, whilst there are significant Gujarati speaking communities in the Wirral.

C.4.7.3 When discussing which risk groups to include in the sub-sample, Greater Merseyside Connexions staff indicated that they had identified young people in every risk category and that the numbers in each category (particularly those who misuse substances and those with offending behaviour) are high compared to national averages. Thus the sub-samples for Phase 1 were identified for those with offending behaviour or at risk of offending, substance misusers, and those with emotional behavioural difficulties. It is also worth noting that levels of disabilities in Greater Merseyside are high compared to national average in England and Wales.

C.4.7.4 In Phase 2, Greater Merseyside provided a number of school settings and training providers. Young people who were underachieving in school or who had learning difficulties or special educational needs were also a particular focus for the work.

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C.5. Lincolnshire and Rutland

C.5.1 The demographic profile

C.5.1.1 Rutland is the smallest county in England, whereas Lincolnshire is the fourth largest county and one of the most sparsely populated. Rutland has a population of 34,563 (Census 2001), while Lincolnshire has 646,645 (Census 2001) residents, about half of whom live outside the main towns of Lincoln, Grantham and Boston. The population forecast for both Rutland & Lincolnshire is 8% growth between 1996 and 2006. Lincolnshire specifically has the highest population growth in England, mainly in the number of older people.

C.5.1.2 Lincolnshire has 10 of the 71 most deprived wards in the East Midlands, several of which are in the East Lindsey coastal district.

C.5.1.3 The proportion of residents from minority ethnic groups is low, at less than one per cent of the total population.

C.5.2 Employment and the local economy

C.5.2.1 Despite relatively high employment, there are areas of considerable social and economic disadvantage, particularly in the larger towns. Farming, food processing, tourism and manufacturing dominate the economy and there is a heavy reliance on semi-skilled and unskilled labour. Therefore, although unemployment (1.4% Lincolnshire and 0.4% Rutland (July 2004) is below the national average, wage levels are low. Lincolnshire has a significant number

of armed forces personnel (2.13%, compared with a national average of 0.55% Census 2001). The proportion of the population in the higher social classes is in line with the national average.

C.5.3 Education and achievement

C.5.3.1 There are 57,822 young people aged 13-19 in the Connexions Partnership area (Hansard 2003). With regard to post-compulsory education, destination statistics for July 2004 show 51% of young people in education, 29.5% in employment, 3.1% in work based and other government training, 4.6% NEET, 1.4% other and 10.3% unknown.

C.5.3.2 Lincolnshire and Rutland have separate LEAs. There are a total of 37,311, pupils in Years 8-11 on roll in mainstream schools, special schools, City Technology Colleges, Pupil Referral Units and the independent sector (Business Plan 2004-5) The proportion of pupils over 16 in secondary schools is well above average. The proportion of pupils with a statement of special educational needs (SEN) is in line with the national average. There is a high pupil turnover in some schools, especially those near air force bases and in coastal resort towns (Ofsted 2003).

C.5.3.3 Attendance rates compare well with schools in similar LEAs but there has been a rise in the number of pupils excluded from school in both authorities between 2000/1 and 2001/2. Standards in the county's schools are mainly in line with or above the averages nationally and for similar authorities, although the area generally has a low skills base with low levels of male participation in learning.

C.5.3.4 There are 15 Grammar schools in Lincolnshire, with 13 comprehensives, one secondary bilateral, 34 secondary modern, 19 special schools, and four pupil referral units. Four new day schools for pupils with emotional and behavioural difficulties are to be opened in Lincoln, Grantham and Spilsby. Since the Ofsted inspection in 2000, 18 secondary schools have achieved specialist status, making a total of 21, and a further 26 secondary schools are in the process of bidding for this.

C.5.3.5 Results in Lincolnshire and Rutland schools are in line with, or above, the national averages and averages for statistical neighbours (authorities with similar socio-economic circumstances). However, there is significant variability in the performance of different schools. At Key Stage 3, results for English are in line with national and statistical neighbour averages. In mathematics and science, they are above national averages and in line with those for statistical neighbours. The percentage of pupils gaining five or more A* - C grades at GCSE is above the national average and in line with statistical neighbours. Attainment at age 18 is above national and statistical neighbour averages for pupils gaining two or more Advanced levels or equivalent qualifications. Furthermore, the percentage gaining fewer than two 'A' levels is in line with statistical neighbours and above the national average (Ofsted 2003).

C.5.3.6 Attendance at both primary and secondary level in both Lincolnshire and Rutland is above the national average and in line with the average for similar authorities. Exclusion rates in primary and secondary schools in 2000 / 2001 were in line with national and statistical neighbour averages. Figures for 2001/2 show an increase in exclusions in both counties.

C.5.4 Youth provision

C.5.4.1 Practical partnerships and collaborations have been established between Connexions and the Lincolnshire & Rutland Youth Service (concerning issues of curriculum and other work in schools, Summer Activities programmes, outreach activities, building referral systems, needs analysis, monitoring and tracking, and PA training).

C.5.4.2 Mapping of youth provision in the area also indicates that there are approximately 65 Voluntary Sector organisations working with young people aged 13-19 years, and a Voluntary Sector Forum has been established with representatives from these groups.

C.5.5 The nature of the Partnership

C.5.5.1 Connexions Lincolnshire & Rutland is a company limited by share. It operates on a direct delivery model. It has a Board of Directors rather than a local management committee, but this is fully representative of the whole community.

C.5.5.2 The Lincolnshire and Rutland Partnership is divided into two main areas containing 10 main delivery areas representing the major centres of population. Each delivery area contains many Connexions delivery points. There are two assistant directors supported by 5 area managers and 5 assistant managers.

C.5.5.3 As of September 2004, the overall full-time equivalent staffing complement was 182 staff, of whom 78 were PAs -47 of whom were fully trained and 31 part-trained.

C.5.5.4 There are Connexions Resource centres in the majority of schools in the Partnership area, some more explicitly branded than others. Jointly funded Learning Liaison Officers are already placed with the Youth Offending Team. Connexions Access Points also exist in several Youth Centres (and other organisations) in the areas.

C.5.5.5 Lincolnshire & Rutland Connexions will be operating the Education Maintenance Allowance across their area from September 2004.

C. 5.6 Current priorities

C.5.6.1 The Partnership has identified 8 themes for the Business Plan in 2004-5. These are:

- Extending the engagement of young people in the development of Connexions
- Quality assuring our practice
- Continuing to provide and develop impartial information, advice and guidance
- Ensuring the competence of Personal Advisers and Assistants
- Continuing to improve young people's achievements
- Maintaining a focus on vulnerable groups
- Giving due attention to targets and making best use of data to inform developments
- Improving the consistency of all processes and services (an overarching theme)

C.5.7 Focusing the sample in the Partnership area

C.5.7.1 In Lincolnshire and Rutland, Lincoln City was selected because it was considered suitably representative of the conditions encountered in the majority of large towns within this largely rural county. Skegness was also selected because it is one of the largest coastal resort towns in Lincolnshire and is characterised by a highly transient population, which rises dramatically according to summer employment opportunities. This change in population is also reflected in school rolls in the area, which are also fluctuating and characterised by disrupted continuity of schooling. For example, for every five young people on roll at the start of Year 7 at the Earl of Scarborough School in Skegness, only one of these will be still on roll at the end of Year 11.

C.5.7.2 In Phase 1, the three sub-sample groups targeted for the study were young people with caring/parental responsibilities, and a combination of young people with poor health/disabilities and of young people with emotional/behavioural difficulties. Lincoln is described as a 'hotspot' of teenage pregnancies in the area, with conception rates at 63.8 per 1,000 live births (compared to the national average of 45.6 per 1,000). 1,077 (3.0%) 13 to 16 year olds hold an education statement in the Connexions area, and 2,032 (5.7%) have learning difficulties/disabilities. (Ofsted 2003)

C.5.7.3 In Phase 2, young people with substance misuse problems and young offenders were a particular focus. In terms of settings, the researchers particularly sought out information on Connexions shops, centres and multi-agency teams.

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C.6 Nottinghamshire

C.6.1 The demographic profile

C.6.1.1 In general terms, every economic indicator puts Nottinghamshire well below the UK average. Thirty-one of the geographic county's wards are in the worst 10% nationally.

C 6.2 Employment and the local economy

C.6.2.1 The unemployment rate in Nottinghamshire is 2.1%, which is slightly higher than the East Midlands average of 2.0% but below the UK rate of 2.3% (Nottinghamshire CC Employment Bulletin, July 2004).

C.6.2.2 Nottinghamshire has a diverse local economy that employs people in a range of sectors; prominent amongst these are healthcare, pharmaceuticals, precision engineering, the textile and clothing industries and professional and financial services. Economic difficulties have resulted from structural economic changes in the coal and textile industries, which have led to Objective 2 status being obtained for the former coalfield area.

C.6.3 Education and achievement

C.6.3.1 In Nottinghamshire there is a total of 57 secondary and sixth form schools for pupils aged 11-16 and 16 plus, 20 independent schools, 13 special schools and 5 referral units. The number of 13-19 year olds in the region is 91,166 (Hansard, 2003).

C.6.3.2 According to the 2003 OFSTED Inspection of the Nottinghamshire Local Educational Authority, "there has been some significant improvement in pupils' performance since the previous inspection in 1999. Performance at Key Stage 3 shows a faster rate of improvement than the national average in English, with maths and science broadly in line with national average. Attainment is broadly in line with national averages, including at Key Stage 4, but generally below that of the LEA's statistical neighbours at all stages of compulsory education". The Connexions Area Business Plan 2002-2005 recognised at that time that achievement of GCSE was below the national average and well below in the city schools: 30.3%, compared to 45.6% in the County and 50% nationally. Participation rates in post-16 education and training are below the national average and are comparatively poor. School leaver destination statistics indicate that 13.5% of young people do not make the transition from school to further education, employment or training.

C.6.3.3 Of all young people in the Connexions area, it is estimated that some 16% experience multiple barriers which prevent them from learning, 45% have some barriers to overcome, and 39% have few or no barriers, but still

need information, advice and support. (Source: Connexions Service related mapping by the Research Team of Nottinghamshire County Council and private company research for the Youth Service Plan 2003/4.)

C.6.3.4 Some areas of Nottinghamshire were part of the Education Maintenance Allowance pilot, including the Broxtowe Estate, one of the two selected areas in this study. EMA will be available across the county from

C.6.4 Youth Provision

C.6.4.1 There is a wide pattern of Youth Work delivery ranging from traditional youth club based activity (there are over 80 statutory youth clubs in the county) detached street work, adventure bases, art centres, music studios, motor projects and specialist projects for the unemployed, homeless and other disadvantaged young people. Nottinghamshire County Council has a local “compact” with the voluntary and community sector and participates in Nottinghamshire Youth Organisations Network, a local umbrella group. Investment in the voluntary sector falls within the top 25% of authorities.

C.6.5 The nature of the Partnership

C.6.5.1 Connexions Nottinghamshire Ltd. is a Phase 2 Partnership, established in December 2001, as a company limited by guarantee. Ownership of the existing careers service, GuideLine has been transferred in its totality to Connexions Nottinghamshire Ltd., which has retained the company as a wholly owned subsidiary focussed on lifelong learning and commercial activity.

C.6.5.2 The Connexions Nottinghamshire Partnership is developing working relationships with the following services, service providers and sectors: the Learning and Skills Council, the Youth Service, the City and County Local Educational Authorities, Community and Voluntary Organisations, the Social Services, Housing Advice Providers, the Health Services, the Police, Employment Services, Youth Offending Teams, Drug Action Teams and the Teenage Pregnancy Coordinators. Good working relationships with schemes such as Sure Start and Life Skills are also in place.

C.6. 6 Current priorities

C.6.6.1 Current local priorities and targets for action for this Partnership include:

- A sharper focus on NEET young people with whom the Partnership has lost contact
- Targeting of work with disadvantaged BME young people including travelers, refugees and asylum seekers, African Caribbean young people and South Asian young women.
- Review partnership work at team level
- More help to young people with career progression via the Aim Higher programme and career education in the light of the 14-19 curriculum changes. (Nottinghamshire Connexions targets 2004-5.)

C.6.7 Focusing the sample in the Partnership area

C.6.7.1 The areas within Connexions Nottinghamshire selected for the study were Eastwood and the Broxtowe Estate (the school catchment area serving Broxtowe).

C.6.7.2 Eastwood is a small, ex-mining town with some twenty thousand inhabitants, approximately ten miles northwest of Nottingham. Eastwood is included within the Broxtowe Local Authority District, although it is geographically very separate and distinct from the Broxtowe area.

C.6.7.3 Eastwood's collieries have now all closed. It is characterised by many of the problems usually associated with the breakdown of traditional staple industries in similar towns and villages. Eastwood is currently undergoing a major renovation, called the Phoenix Project, which involves a facelift for the town centre and the renewal of industry in the surrounding area through provision of industrial start-up premises, grants and training, together with the planting of a community forest.

C.6.7.4 As Eastwood is within Broxtowe, the area statistics quite closely reflect those for Broxtowe. (Separate statistics are available for Eastwood North and Greasley [Beauvale].) Young people under 16 there constitute 20.3% of the population, while those in the 16-19 age bracket constitute 5.3%. In the minority ethnic population, the groups with highest presence are white (99.0 %) and Black or Black British (0.4 %) The unemployment rate is 2.9 %. 34 % are long-term unemployed. The economically inactive students constitute 3.3 %.

C.6.7.5 The Broxtowe area is also a few miles from Nottingham city centre and comprises several large housing estates, which are served by several secondary schools in the area. Broxtowe Estate lies to the north west of the city of Nottingham, about three miles from the city centre. According to the 2001 Census, the resident population of Broxtowe was 107,570. Those under 16 years of age constituted 18.8 % of the population while those in the 16-19 age bracket constituted 4.3 %. With regard to the minority ethnic composition of the population, the groups with highest presence are white (95.4 %), Asian or Asian British (2.0 %), Chinese or other ethnic group (1.1 %), mixed (0.9 %). Pakistani and Black or Black British also have a notable presence in the area.

C.6.7.6 Broxtowe was built by Nottingham City Council during the depression of the 1930's, to replace some of the slums of the city and to provide work for the unemployed. The factors that have traditionally determined the socio-economic profile of Broxtowe are the rich agricultural land, the proximity of the Rivers Trent and Erewash and the availability of natural building materials. The extensive and easily mined coal deposits have also had an important effect on the development of industry in the North of the borough. The decline of the mining industry has impacted on the labour markets and employability in both Broxtowe and Eastwood.

C.6 7.7 Consideration of the choice of sub-samples in Phase 1 led to a selection of young people with parental and caring responsibilities, young people with poor health or disabilities and young people with offending behaviour or at risk of offending.

C.6.7.8 In Phase 2, the work in Nottinghamshire shared the focus on young offenders and young people who misuse substances and particularly examined multi-agency settings and Connexions centres and shops.

C.6.8 References

OFSTED Inspection of the Nottinghamshire Local Educational Authority 2003.

Nottinghamshire County Council Youth Service Plan 2003-4.

Nottinghamshire Connexions targets 2004-5.

Nottinghamshire County Council Employment Bulletin, July 2004.

C.7 South Yorkshire

C.7.1 Demographic profile

C.7.1.1 South Yorkshire's population is currently 1,266,337 (2001 Census). It is made up of four conurbations - Doncaster, Rotherham, Barnsley and Sheffield. There are distinct variations in population density across the region with sparsely populated areas in Barnsley, Rotherham and Doncaster in contrast to higher population densities in Sheffield. For the purpose of the study, the two areas of focus were Barnsley and Sheffield, as described below. The Census reveals that South Yorkshire has lost 1.7% of its population since the previous census. It has an aging population with a greater proportion aged above 30 than below, reflecting the movement of young people in their 20s to other areas to seek work. 95.2% of the population identify themselves as white with 3.1% having been born outside the EU area compared with 6.65 % for England and Wales as a whole. The largest minority group is those of Pakistani origin currently 1.8%.

C.7.1.2 In relation to deprivation, of the 94 wards in the South Yorkshire domain, 16 fall within the worst 5% in England: 20 are among the worst 10%, and a further 33 are in the worst 25% (DETR Index of Multiple Deprivation 2000).

C.7.2 Employment and the local economy

C.7.2.1 In the 1970s, South Yorkshire's coal, steel and railway engineering industries were booming. This changed, however, with a downturn in the economy and a reduction in the demand for coal and steel. South Yorkshire relied mainly on these industries for its wealth so it became particularly vulnerable. There are now just three collieries remaining in South Yorkshire.

There has been a significant shift from traditional manufacturing industries towards a service-based and knowledge based economy. In Barnsley 35% of the working population commutes to neighbouring cities of Rotherham, Sheffield, Wakefield, Leeds and other cities to work. In Rotherham there has been a transformation of large areas of dereliction into new leisure, employment and related facilities. But manufacturing continues to play a key role throughout the area by providing nearly 17% of all employment (Census 2001). Public administration, education and health are the largest providers of employment in South Yorkshire. However, according to the South Yorkshire Learning and Skills Council, more than one fifth of the population has no formal qualification. Unemployment rates are above the national figures (Ofsted, 2003).

C.7.2.2 The destination statistics for Year 11 young people compiled for October 2003 show that 64.3% were in full-time education, 21.8% were employed or in work based training, 9.8% were not settled, 1.3% not available, 1.4% had moved away and 1.4% declined to take part.

C.7.2.3 Unemployment rates are still higher in South Yorkshire than nationally and this particularly affects males. The adjusted number of NEET young people in South Yorkshire was 4,277 at June 2004, a proportion of 12.6%.

C.7.3 Education and achievement

C.7.3.1 The Partnership serves the four LEAs of Rotherham, Doncaster, Barnsley and Sheffield. There are 83 secondary schools, 11 independent schools and 24 special schools in the South Yorkshire area, along with 7 colleges of further education (FE) and a wide range of work-based learning providers (Ofsted, 2003). Educational attainment is below the national figure in all four local authority areas. For example, in 2002, 41.6% of students aged 16 in Rotherham gained 5 or more passes A-C in GCSE or equivalent compared with the national figure of 51.5%, in Sheffield the figure was 41.4%, in Doncaster 39.6% and in Barnsley 35.4%.

C.7.3.2 Sheffield LEA maintains 27 secondary schools, 14 special schools and 1 pupil referral unit. Attendance rates for 2001/2 show the percentage of half days missed by pupils in maintained secondary schools as 11.0%.

C.7.3.3 Barnsley LEA looks after 14 secondary schools, 3 special schools and 1 pupil referral unit. Comparable attendance rates of half days missed by pupils in maintained secondary schools stand at 10.3%.

C.7.3.4 Barnsley, Sheffield, Rotherham and Doncaster LEAs all now operate the EMA system in their respective areas.

C.7.4 Youth provision

Each of the Boroughs operates its own local youth service. Barnsley Youth Service is located within the education service and is part of the Borough's Social Inclusion Division. It was inspected in January 2004 and

is regarded as an effective service working to a clear set of aims. Newly developed key centres provide good accommodation and facilities and there is specialist work in the arts, dance, theatre, conservation and environmental projects. Doncaster Youth Service was inspected in May 2003 and is located within the Directorate of Education. The service is delivered through 16 geographical areas, each of which has a main youth service and a mixture of satellite, outreach, detached and mobile provision according to local need. It is reported to provide a wide range of very good quality provision with large numbers of young people participating on a regular basis. Rotherham Youth Service has not been inspected recently. It is a contract holder for Connexions and good work in the Rotherham Youth Café was commended in the South Yorkshire Connexions inspection, along with the work of young people in the area who acted as peer researchers to interview users about youth provision and to produce a video. Sheffield Youth Service merged with Sheffield Careers Guidance Services to form an independent charity "Sheffield Futures" and its activities are described in C.7.5.2 below. There is partnership work with the voluntary sector to offer Connexions services to the Yemeni Community Association, a City farm and an Arab young women's group.

C.7.5 The nature of the Partnership

C.7.5.1 Connexions South Yorkshire currently operates a borough consortium arrangement, which will be in place until March 31, 2005. It is exploring the feasibility of becoming a lead body.

C.7.5.2 Connexions in Sheffield operates through Sheffield Futures, which is the product of a merging of Sheffield Careers and Guidance Service with Sheffield City Council's Youth Service. It is a charitable company and manages the delivery of the majority of the Connexions Services in Sheffield. With over 600 staff, Sheffield Futures is one of the largest providers of the Connexions service and has a citywide network of youth centres and projects. As well as catering for young people, it also provides a wide range of support services for adults.

C.7.5.3 Connexions in Barnsley operates through Lifetime Careers (which covers the Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham areas). Lifetime Careers primarily runs as a service to help NEET young people, to act as a post-16 gateway provision and also to act as a placing service (into training or employment).

C.7.5.4 The number of 16-19 year olds who require additional support in South Yorkshire is estimated at 23,450. (Business Plan 2002-5.) To assist with this, the Partnership has the following delivery partners on board:

- Core service – guidance community, pastoral teams and Connexions locality teams
- Additional one-to-one support – PAs, learning mentors, youth workers, NOF summer plus school pastoral tutors, educational welfare officers
- Sustained one-to-one support – PAs, specialist support workers (teenage pregnancy, Youth Offending Teams)

C.7.6 Current priorities

C.7.6.1 The Partnership is currently revising its targets. The Connexions Ofsted report (2003) recommended:

- Improvements in one-to-one practice;
- Use of data to set targets;
- Allocation of resources in relation to need;
- Involvement of young people in planning provision;
- Co-ordination of services at the point of delivery;
- Improvement in relations for assuring quality and sharing good practice.

C.7.7 Focusing the sample in the Partnership area

C.7.7.1 The two areas of South Yorkshire selected for focus in this study were Barnsley and Sheffield. Sheffield was a clear choice as the major conurbation in the region, with all the expected urban characteristics. Barnsley was chosen for its interest as a smaller urban area with rural characteristics on its outlying fringes. It has a history of a changing economy, including the decline of the mining industry. Barnsley and Sheffield also have contrasting patterns of youth provision and different Connexions sub-contractors.

C.7.7.2 In terms of young people in the 13 –19 age cohort, Sheffield has a youth population of 41,205 and Barnsley, Doncaster and Rotherham (BDR) together have a youth population of 74,193.

C.7.7.3 The ethnic profile shows that the population in Barnsley is overwhelmingly white at 99.1% with very small proportions of mixed, black, Asian or other minority groups, under one percent in all cases. Sheffield is more diverse with a white population of 91.2%, Mixed 1.6%, Asian 4.6% and black 1.8% (2001 Census ONS).

C.7.7.4 Within the Partnership area there are 114 travellers aged 13-19 with 36% in EET (Dec 2002). There are 2,637 16-19 year olds with LDD in EET a proportion of 72.7%. The under 18 conception rate (1998 actual published in 2000) was 60.1% in Barnsley and 60.6% in Sheffield.

C.7.7.5 In Phase 1, the work in these areas concentrated on the sub-samples of young parents and carers, those looked after or homeless, young people with a disability or health problem, asylum seekers and young offenders. For Phase 2, the work focused on multi-agency settings and Connexions shops and centres and in terms of risk groups, on young offenders and young people who misuse drugs.

C.7.8 References

South Yorkshire Connexions Business Plan, Final Draft, 6th February 2003.
South Yorkshire Connexions website - www.connexionssy.org.uk

Ofsted Inspection of Barnsley Local Educational Authority, July 2000.

Ofsted Inspection of Sheffield Local Educational Authority, March 2002.

Ofsted Inspection Report South Yorkshire Connexions, 2003.

Ofsted Barnsley Youth Service Inspection Report, 2004.

Ofsted Doncaster Youth Service Inspection Report, 2003,
www.ofsted.gov.uk

National Statistics Office - www.statistics.gov.uk

C.8 West of England

C.8.1 Demographic profile

C.8.1.1 The Bristol City (West of England) region includes Bristol, Bath and Weston Super Mare, and covers the four unitary authority areas of Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset (BANES), North Somerset and South Gloucestershire²¹. These four authorities were formed in 1996, when Bristol was declared both a city and a county, following the abolition of Avon County Council.

C.8.1.2 The Bristol City (West of England) Region has a fast growing population of nearly of 1,000,000 people²². According to the 2001 Census, the region's resident population can be broken down as follows:

AREA	POPULATION	MALE	FEMALE
BANES	169,040	49%	51%
Bristol	380,615	49%	51%
North Somerset	188,564	49%	51%
South Glos.	245,641	49%	51%
REGION TOTAL	983,860	49%	51%

It should be pointed out, however, that Bristol has been identified as an area with a significant risk of under-estimation of the population in the 2001 Census. Following detailed analysis, the Office for National Statistics has

²¹ www.bristol-city.gov.uk/aboutbris/bristol_prospectus

²² www.bristol-city.gov.uk/aboutbris/bristol_prospectus

therefore suggested that the Census under-estimated the population of Bristol by 6,732²³.

C.8.1.3 The region's population is predominantly white, with an ethnic breakdown as follows:

AREA	WHITE	MIXED	ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH	BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH	CHINESE OR OTHER ETHNIC GROUP
BANES	97.2%	1%	1.1%	0.9%	0.8%
Bristol	91.8%	2.1%	5.7%	5.5%	0.9%
North Somerset	98.6%	0.6%	0.8%	0.1%	0.4%
South Glos.	97.6%	0.8%	1.4%	0.7%	0.5%

C.8.1.4 According to the 2001 Census, there are a total of 85,625 young people aged 13-19 inclusive in the West of England Region. Within Bristol, there are 34602 young people aged 13-19. In Bristol, 15% of the population live in the most deprived 10% of English wards. The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) 2000 combines deprivation for income, employment, health and disability, education, housing and access to services. It shows that Bristol has 5 wards amongst the 10% most deprived wards in England (Lawrence Hill, Filwood, Southmead, Knowle and Ashley). In contrast Henleaze is one of the 10% least deprived wards in England. Bristol has been identified by the government as one of the 88 LA's with the most deprived wards. Consequently, £8.1m over 3 years has been allocated to help regenerate areas of poverty and social exclusion through Bristol's Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy 2002²⁴

C.8.1.5 The population in Bath and North East Somerset (BANES) of young people aged 13-19 inclusive is 15139. The Child Poverty Index shows that 9 Wards in Bath & North East Somerset fall within the 40% most deprived Wards in the country; these are Abbey, Combe Down, Kingsmead, Oldfield, Radstock, Southdown, Twerton, Walcot and Weston. Twerton is the poorest, it is among the 20% most deprived Wards in England and Wales, hence its eligibility for childcare funding from central Government²⁵. All but one of BANES' most deprived wards are in Bath. None of the BANES population lives in the most deprived 10% of wards in England²⁶.

C.8.1.6 The population in North Somerset of young people aged 13-19 inclusive is 15,321. North Somerset is, in national terms, generally affluent, with unemployment well below the UK average. However, there are pockets

²³ Office for National Statistics, 2004, *Local Authority Studies*

²⁴ Bristol City Council, 2003

²⁵ Bath & North East Somerset Second Review, 2003-4

²⁶ WESTEC Community Profile, BANES

of severe deprivation with, for example, two wards in Weston-super-Mare in the 10% most deprived nationally²⁷ (Weston-super-Mare South and Weston-super-Mare Ellenborough, which have the highest Overall Index of Multiple Deprivation for 2000)²⁸

C.8.1.7 The population in South Gloucestershire of young people aged 13-19 inclusive is 20,563. Around 23% of South Gloucestershire is urbanised, the remainder is predominantly rural in character²⁹. The most deprived wards 14 in South Gloucestershire are Kings Chase, Staple Hill, Yate [West], Filton [Conygre], Patchway and Stoke Gifford [North]. These are mostly wards that are on the edge of the Bristol conurbation. None of the South Gloucestershire residents lives in the most deprived 10% of wards in England.³⁰ A ranking of metropolitan districts, unitary authorities and London boroughs based on amalgamated and average ward scores places South Gloucestershire 108th out of a total of 115 authorities (115th = least deprived). Bristol - 63, North Somerset - 101, Bath and NE Somerset –106³¹.

C.8.2 Employment and the local economy

C.8.2.1 In Bristol, the average unemployment rate is 4.6%, which compares to a national average of 5.2%³². The unemployment figure for males in the Bristol area is 5.6% overall, with figures for females being unavailable (sample size too small for reliable estimate)³³. Areas (known as super output areas) within the Lawrence Hill and Filwood wards are in the 100 worst areas nationally for income deprivation and employment deprivation³⁴, with unemployment in these areas currently at 13.8% and 8.1% respectively, according to the 2001 census³⁵.

C.8.2.2 In BANES, the average unemployment rate is 2.8%, with figures for both males and females being unavailable. Within BANES, however, there are pockets of higher than national average unemployment, with for example, Twerton at 6.6%³⁶ being the area of highest unemployment within BANES.

C.8.2.3 North Somerset has an unemployment rate of 2.1% with figures for both males and females being unavailable. Again, there are pockets of higher than average unemployment within North Somerset with, for example Weston Super Mare Central and Weston Super Mare south having unemployment rates of 9.3% and 7.5% respectively³⁷.

²⁷ North Somerset Council, 2004

²⁸ WESTEC Community Profile, North Somerset

²⁹ <http://www.southglos.gov.uk/acrobat/storyboard.pdf>

³⁰ WESTEC Community Profile, South Gloucestershire

³¹ DETR Indices of Deprivation Study, 2000

³² Source: local area labour force survey (Mar 2002 – Feb 2003). Nomis – Official Labour Market statistics.

³³ *ibid.*

³⁴ Bristol City Council, Deprivation in Bristol 2004

³⁵ Nomis

³⁶ *ibid.*

³⁷ Nomis

C.8.2.4 South Gloucestershire has an unemployment rate of 3.2%. While there are pockets of higher unemployment throughout the area, the highest areas of unemployment at 4.2% (Staple Hill and Patchway) are still below the national average³⁸.

C.8.2.5 The prime employment sectors within the West of England as a whole, have been identified as the following³⁹:

Advanced Engineering
ICT
Digital Media
Financial Services
Printing & Publishing
Marketing Services
Food & Drink Processing

3.8.2.6 The principal employers in manufacturing in general in the West of England include BAE Systems, Rolls Royce, and Westland, and in ICT, the fastest growing sector in the region, HP European Labs, STMicroelectronics and Toshiba Research Labs. Within the digital media sector, the BBC's main natural history unit is based in Bristol, which, along with the award winning Aardman Animation sets a scene of positive creative ability in the area. The major companies from the financial sector are Lloyds/TSB, with their Retail Banking Division headquartered in Bristol, Bristol & West, AXA Sun Life, Clerical Medical, now part of the Halifax Bank of Scotland Group and DAS⁴⁰.

3.8.2.7 Overall, productivity is high in the West of England, the per capita GDP is 23% above the national average, the second highest in England after London and the 34th highest in Europe, ahead of Berlin, Madrid, and Rome⁴¹.

C.8.3 Education and Achievement

C.8.3.1 The OFSTED Commission report for Bristol LEA notes that educational performance varies within Bristol schools, and while in some schools performance is good, there is significant underachievement in others. In the primary phase, results have improved faster than the national rate. At Key Stage 2, standards remain too low, although the percentage of boys attaining Level 5 in 2002 is in line with the national average. One third of schools missed their targets in 2002, and significant gains need to be on order to challenge targets for Key Stage 2 for 2004⁴². The numbers of children permanently excluded from Bristol primary and secondary school has risen from 65 in 2001/2002 to 70 in 2002/3⁴³. As an example of school performance throughout the 4 regions in the West of England, the following

³⁸ Nomis

³⁹ WESP, 2002

⁴⁰ *ibid.*

⁴¹ Business West, 2004

⁴² OFSTED Audit Commission, May 2003

⁴³ Department for Education and Skills

table shows the secondary school (key stage 3) performance tables 2003 Key Stage 3 Results⁴⁴:

BANES	35.7
Bristol	31.8
North Somerset	35.3
South Gloucestershire	34.8
England Average	34.3

C.8.4 Youth Provision

C.8.4.1 Youth Service provision is managed by the local authorities in the sub-region. Bristol City Council has been updating the services provided for young people in line with OFSTED inspections. The council offers a combination of detached and youth centre based youth projects in a total of thirteen areas of the city where young people, aged 13-19, appear to need services most. In addition, there are inclusion youth projects for the four groups identified as having the most need: Disability Project; Lesbian, Gay and Bisexual Project; Participation Project; Race Equality Project⁴⁵

There is a wide range of voluntary services for young people across the city, (and some across the West of England) including the following (details for these and other organisations are provided on the Bristol City Council website):

Avon Youth Association
 BREAD Youth Project
 Fairbridge West
 Off the Record
 Priority Youth Housing
 Young Bristol
 Youth Education Service

In addition, there are various initiatives throughout the city, including;

The City Of Bristol Young People's Forum, which encourages young people to get involved in the city, to get their views heard and ensuring that they involved in decision making.

⁴⁴ *ibid.*

⁴⁵ Bristol City Council, Young People's Services

Southmead Youth Sports Development Initiative, which offers positive activities for young people and to help raise their self-esteem. Although focused on sports, the initiative helps with young people's other interests and needs.

Connexions projects for the West of England: Young people worked on a radio advertising campaign with radio station Vibe 101. The two adverts are aimed at helping young people who have just left school. Development of a new information leaflet with a group of young people

The Knowle West Development Trust, One Stop Job Shop: Establishes strong working partnerships with other agencies and credibility with employers. At the local Jobcentre Plus office they display vacancies and offer outreach services. Connexions Advisers use the shop to deliver young persons and adult guidance sessions⁴⁶.

Business West Education Unlimited: Partnership with the Learning and Skills Council and Connexions to deliver a programme which supports young people as they progress into either a job or meaningful education, but does so in a different way - by providing a buddy to help and encourage, a variety of training opportunities and tasters of work experience⁴⁷.

C.8.4.2 South Gloucestershire Council has been developing a Youth Service Plan in line with the DfES guidance on Youth Service. One of the main strategic objectives of the new plan is to develop relationships with partner agencies, including Connexions in order to identify and respond to young people's needs within the South Gloucestershire area. They are working in partnership with Connexions by establishing a jointly funded post to deliver support to the Voluntary Sector Forum and to enable them to contribute to both the Local Authority and Connexions agendas⁴⁸.

Ongoing and previous projects involving collaboration between South Gloucestershire council and partnership agencies include the following⁴⁹:

Whistle Crew: partnership between the Local Authority Youth Service in Patchway, Patchway High School and what was Learning Partnership West. Its relationship with Connexions is currently being developed.

Patchwork: Support, Advice and Information Project for 16 – 25 year olds based in a Local authority Youth Centre. Partnership between, Patchway and Bradley Stoke Community Development Project,

Kingsmeadow Outreach work (Made For Ever Youth Centre): A representative group of young people involved themselves with Council

⁴⁶ Connexion Point, 2002

⁴⁷ Business West

⁴⁸ South Gloucestershire Council, 2002

⁴⁹ *ibid.*

Officers, Council Members and Area Facilitators to plan and design an outdoor sports court on the estate. The court was completed in 2002.

Southey Park Skateboard Project (Made For Ever Youth Centre Outreach): A group of young people worked with the outreach youth workers, South Gloucestershire Council officers and South Gloucestershire Council Members to consult with residents and work with others to plan and design a Skate Park. This piece of work developed into a larger project, which involved the young people in developing the facilities within the rest of the park.

Warmley Skateboard Project: Young people involved in a process to identify land and funding for provision of a local skateboard park. The project involved residential work, consultation, meetings with Parish Councillors and South Gloucestershire Councillors and visits to other skateboard facilities. Young people worked with youth workers, Councillors and Council Officers to obtain funding from a local company, 3 Parish Councils, the Community Safety group and a Landfill Tax grant as well as holding fundraising events.

C.8.4.3 Bath and North East Somerset state that their aim by 2007 is to ensure that no teenagers are without employment, education or training placement after the end of compulsory schooling⁵⁰. There are several initiatives for young people within BANES, including:

Democratic Action For B&NES Youth; a project developing ways of ensuring that young people's voices are heard and that they are part of decision-making processes⁵¹.

Managing a rural project – Mentoring Plus, Bath and North East Somerset: This project covers the City of Bath and adjacent North East Somerset. Consequently it has a large rural dimension. About half of the projects work is with young people from depressed rural areas⁵².

Bath Self-Help Housing Association: Pathways Project: provides a range of housing and support services to young people. The various initiatives are funded through a combination of rental income and other grant funding including Support Housing Management Grant and Transitional Housing Benefit and in the case of the Outreach Service, money from the Rough Sleepers Unit⁵³.

C.8.4.4 North Somerset Youth Service is targeted at the 13-19 age range. Due to the geographical nature of North Somerset there are a broad range of delivery methods utilised to provide services to young people including:

- Local Authority managed Youth Centres in key locations.
- Provision of Youth Centres in partnership with Voluntary and Community Sector partners.
- Development of Mobile Youth Provision.

⁵⁰ Bath and North Somerset website

⁵¹ BANES website

⁵² Youth Justice Board

⁵³ Bath Self Help Housing

- Detached and Outreach Projects.
- District-wide Youth Information and Support services.
- Specific district wide issue based projects: Participation, Accreditation, and Communities Against Drugs.⁵⁴

Council initiatives include a Youth Parliament, which aims to represent the views of young people in North Somerset.

School Based Mobile Youth Project: Working in partnership with Avon Youth Association. Operated in four Community Schools in Weston super Mare. The project, funded by Connexions West of England and the Youth Service, focused on the needs of young people in Year 10 at risk of disengaging from the learning process.

Making Tracks at Portishead: The Music and Arts Project (MAP) at Portishead Youth Centre has provided young people with the opportunity to extend their range of art and performance skills over a number of years.

C.8.5 The nature of the Partnership

C.8.5.1 Connexions West of England started in April 2001 as a 'direct delivery' organisation. It is a transmuted company formed from the Learning Partnership West. Connexions West of England has offices in Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire. 250 people are employed by Connexions in the four unitary authorities who work with, "70,000 individuals, 100 schools, 7 colleges, over 43 training providers and more than 5000 businesses". A board of 17 Directors manages the Partnership, which includes the Learning and Skills Council, the Probation Service, the four Local Authorities, the Voluntary and Community Sector, Police, Employment Services, the Chamber of Commerce, employers, the Small Business Service, and the Health Service⁵⁵.

C.8.5.2 The planned staffing resource for West of England Connexions as at March 2004 was for 213.2 full time Connexions staff, plus a total of 81.7 from partner organizations, making a total of 294.9. Of this planned level, the Connexions Service resource deployment profile for 2003-2004 was for: 57.5 PA's in schools, 13.5 in colleges and other further education, 3.3 with training providers, 0.1 with employers, 10.6 in Connexions office and 13.3 community based. For the period June 2003 to the end of March 2005, the aim is for a total of 169.5 directly employed PA's to be trained (of which, 72 should be for the full Diploma), plus another 105 sub-contracted employees and those working for partner organisations.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Youth Service Plan 2003-2006

⁵⁵ <http://www.connexionswest.org.uk/adults/aboutus/>

⁵⁶ Connexions West of England Business Plan 2003-2004

C.8.6 Current priorities

C.8.6.1 Current local priorities and targets for action for this Partnership include:

- Offering services to all teenagers;
- Developing and implementing preventative strategies in relation to barriers to achievement;
- Extending and improving services to young people who are NEET;
- Encourage and enable full participation;
- Increase engagement of young people in personal development opportunities;
- Increase range and quality of opportunities;
- Improve quality of Connexions services⁵⁷.

C.8.7 Focusing the sample in the Partnership area

C.8.7.1 Within this Partnership, the areas selected were Bristol and Weston-Super-Mare, which offers a more rural setting where issues of isolation and lack of transport are critical. Bristol on the other hand is a major urban centre with high levels of multiple deprivation, especially in inner city wards.

C.8.7.2 The sub-samples for Phase 1 were chosen after consultation with service managers and individual Personal Advisers, who provided details on the groups of young people being targeted in each area. From this information, it was felt that best access would be to young people who were looked after or homeless, those who were misusing substances and young people with emotional and behavioural difficulties.

C.8.7.3 In Phase 2, the research in this area concentrated mainly on young parents and carers, young people looked after and the homeless. In relation to settings, there was a particular focus on outreach work, informal youth provision and specialist agencies.

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Appendix D - Refining the hypotheses

D.1 Introduction

D.1.1 In realist evaluation methods, the more a complex system such as Connexions is “unpacked”, the more hypotheses are generated about what works. Practitioners will produce an endless variety of “theories” about how and why the programme works most effectively. Researchers will contribute their own observations and draw on programme publications and previous studies. There is then a necessary process of listing potential hypotheses, refining and prioritising them. As the evaluation proceeds, the hypotheses are developed becoming continually more specific. The means of exploring or testing them have to be devised and made explicit.

D.1.2 This is an ideal process. In practice, it is often a struggle making the thinking explicit and facing the choices about which issues to focus upon. It was felt that it would be helpful for this process to be to some degree visible, so that its complexity could be evident to the reader.

D.2 The Phase 1 hypotheses

D.2.1 The work of Phase 1 identified five key areas for analysis:

- young people;
- Connexions through the work and roles of Personal Advisers;
- the relationships forged between them;
- the Connexions context and how it influences the young people, the PAs, and the relationships formed between them;
- the broader context of choice and opportunity (or lack of it) within which both Connexions and young people exist.

D.2.2 The hypotheses explored at this stage are listed below. The findings of this phase are detailed in Section 4 of the report.

1. Impact is likely to be facilitated when
 - the young person has an identified need
 - the young person has a reference place or person to seek help
 - the young person wants the help which is available.
2. Impact will be affected by the PA’s understanding, interpretation and acceptance of their role within a specific service structure. It is likely to be inhibited where the PA does not fully understand or identify with the ethos and principles of Connexions.
3. The potential for impact will be enhanced if the PA and the young person establish a continuing relationship characterised by trust, mutuality and openness.

4. The potential for impact will be enhanced if the PA and the young person can negotiate a mutual accommodation of priorities about needs and support, which leads to an appropriate type of intervention.
5. The matching of support to need will be more closely aligned when there is effective, continuous, and consistent assessment to assess risk categorisation.
6. Impact will be inhibited if the level of demand arising from the needs of young people exceeds the capacity of the service to supply resources, because young people will not receive the support they need.
7. Different arrangements for delivering Connexions will influence the roles of PAs and the patterns of impact of Connexions.
8. The consequences, which arise from different arrangements for delivery, can be altered by attention to processes within the arrangements.
9. Availability of resources and opportunities for education, employment or training will set limits to the extent to which choices can be activated for the individual young person supported by the Connexions intervention.
10. If services and provision are positively aligned to create opportunities for young people, the potential for Connexions impact to occur will be enhanced.

D.3 Work on the second phase hypotheses

D.3.1 In the early months of the second year of the research, the findings of Phase 1 were developed and new hypotheses were formulated about the influence of settings and processes and the factors that might increase positive impact with risk different groups. These were derived from the fieldwork undertaken during Phase 1 and influenced by the views of PAs, managers and partners in exploratory interviews. The key research questions remained around the nature of impact, the most effective arrangements for PA deployment and delivery, and how impact could be maximised through the Connexions process.

D.3.2 At this point we had 53 hypotheses and were acutely aware of the need to prune and narrow down the focus. It was only feasible to examine closely a few of these hypotheses and to produce an “informed opinion” on a slightly larger number.

D.3.3 At this stage, colleagues at the Department of Education and Skills were asked to comment on priorities and their perceptions about where change could most easily be effected in response to the eventual findings. The response was a broad interest in all the potential areas of exploration.

D.3.4 For the interest of those who wish to follow the methodology and process of refinement, the hypotheses at this stage of development are listed below. Some more general hypotheses (shown in italics) were considered as

a device for reduction and summarising but a much larger number of more specific hypotheses were listed as a part of unpacking the Connexions process and how it was working. “Impact” here can be taken to mean positive impact with young people at risk (P1 and P2). Negative impact if it occurs will be specifically mentioned as such.

D.3.5 The first draft hypotheses for Phase 2:

General hypothesis A: Contact with young people at risk is best achieved and maintained when arrangements are in place which enable collaborative working between education providers (schools, FE, EWS, PRUs) and Connexions. The evidence of collaboration will be seen in arrangements including those for identifying young people at risk, agreeing the services to be provided and for whom, and for follow up/tracking.

Detailed hypotheses

1. Contact is most successfully achieved with young people of school age when the Connexions Partnership and schools work together professionally, as a single team, to identify young people at risk.
2. Contact is successfully maintained when there is an effective tracking system within the working arrangements agreed between the school (or any other partner) and the Connexions service.
3. Contact is most successfully maintained when tracking or follow up is undertaken by someone already known to the young person (e.g. learning mentor, Connexions PA).
4. Contact is most successfully maintained for young people who have left school when appropriate arrangements are in place for monitoring the progress and destinations of the young person at regular intervals.
5. Impact is inhibited where there are major breaks in contact over time with the Connexions Service, of say more than three months.
6. Impact is inhibited if contact with the designated PA is broken by work circumstances at Connexions or career transitions (e.g. new job, reorganisation, maternity leave) and there is no alternative/back up provision in place.
7. Contact is most effectively maintained when provision is specifically established to bridge transition stages in a young person’s life between school and EET (e.g. E2E).

General hypothesis B: Impact is more likely to be achieved when young people experience Connexions as congruent with their expectations of a youth-orientated service.

Detailed hypotheses

8. Successful contact with young people at risk can be more easily achieved when young people identify the Connexions Service as a general service open to all young people, not simply for young people with problems.
9. Successful contact with young people at risk can be more easily achieved when young people understand the Connexions Service to

be a holistic service and not a service chiefly concerned with jobs and careers.

10. Young people are more likely to experience contact with Connexions as negative and less likely to sustain contact if they experience the referral to Connexions as compulsory, for instance as a condition of receiving JSA or other normative functions.
11. Initial contact is less likely to be successful if the young person has prior positive expectations of, and therefore orientations towards, Connexions that are not met in the first contact with a PA. (Such expectations might for instance be formed by publicity, advertising, peer influence or school assembly presentations.)
12. The branding and marketing and the physical location of a Connexions service outlet will contribute to forming expectations of and orientations to what Connexions offers.
13. Contact is more likely to be sustained and congruent orientations achieved if the social characteristics of the Connexions PA in relation demographic variables and personal values (such as ethnicity, cultural/ethnic background, socio-economic status, regional accent etc.) are matched to the characteristics of the young person on their caseload. This is most likely to occur where young people have chosen a route to contact with Connexions that enables them to select a PA who is credible in their eyes.
14. Impact with P1 and P2 young people is enhanced by a trusting relationship with a PA, in which congruent orientations are brought to the relationship or negotiated within it by the PA and the young person.
15. Achieving congruent orientations will be crucially dependent on skilled listening to the expressed needs of the young person and treating those needs as priorities for action.
16. PAs from professional groups that have not traditionally placed a priority on listening skills to respond to a broad range of needs will demonstrate this skill area less effectively. (Examples may include Job Centre advisers, careers advisers, police and some health professionals; young people may report it as a failure to listen or to meet expressed needs.)
17. If PAs are deployed in a setting, which emphasises a culture of meeting specific targets such as EET outcomes, their ability to prioritise individualised listening to expressed needs will be diminished. (The culture of the setting will dominate.)

General hypothesis C: Impact is enhanced where there are clear and understood protocols in place which define the role of Connexions and the PA in relation to others who work with the client group of young people.

Detailed hypotheses

18. The impact of Connexions is enhanced for young people in an institution, organisation or programme (school, foyer, residential care, E2E) when PAs are based on site. (Local base and geographical proximity enable more effective referrals, quicker responses and face-to-face contact to build rapport.)

19. Impact will be enhanced if protocols or service level agreements are in place describing the role of Connexions and its partner organisation and roles of the PA and other key staff.
20. Impact will be enhanced when specialist PAs are deployed to deal with specific risk groups of young people.
21. Secondments of staff from partner agencies into Connexions will enhance the coordination and continuity of arrangements for multiple risk and specific risk groups.
22. Impact will be enhanced if there are mechanisms in place to identify and agree between agencies the key worker for each P1 young person facing multiple risks.

General Hypothesis D: The Partnership model will influence the pattern of delivery arrangements.

Detailed Hypothesis

23. Delivery arrangements will be more sharply divided between universal and targeted service in subcontracted Partnerships.

General hypothesis E: Accurate and sensitive assessment, which leads to coordinated intervention, is critical to enabling impact.

Detailed hypotheses

24. Impact will be inhibited if formal APIR assessment processes are applied at first contact or too soon in the relationship with the PA before trust building occurs.
25. A successful assessment of need can only take place when the task is specified in the job description of PAs and time is allocated to carry out the task.
26. Impact will be enhanced by a coordinated plan for the young person, achieved when APIR takes place and shared by a range of agencies.
27. Assessment will most effectively enhance impact if it is cumulative over a period and periodically reviewed (as opposed to a once only meeting.)

General hypothesis F: Young people's choice is an important determinant of impact.

Detailed hypotheses

28. Young people who self-refer are more likely to experience greater impact from their contact with Connexions than those who come to Connexions by other routes.
29. Self-referrals are more likely to occur where the branding and marketing of the Connexions Partnership appeals to young people.
30. Young people who want help from Connexions are more likely to experience impact than those who do not.
31. Successful contact between Connexions and young people at risk can be achieved when referrals take place from the range of other organisations/initiatives set up for young people, both statutory and voluntary. In practice, this requires close partnerships and working

- relationships with youth clubs, charities, Social Services Departments, housing agencies, Youth Offending Teams, pupil referral units etc.
32. Successful contact with young people, especially those in P1 who are most at risk, is more easily established through a positive referral from a friend or another adult whom they already trust.

General hypothesis G: Impact is enhanced when interventions are tailored to young people's starting points and capacities.

Detailed Hypotheses

33. The impact of interventions chosen is dependent on the relationship with the PA and on the congruence of orientations within that relationship.
34. Impact is maximised when interventions take place, which are tailored appropriately to the needs and wishes of the individual, including their personal development needs.
35. Positive outcomes from tailored interventions are most likely to occur where sustained contact is maintained by the PA, especially at key points such as a job interview or starting a course or activity. ("Sustained" in this context does not mean at a fixed and regular frequency such as automatically meeting every two weeks.)
36. Impact is enhanced if the PA has at his/her disposal a wide range of interventions for consideration. (A "wide range" of interventions might include individualised advice and guidance, personal development in group settings, activity programmes, financial support such as EMA, the Connexions card, and referral to specialist agencies.)
37. Impact is maximised where the PAs have training and support to keep them informed of the interventions and referral routes available.
38. The range of potential interventions will be increased, with a consequent increased chance of positive impact, where the PA understands the place of brokerage and has the skills necessary to work in this way with other agencies.
39. Financial support to stay in education or training (such as EMA or E2E) will enhance impact in terms of continuation rates in training or further education and reducing the chance of NEET outcomes.
40. PAs with high caseloads will use a narrower range of interventions than PAs with small caseloads (i.e. workload will restrict application of the full range of possible interventions.)

General Hypothesis H: Changes in the reasoning, resources and behaviour of young people leading to positive outcomes are most likely to occur within a congruent relationship with the PA where actions are jointly agreed.

Detailed Hypotheses

41. An action plan that is negotiated and understood by both the young person and the PA will increase the likelihood of positive outcomes.
42. For impact to be fully monitored and recorded, processes need to be in place, which give appropriate recognition to the range of potential outcomes.

Specific settings

Schools

43. Connexions has most impact for school age pupils when both types of PAs (education and community) work within the school context in a paired arrangement.
44. Impact is enhanced if the main one-to-one contact and support to young people with intensive support needs is provided by community based PAs.
45. The Connexions Service in schools will have greater impact if it allows young people to self-refer outside booked appointments.
46. Connexions in schools is most effective when a clear protocol or working agreement exists, which sets out a well-defined division of roles between the Connexions PA and other school staff (e.g. work experience coordinator, learning mentor, school counsellor, education social worker/ education welfare officer, or PSHE coordinator.) Such a protocol will reduce overlap, duplication and gaps in provision.
47. Impact is more likely to occur when all members of the pastoral care team (including the Connexions PA) work towards a single support and progression plan for each young person that is the result of a comprehensive but common assessment of needs.
48. Impact is more likely when there is a tracking system that moves with the young person after school leaving, especially for those who have not arranged post-16 options.
49. Impact is more likely to occur where there is an evident handover of cases from the school situation in periods of transition, allocating a PA to the young person before the transition occurs. Such transitions would include a move to alternative education or pupil referral units, which are not in the geographical catchment area of the school.

Particular risk groups

General hypothesis 1: In all risk groups, positive outcomes are more likely where the PA has the experience and skills to deal with particular risk situations/young people with specific risks, utilises appropriate interventions and liaises with/refers to the appropriate experts.

Detailed hypotheses

Young people with learning disabilities

50. Positive outcomes can more easily be achieved with this group of young people when Connexions works closely with the parents, carers or guardians. (This may at times include challenging family situations or protectiveness as well as response to their concerns.)

Young parents or young women at risk of pregnancy

51. Connexions will have a positive impact on risk behaviour associated with sexual health if its offices and outlets are used as outreach bases for sexual health organisations delivering information advice and contraceptive services.
52. Positive outcomes can more easily be achieved where Connexions is involved in sexual health education targeted to at-risk groups.

53. Positive outcomes will be more easily achieved when Connexions works in partnership with other organisations as part of an overarching teenage pregnancy strategy.

D.4 Finalising the Phase 2 hypotheses

D.4.1 A further period of refinement then reduced the number of hypotheses further. Particular regard was paid to the types of evidence to be gathered in order to test and examine the hypotheses and the availability of that evidence. This resulted in a final list of 37 hypotheses. The findings of the study in relation to these hypotheses are summarised at Section 7 of the report. The hypotheses are listed below, followed by a summary of the types of data gathered to operationalise and test them. Each hypothesis was related to specific data types to ensure that evidence would be available to examine it.

D.4.2 By this stage, the importance of the Connexions process had become very evident and the revised hypotheses were now grouped under different stages of this process (see Section 3 of the report). It had also become clear that there are different types of impact, occurring over different periods of time in the work of Connexions with a young person (see Section 2 of the report). The hypotheses were therefore mainly couched in terms of “outcomes” rather than impact, and this included “intermediate” outcomes as well as “final” outcomes. It was also decided that Partnership models (direct delivery, sub-contracted or lead body) would not be examined through a specific hypothesis, as this was less of a priority and liable to change in different areas.

D.4.3 The final list of Phase 2 hypotheses appears below.

- **Pre-contact and identification**
- 1. **The branding and marketing and the physical location of a Connexions Service outlet will contribute to forming expectations of and orientations to what Connexions offers.**
(This may include an increase in self-referral from appealing branding.)
- 2. **Contact is most successfully achieved with young people of school age when the Connexions Partnership (through its PAs) and schools work together as an integrated team in the school’s internal processes to identify young people at risk.**
- 3. **Young people in the highest risk groups will show improved outcomes when the pattern of support offered is intensive, regular, and continuous for a sufficient duration.**
- 4. **Positive outcomes are inhibited where there are major breaks in contact over time with the Connexions service.**
(This includes when contact with the designated PA is broken by work

circumstances at Connexions or career transitions [e.g. new job, reorganisation, maternity leave] and there is no back up provision.)

- **First contact and interaction**
- 5. **Successful contact with young people at risk can be more easily achieved when young people identify the Connexions Service as a general service open to all young people, not simply for young people with problems.**
- 6. **Successful contact with young people at risk can be more easily achieved when young people understand the Connexions Service to be a holistic service and not a service chiefly concerned with jobs and careers.**
- 7. **Young people are more likely to experience contact with Connexions as negative if they experience the referral to Connexions as compulsory, for instance as a condition of receiving JSA or other normative functions.**
(This may include reference to examples where young people are compliant for instrumental reasons but withdraw psychologically from commitment.)
- 8. **Initial contact is less likely to be successful if the young person has prior positive expectations of, and therefore orientations towards Connexions, that are not met in the first contact with a PA. (Such expectations might for instance be formed by publicity, advertising, peer influence or school assembly presentations.)**
- 9. **The Connexions Service in schools is more likely to have successful contact and outcomes if it allows young people to drop in outside booked appointments.**
- 10. **Successful contact between Connexions and young people at risk can be more easily achieved through self-referral or when positive referrals take place from the range of other organisations/initiatives set up for young people, both statutory and voluntary, or from friends or other trusted adults.**
(In practice, this requires close partnerships and will therefore include examination of the working relationships with youth clubs, charities, Social Services Departments, housing agencies, Youth Offending Teams, pupil referral units etc.)
- 11. **Successful contact can be enhanced by outreach to young people at risk.**
- **Second and further contacts, including their frequency, regularity, continuity and intensity**

- 12. Outcomes with P1 and P2 young people are enhanced by a trusting relationship with a PA, in which congruent orientations are brought to the relationship or negotiated within it by the PA and the young person.**
(This should include whether the changes in reasoning, resources and behaviour that lead to positive outcomes are more likely to occur where there is a congruent relationship and the young person's choices are taken into account and actions are jointly agreed.)
- 13. A trusting relationship will aid disclosure by the young person, which will assist assessment.**
- 14. Positive outcomes will be more likely where young people perceive the PA as listening to their expressed needs and treating those needs as priorities for action.**
- 15. Contact is more likely to be sustained and congruent orientations achieved where young people have chosen a route to contact with Connexions that enables them to select a PA who is credible in their eyes, which may include sharing certain demographic or social characteristics.**
- 16. The motivation and reasoning that young people bring to their interaction with Connexions will affect the outcomes they experience from the process.**
- 17. Successful outcomes are more likely where PAs are differently deployed within an integrated team, being equipped to respond to differing levels of need.**
- 18. The culture and management of target setting will influence the PA's ability to create congruence and manage their workload.**
- **Assessment and action-planning**
- 19. Impact will be inhibited if formal APIR assessment processes are applied too soon in the relationship with the PA before trust building occurs.**
- 20. Outcomes will be enhanced by - a coordinated plan for the young person, achieved when APIR takes place and shared by a range of agencies and by - an action plan that is negotiated and understood by both the young person and the PA.**
(This should include examination of the concept that young people most at risk often only take "one step at a time"; and that it may also be important that plans are used to build and hold stability so that young people can make more positive steps later.)

- **Interventions and referrals**

21. The outcome of interventions chosen is dependent on the relationship with the PA and on the congruence of orientations within that relationship.

22. Positive outcomes are maximised when interventions take place, which are tailored to the needs and wishes, starting points and capacities of the individual, including their personal development needs.

(“Tailored interventions” should include consideration of whether or not contact with parents, carers or guardians could be helpful or similarly of the need for leisure activities or training in skills for employment.)

23. Positive outcomes from tailored interventions are most likely to occur where sustained contact is maintained by the PA, especially at key points, such as a job interview or starting a course or activity.

(“Sustained” in this context does not mean at a fixed and regular frequency such as automatically meeting every two weeks.)

24. Positive outcomes are enhanced if the PA has at his/her disposal a wide range of interventions for consideration.

(A “wide range” of interventions might include individualised advice and guidance, personal development in group settings, activity programmes, financial support such as EMA, the Connexions card, and referral to specialist agencies.)

25. Positive outcomes are maximised where the PAs have training and support to keep them informed of the interventions and referral routes available.

26. The range of potential interventions will be increased, with a consequent increased chance of positive outcomes, where the PA uses brokerage effectively.

27. Financial support to stay in education or training (such as EMA or E2E) will enhance outcomes in terms of continuation rates in training or further education and reducing the chance of NEET outcomes.

- **Follow up and review**

28. Contact is most successfully maintained when there is an effective system of follow up and tracking within the working arrangements agreed between the school (or any other partner) and the Connexions Service, to trace where young people are and their progress.

(This should include reference to arrangements for follow up to be undertaken by someone already known to the young person;

arrangements for monitoring the progress and destinations of the young person at regular intervals; and bridging arrangements to training provision such as E2E and arrangements for transition from custody to community or follow up after an order [for young offenders]. Such transitions would also include a move to alternative education or pupil referral units, which are not in the geographical catchment area of the school.)

29. Geographical mobility of young people will impair the ability of Connexions to sustain contact and increase positive outcomes.

30. Assessment will most effectively enhance outcomes if it is cumulative over a period and periodically reviewed (as opposed to a once only meeting.)

- **Exit strategy and closure**

31. Pro-active attention to an exit strategy will increase successful outcomes and/or help to avoid loss of impact already achieved.

32. Over-dependence on PAs may lead to limitation of successful outcomes.

- **Protocols and service arrangements**

(Protocols and Service Level Agreements are not confined to any particular stage. They govern and clarify roles and responsibilities between agencies at various stages such as referral to or from Connexions, assessment, interventions, specialist support, monitoring or exit from the Connexions process.)

33. Outcomes will be enhanced if protocols or Service Level Agreements are in place describing the role of Connexions and its partner organisations and roles of the PA and other key staff. (This should include the need to have a well-defined division of roles for staff within the setting and should be considered for all settings, including schools.)

34. Positive outcomes will be enhanced when specialist PAs are deployed to deal with specific risk groups of young people.

35. Positive outcomes will be enhanced if there are mechanisms in place to identify and agree between agencies the key worker for each P1 young person facing multiple risks.

36. For all specific risk groups, positive outcomes are more likely where the PA has the experience and skills to deal with particular risk situations/young people with specific risks, utilises relevant interventions and draws on external expertise. Such an approach is likely to be the subject of protocols and strategies setting out these relationships.

37. For impact to be fully monitored and recorded, processes need to be in place, which give appropriate recognition to the range of potential outcomes, including intermediate outcomes and distance travelled (such as increased personal confidence.)

D.5 Data collection to examine the hypotheses

D.5.1 The means of collecting data to test and operationalise these hypotheses included:

- 1) Asking PAs about their career and training history; analysis of training materials.
- 2) Asking PAs about their work setting, the nature and importance given to EET targets relative to “soft” targets or practical help; by observation in that setting, with attention paid to the concretisation of the organisational priorities through branding, the use of space, the demeanour of workers, etc.
- 3) Analysis of administrative data, for instance partnership agreements/protocols.
- 4) Asking PAs about when and how they deploy APIR. Analysis of APIR documentation and tools used by PAs. Asking PAs about what “softer” interview strategies they use in initial contacts with young people.
- 5) Looking at existing responses to what young people expect from Connexions, and their subsequent experiences; analysis of publicity material (adverts, leaflets etc.); observation of school presentations. This included the use of peer researchers.
- 6) Asking young people how they found out about Connexions and first had contact with Connexions.
- 7) Looking at existing data on routes into Connexions, including whether the young person is referred as a compulsory measure, or whether it is voluntary contact and also including whether they are referred by others or self-referred. Often one young person will have multiple routes at different times, allowing some comparison within a single case.
- 8) Asking young people and PAs how and why breaks in contact occurred.
- 9) Examination of existing Phase 1 data on what young people said about their feelings about PAs, and paying particular attention to demographic data on young people and their PAs.
- 10) Asking young people if they had an action plan and how it was used.
- 11) Asking young people for their views on how and where Connexions had an impact on their lives.

12) Efforts to triangulate e.g. interviewing the young person, their PA and other workers, parents or friends about their perceptions.

13) Comparisons between sub-groups where differences might be expected e.g. settings with different delivery arrangements or between young people who have taken up training or work and those who have not.

14) Asking adult respondents about arrangements or collaboration with partners in the setting concerned around identifying young people at risk, assessment, agreement of interventions and follow up/tracking.

Appendix E - Targets of the Connexions Service

The priorities of the Connexions Service are translated each year into **targets for each Connexions Partnership**.

In 2004/5, **the key measure of success** was set out as the extent to which Connexions is **reducing the proportion of young people aged 16 – 18 who are not in employment, education or training (NEET)**.

- Partnerships live at the end of November 2002 have a target of reducing the proportions of 16-18 year olds who are NEET by 10% between November 2002 and November 2004. Partnerships starting after that date have a target of reducing NEET proportions by 5% between November 2003 and 2004.
- Each Partnership also has a ceiling target for the number of 16 -18 year-olds to be recorded as “situation not known”. This is aimed at increasing the robustness of the data so that progress in reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET can be reported with confidence in November 2004.

All Partnerships are also expected to set a **local target for increasing participation amongst a priority group**. This might be for instance a particular minority ethnic group or young people resident in a geographical area with low participation levels.

Partnerships are required to monitor the progress of young people from black and ethnic minority groups and those with learning difficulties and disabilities as part of the routine Management Information, as these groups are known to be more likely to underachieve and are under-represented in post-16 education and training.

Cross-Government targets are monitored through other plans. The Connexions Service supports these crosscutting targets.

LEA Education Development Plan targets are set in agreement with DfES for:

- Raising the percentage of 16 year-olds achieving 5 or more GCSEs at grades A*-C (or equivalent);
- Increasing the percentage of 16 year-olds obtaining 5 or more GCSEs including English and Maths at grade G or above (or equivalent);
- Decreasing the percentage of half days missed by pupils at maintained secondary schools.

Local Learning and Skills Council targets aim to:

- Increase the number of 19 year-olds achieving a qualification equivalent to NVQ level 2 between 2000 and 2004;
- Increase the number of 16-18 year olds in structured learning by 2004.

The **teenage pregnancy targets** aim to:

- Reduce the under-18 conception rate by 50% (by 2010) and establish a downward trend in the conception rate for under 16s;

- For 60% of 16-19 year old mothers to be in employment, education and training by 2010.

Targets for care leavers seek to:

- Increase the levels of participation in employment, education and training for care leavers aged 19, so that levels for this group are at least 75% of all young people in the same area by December 2004.

Shared targets with the Home Office are:

- (For young offenders) to ensure that 90% of 13-18 year-olds, supervised by Youth Offending Teams, are in education, training and employment by December 2004;
- (In relation to substance misuse) to refer all young people, with a drug related problem, to specialist support.

(Source: SCYPG. *Connexions: Guidance on the Performance Management Framework*, April 2004.)

Appendix F – References

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Appendix G - Supplementary tables

G.1 Introduction

G.1.1 This Appendix provides a number of additional detailed tables on the risk categories and relationships to multiple risk and contact with Connexions, as referenced in the main text.

G.2 Tables related to Section 4- Findings from the first phase

Table G1
Age of young people in the sample

Age	Frequency	Per cent
12	1	0.2
13	22	3.8
14	59	10.3
15	158	27.6
16	139	24.3
17	123	21.5
18	48	8.4
19	13	2.3
20	4	0.7
21	3	0.5
23	2	0.3
Don't know	1	0.2
Total	573	100

Table G2
Gender of young people in the sample

Gender	Frequency	Per cent
Male	293	51.1
Female	280	48.9
Total	573	100.0

Table G3
Ethnicity of young people in the sample

Ethnicity	Frequency	Per cent
White British	500	87.3
White Other	10	1.7
All other	59	10.3
Not known	4	0.7
Total	573	100.0

Details of "all other" in Table 3:

Black/Black British: Caribbean	13
Black/Black British: African	4
Black/ Black British: Other	6
Asian/Asian British: Indian	6
Asian/Asian British: Pakistani	10
Asian/Asian British: Bangladeshi	3
Asian/Asian British: Other	2
Mixed	11
Other	4

Table G4
Year of education and educational status of young people in the sample

	Frequency	Per cent
Year 8	5	0.9
Year 9	33	5.6
Year 10	85	14.8
Year 11	147	25.7
Year 12	36	6.3
Other	179	31.2
Not in education	83	14.5
Not known	5	0.9
Total	573	100.0

Table G5
Current education, training or employment status of young people in the sample

	Frequency	Per cent
School	290	50.6
Further Education	75	13.1
Higher Education	1	0.2
Training	112	19.5
Employed	12	2.1
NEET	74	12.9
Transitional state	8	1.4
Don't know	1	0.2
Total	573	100.0

Table G6
Types of difficulties reported at school by young people

	Frequency	Per cent
None	177	30.9
LDD	48	8.4
SEN	37	6.5
Literacy / Numeracy	58	10.1
Behaviour	143	25.0
Relationships	36	6.3
Conflict	36	6.3
Other	26	4.5
Not known	12	2.1
Total	573	100.0

Footnote: For all these tables, individuals were coded once on each question. There is no double counting. The total number of individuals is 573 in each table. However, an individual will obviously display more than one characteristic and can display more than one risk condition.

Table G7
Proportion of young people assessed as SEN (special educational needs)

	Frequency	Per cent
No	414	72.3
Yes	83	14.5
Other	1	0.2
Not known	75	13.1
Total	573	100.0

Table G8
Experience of bullying amongst young people

	Frequency	Per cent
Been bullied / not been a bully	164	28.6
Not been bullied / not been a bully	280	48.9
Been a bully / not been bullied	21	3.7
Been a bully / been bullied	10	1.7
Not known	98	17.1
Total	573	100.0

Table G9
Experience of truancy amongst young people

	Frequency	Per cent
No	231	40.3
For the odd day or lesson	116	20.2
For particular days or lessons	84	14.7
For several days at a time	47	8.2
For weeks at a time	65	11.3
Other	10	1.7
Not known	20	3.5
Total	573	100.0

Table G10
Experience of suspension or exclusion amongst young people

	Frequency	Per cent
No	307	53.6
Fixed term exclusion (suspension)	161	28.1
Permanent exclusion (expelled)	84	14.7
Other	7	1.2
Not known	14	2.4
Total	573	100.0

Table G11
Distribution of risk in sample of young people: ten risk dimensions plus all educational difficulties, bullying, SEN, truanting, suspension, trouble with the police, and lone parent family

Number of risks present	Frequency	Per cent
None	35	6.1
1	64	11.2
2	55	9.6
3	69	12.0
4	77	13.4
5	75	13.1
6	66	11.5
7	33	5.8
8 plus	99	17.3
Total	573	100.0

Table G12

Distribution of risk in sample of young people: four educational risk dimensions plus all educational difficulties, bullying, SEN, truanting and suspension

Number of risks present	Frequency	Per cent
None	70	12.2
1	82	14.3
2	68	11.9
3	104	18.2
4	87	15.2
5	62	10.8
6 plus	100	17.5
Total	573	100.0

Table G13

Proportion of each age group receiving the lowest levels of support

Age	Connexions support level		Total for whole sample
	None	Minimal	
12			1 0.2%
13	12 54.5%	2 9.1%	22 3.8%
14	13 22.0%	29 49.2%	59 10.3%
15	30 19.0%	77 48.7%	158 27.6%
16	12 8.6%	61 43.9%	139 24.3%
17	6 4.9%	64 52.0%	123 21.5%
18	7 14.6%	7 14.6%	48 8.4%
19	4 30.8%	5 38.5%	13 2.3%
20*			4 0.7%
21*			3 0.5%
23*			2 0.3%
Total	88 100.0%	247 100.0%	573 100.0%

Note: Those aged over 19 would not normally be regarded as eligible for Connexions support, with the exception of young people with learning difficulties. Some of the older age group may also have left school before Connexions came into being in their area.

G.3 Tables relating to the follow up cohort and changes in risk categorisation over the follow up period

Table G14

Education, employment and training situation in the follow up cohort

	Frequency	Per cent
School	50	31.1
Sixth form	8	5.0
College: further education	8	5.0
College: preliminary/foundation course	11	6.8
Higher education	1	0.6
Training	29	18.0
Employed	13	8.1
Not in employment, education or training	35	21.7
In transitional state	6	3.7
Total	161	100.0

Table G15

Changes in parent/carer status in the follow up cohort

	Frequency	Per cent
Was not parent/carer, is not now	129	80.1
Was not parent/carer, is now	8	5.0
Was a parent/carer, remains so	21	13.0
Was a parent/carer, is not now	2	1.2
Don't know	1	0.6
Total	161	100.0

Table G16

Changes in homelessness and care leaver status in follow up cohort

	Frequency	Percent
Was not care leaver/homeless, is not now	138	85.7
Was not care leaver/homeless, is now	2	1.2
Was homeless, remains so	11	6.8
Was a careleaver/homeless, is not now	10	6.2
Total	161	100.0

Table G17
Changes in health risk and disability in follow up cohort

	Frequency	Per cent
Was not disabled/ill, is not now		82.0
Was not disabled/ill, is now	6	3.7
Was disabled/ill, remains so		9.9
Was disabled/ill, is not now	5	3.1
	2	1.2
Total		100.0

Table G18
Changes in substance misuse risk categorisation in follow up cohort

	Frequency	Percent
Was not substance misuser, is not now	124	
Was not substance misuser, is now	4	2.5
Was a substance misuser, remains so	19	11.8
Was a substance misuser, is not now	11	6.8
Don't know	1	0.6
Not asked	2	1.2
Total	161	100.0

Table G19
Changes in offender status in follow up cohort

	Frequency	Per cent
Was not an offender, is not now	112	69.6
Was an offender, remains so	22	13.7
Was an offender, is not now	23	14.3
Don't know	2	1.2
Not asked	2	
Total	161	100.0

Table G20
Changes in categorisation of emotional/behavioural problems in follow up cohort

	Frequency	Per cent
and does not now	118	73.3
Had E/B problems and continues to do so	24	14.9
Had E/B problems, and has improved	14	8.7
Don't know	3	1.9
Not asked	1	0.6
Total	160	99.4
Not coded	1	
Total	161	100.0

G.4 Educational Maintenance Allowance

Table G21

Whether EMA was available in the area for young people in the Phase 1 cohort

	Frequency	Per cent
No	165	28.8
Yes	302	52.7
Not known	106	18.5
Total	573	100.0

Table G22

Whether young people in the Phase 1 cohort perceived EMA as affecting their decision to continue in learning

	Frequency	Per cent
No, EMA does not /would not affect decision	200	34.9
Yes, EMA does/ would affect YP's decision		22.0
Not known	247	43.1
Total	573	100.0

G.5 Ethnicity within the sample

The numbers of black and minority ethnic young people in the sample are in most cases very small. It is not easy to draw any conclusions and any amalgamation of categories would be misleading. Broadly speaking, there appears to be a lower prevalence of some risks amongst the Black groups than amongst the White British young people, an even lower one for the Asian groups, and an increased prevalence of risks amongst mixed-race (dual heritage) young people. This does not hold for every risk factor, but it is an overall trend. All the cross-tabulations of risks and ethnic categories are set out here so that the comparisons can be made.

Table G23
Parent/Carer * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Parent/ carer?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
No	479 82.7%	4 30.8%	23 74.2%	22 95.7%	11 73.3%	6 75.0%	5 100.0%	550 81.6%
Yes	93 16.1%	2 15.4%	8 25.8%	1 4.3%	4 26.7%	1 12.5%		109 16.2%
Don't know	3 0.5%					1 12.5%		4 0.6%
Not asked	4 0.7%	7 53.8%						11 1.6%
Total	579 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	674 100.0%

Table G24
Looked after/Homeless * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Looked after or homeless?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
No	501 86.4%	5 38.5%	25 80.6%	20 87.0%	12 80.0%	4 50.0%	5 100.0%	572 84.7%
Yes	76 13.1%	1 7.7%	6 19.4%	3 13.0%	3 20.0%	4 50.0%		93 13.8%
Don't know	2 0.3%							2 0.3%
Not asked	1 0.2%	7 53.8%						8 1.2%
Total	580 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	675 100.0%

Table G25
Disability/Health problems * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Disability or health problems?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
No	499 85.9%	4 30.8%	29 93.5%	21 91.3%	12 80.0%	7 87.5%	4 80.0%	576 85.2%
Yes	72 12.4%	2 15.4%	2 6.5%	2 8.7%	3 20.0%		1 20.0%	82 12.1%
Don't know	5 0.9%					1 12.5%		6 0.9%
Not asked	5 0.9%	7 53.8%						12 1.8%
Total	581 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	676 100.0%

Table G26
Asylum seeker/Refugee/Immigrant * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Asylum seeker or refugee?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	Categories	Mixed		Not Known	
No	580 100.0%	5 38.5%	28 90.3%	22 95.7%	15 100.0%	4 50.0%	5 100.0%	659 97.6%
Yes		8 61.5%	3 9.7%	1 4.3%		4 50.0%		16 2.4%
Total	580 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	675 100.0%

Table G27
Substance abuse * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Substance abuse?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
No	463 80.0%	4 30.8%	29 93.5%	22 95.7%	11 73.3%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	542 80.4%
Yes	103 17.8%	2 15.4%	2 6.5%	1 4.3%	4 26.7%			112
Don't know	9							9 1.3%
Not asked	4 0.7%	7 53.8%						11 1.6%
Total	579 100.0%	11 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	674 100.0%

Table G28
Offending * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Offending	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed		Not Known	
No	429 74.2%	5 38.5%	25 80.6%	21 91.3%	9 60.0%	6 75.0%	3 60.0%	498 74.0%
Yes	134 23.2%	1 7.7%	6 19.4%	2 8.7%	5 33.3%		2 40.0%	150 22.3%
Don't know	12 2.1%				1 6.7%	2 25.0%		15 2.2%
Not asked	3 0.5%	7 53.8%						10 1.5%
	578 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	673 100.0%

Table G29
Emotional/Behavioural problems * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Emotional or behavioural problems?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
No	374 64.7%	4 30.8%	24 77.4%	21 91.3%	9 60.0%	5 62.5%	3 60.0%	440 65.4%
Yes	187 32.4%		6 19.4%	2	5 33.3%		2 40.0%	204
Don't know	17 2.9%		1 3.2%		1 6.7%	3 37.5%		3.3%
Not asked		7 53.8%						7
Total	578 100.0%	13	31 100.0%	100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	673 100.0%

Table G30
Underachiever * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Under-achiever?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
No	342	4	19	20	8	3	4	400
		30.8%	61.3%	87.0%	53.3%	37.5%	80.0%	59.3%
Yes	196		9	3	7	3		220
	33.9%	15.4%	29.0%	13.0%	46.7%	37.5%		32.6%
Don't know	40		3			2	1	46
			9.7%			25.0%	20.0%	6.8%
Not asked	1	7						8
	0.2%	53.8%						1.2%
Total	579	13	31		15	8	5	
	100.0%		100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%		100.0%

Table G31
LDD/SEN * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

LDD/SEN?	Ethnicity category							Total
	British	White other	Categories	All Asian Categories		Other	Known	
No		6 46.2%		21 91.3%	9	4 50.0%	3 60.0%	507 75.2%
Yes	17.4%		6 19.4%	2 8.7%	4 26.7%	1 12.5%	2 40.0%	116 17.2%
Don't know	32 5.5%				2 13.3%	3 37.5%		37 5.5%
Not asked	7 1.2%	7						14 2.1%
Total	579 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8	5 100.0%	100.0%

Table G32
School resisting * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

School resisting?	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
No	377	2	23	20	8		3	437
		15.4%		87.0%		50.0%	60.0%	64.8%
Yes	184	4	7	3	6	3	2	209
	31.8%		22.6%	13.0%	40.0%	37.5%	40.0%	31.0%
Don't know	16		1		1	1		19
	2.8%		3.2%			12.5%		2.8%
	2	7						9
	0.3%	53.8%						1.3%
Total	579	13	31	23	15	8	5	674
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table G33
Number of risk factors * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Number of risks	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
None	141 24.0%	1 7.7%	5 16.1%	13 56.5%	1 6.7%	3 37.5%	2 40.0%	166 24.3%
1	23.5%	7 53.8%		5 21.7%	26.7%			165 24.2%
	112 19.1%		8 25.8%	3 13.0%	2 13.3%	1 12.5%		126
3	75 12.8%	3 23.1%	4 12.9%	1 4.3%	3 20.0%	2 25.0%		88 12.9%
4	36 6.1%	7.7%	2 6.5%		2 13.3%	2 25.0%	2 40.0%	45 6.6%
5 plus	85 14.5%	1 7.7%	2 6.5%	1 4.3%	13 20.0%			92 13.5%
Total	587 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	682 100.0%

Table G34
Numbers of young people displaying one or more educational risks * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

Number with 4 education risks	Ethnicity category							Total
	White British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
None	229	8	13	16	4	4	3	277
	39.0%	61.5%	41.9%	69.6%	26.7%	50.0%	60.0%	40.6%
1	160	2	9	5	4	1		181
	27.3%	15.4%	29.0%	21.7%	26.7%	12.5%		26.5%
2	107	3	8		4	3		126
	18.2%	23.1%	25.8%		26.7%			18.5%
3	70		1	1	2		2	76
	11.9%		3.2%	4.3%	13.3%		40.0%	11.1%
4	21				1			22
	3.6%				6.7%			3.2%
Total	587	13	31	23	15	8	5	682
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table G35
Connexions support levels * Ethnicity category Crosstabulation

CX Support Level	Ethnicity category							Total
	British	White other	All Black Categories	All Asian Categories	Mixed	Other	Not Known	
None	86 14.7%	7 53.8%	3 9.7%	3 13.0%	3 20.0%	2 25.0%		104 15.2%
Minimal	194 33.0%	1 7.7%	8 25.8%	12 52.2%	1 6.7%	3 37.5%	3	222 32.6%
Intermediate	119 20.3%	3 23.1%	9 29.0%	3 13.0%				134 19.6%
	143 24.4%	1 7.7%	7 22.6%	3 13.0%	9 60.0%	3 37.5%	1 20.0%	167 24.5%
Don't know	45 7.7%	1 7.7%	4 12.9%	2 8.7%	2 13.3%		1 20.0%	55 8.1%
Total	587 100.0%	13 100.0%	31 100.0%	23 100.0%	15 100.0%	8 100.0%	5 100.0%	682 100.0%

G6 Professional background of PAs in the Phase 2 sample in relation to setting

Table G36
Professional background of PAs in the sample and setting in which they worked

	Secondary School	Special School	Alternative educational provision (school age)	Training provision	College	Connexions centre	Connexions shop	Multi-agency team (general)	Total
Careers adviser	21 35.6%	2 40.0%		3 37.5%	1 14.3%	14 43.8%	8 57.1%		
Youth worker	9 15.3%		9 69.2%	1 12.5%	5 71.4%	1 3.1%	6 42.9%	2 100.0%	
Social worker	1 1.7%					3 9.4%			
Educational social worker/welfare officer	2 3.4%			3 37.5%		1 3.1%			
Teacher	7 11.9%					2 6.3%			See end of 2 nd half of table, below
Health professional									
New entrant [unqualified]	4 6.8%			1 12.5%		2 6.3%			
Learning mentor	2 3.4%								
Multiple experience	1 1.7%	3 60.0%				1 3.1%			
First Job	3 5.1%								
Other	2 3.4%					3 9.4%			
Not asked	7 11.9%		4 30.8%		1 14.3%	5 15.6%			
Total	59 100.0%	5 100.0%	13 100.0%	8 100.0%	7 100.0%	32 100.0%	14 100.0%	2 100.0%	

Table G36 cont'd.

	YOT (multi- agency)	Leavin g care team	Foyer (or other housing agency)	Youth service	Voluntary youth organisation	Specialis t provisio n	Multipl e setting s	Other	Total
Careers adviser	2 33.3%						6 30.0%	1 50.0 %	58 31.0%
Youth worker			8 88.9%	1 50.0%			6 30.0%		48 25.7%
Social worker			1 11.1%				1 5.0%		6 3.2%
Educational social worker/ welfare officer									6 3.2%
Teacher		1 33.3%			1 100.0%	1 33.3%	4 20.0%		16 8.6%
Health professional						1 33.3%			1 0.5%
New entrant [unqualified]									7 3.7%
Learning mentor									2 1.1%
Multiple experience	1 16.7%	2 66.7%				1 33.3%		1 50.0 %	11 5.9%
First Job									3 1.6%
Other	3 50.0%						2 10.0%		10 5.3%
Not asked				1 50.0%			1 5.0%		19 10.2%
Total	6 100.0%	3 100.0%	9 100.0%	2 100.0%	1 100.0%	3 100.0%	20 100.0%	2 100.0 %	187 100.0%

G7 Tables relating to young parents and carers in the NEET sample

Table 37
Number of risk factors for NEET parents / carers

Number of risks	Parent/Carer				Total
	No	Yes	Don't know	Not asked	
	8				8
	11.6%				7.0%
1	9	10		2	21
	13.0%	23.8%		100.0%	18.4%
2	17	12	1		30
	24.6%	28.6%	100.0%		26.3%
3	10	10			20
	14.5%	23.8%			17.5%
4	9				9
	13.0%				7.9%
5 plus	16	10			26
	23.2%	23.8%			22.8%
Total	69	42	1	2	114
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Table 38
Number of educational risks for NEET parents / carers

Number of educational risks	Parent/Carer				Total
	No	Yes	Don't know	Not asked	
None	18	15		2	35
	26.1%			100.0%	30.7%
1	15	16	1		32
	21.7%	38.1%	100.0%		28.1%
2	21	6			27
	30.4%	14.3%			23.7%
3	10	4			14
	14.5%	9.5%			12.3%
4	5	1			6
	7.2%				
Total	69	42	1	2	114
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

Appendix H - Additional illustrative examples

H.1 Introduction

We have conducted more than 800 interviews with young people over the course of this study, including follow up interviews over a period of time. We have been unable to do justice to the complexity and poignancy of their experiences in this report. The archive is potentially a rich vein for research and training material. In this Appendix, we set out a few more illustrative examples, for which there has been insufficient space in the main text. These cases are arranged here chiefly by risk group but it should be noted that they often illustrate more than one aspect of risk or more than one feature of the PA relationship or the Connexions process.

H.2 Young people who say they do not know about Connexions at all.

► One such respondent was a fifteen year-old white male, who was interviewed at a Connexions centre. He said he had no previous knowledge of Connexions and had only come along to be with friends. He tends to be self-reliant when it comes to dealing with problems, or will turn to his friends or his mum. He said he would not choose to speak to Connexions about anything now he had seen the provision and that he did not know if his school had a Connexions worker.

I: *Do you remember the first time you ever heard of Connexions?*

R: *I've never really heard of it really. I probably heard about it today. Like 'cos my friend, he's [here]....*

I: *So you thought you'd come along to see what's happening? And, what do you think Connexions is about?*

R: *I haven't got a clue. I don't know what it's about.*

I: *Right, so now that you've had a little bit of a look around, you really don't know?*

R: *No.*

I: *And no one has explained it to you; what it is for?*

R: *No.*

I: *Is it something that is interesting? Would you like to find out what it's about or are you really just here to see your mate?*

R: *Yea, just to see him really.*

I: *And do you have Connexions at school at all? Is there a Connexions office at school?*

R: *Don't know.*

H.3 Young people with multiple needs, who also suffered breaks in contact

► At our first interview, Katie had been very positive about her monthly contact with Connexions, describing her PA as a 'friend'. However, in her follow-up interview, her appraisal of the service was completely different. This PA had encouraged her to apply for and attend a teacher-training course at a local college. However, prior to her commencing this course 6 months

previously, all contact with her PA had stopped abruptly. Katie had started college, but it appeared that the course was inappropriate, considering her needs (Katie had disability issues: chronic fatigue syndrome and cerebral palsy), and she had to drop out. Then 3 months later she had a postcard from a different PA, and although the postcard explained that the PA would be in contact soon, this did not happen. This young person was wholly critical of Connexions: suggesting that they did not meet her expectations, and that the service had had a detrimental impact upon her future aspirations, rather than fostering her abilities through an individualised package of support.

► When she was first interviewed, Danielle's mother had just died and her relations with her father were clearly strained. Danielle had missed a lot of her schooling whilst caring for her sick mother (and as a result was behind in her schoolwork). This young person was clearly under a lot of pressure at home as well as at school. Danielle had been referred to the Connexions PA based at her school and they had spoken on two occasions. They had mainly discussed careers and jobs, and her caring responsibilities, and accommodation (her father had forced her out of the family home and she was living temporarily with her boyfriend's parents). Danielle was advised by the attendance officer at her school that she would be unable to sit any of her GCSEs because she had missed too much of her schooling. The school referred Danielle to a local youth project for alternative education provision. In the follow-up interview, we found that she had not seen a Connexions PA since leaving school (despite her obvious need for support) and that she had now also dropped out of the alternative provision, making her NEET. After leaving the project, Madeline self-referred to a PA based in her local Connexions shop to discuss her ambitions to be a tattoo artist. The PA was unhelpful and knew nothing about accessing training for this career path. Danielle felt let down by Connexions since they could not help her with her tattooing career and now had no plans to use the service in the future. She said, "*Connexions can't do anything for me because I've got no qualifications*". The main factors leading to her negative view of the service were the lack of sustained contact during transition periods, and a perceived inability to provide information on her chosen career path.

H.4 Teenage parents

► One young woman, aged 18, and pregnant at the time of the interview, told us that she was not looking for work at the moment: "*I can't get a job because no one will employ me as I'm pregnant*." She hoped that she would be able to get on a New Deal course, once her baby was born, which would lead to a part time job "*when the baby's two years of age*". This young woman had a positive wish to be in employment so that she could support her baby, but she recognised that this was not going to happen for quite some time. This young woman did not think she had any contact with Connexions but in fact attended a young mothers' group run by a Connexions PA. She did feel, however, that she needed help with finding her own accommodation.

► One young woman, aged 18, had moved here from the Caribbean in 1997. She told us that her PA made her laugh and was really helpful and

understanding. *“She comes down to your level to help you understand but then becomes a professional again when she needs to be.”* She added that she was the only one among her friends who was pregnant and that she was living too far away to see them. Her PA had brought her out of her shell, improved her self-esteem and helped her to make the effort to help herself. Because of her positive contact with Connexions, this young woman had herself put two of her friends in touch with the Service.

H.5 Young offenders and substance misusers

► An interview with a seventeen year-old white young man showed that he had a history of offending and had been sent to boarding school for long periods of his life. He appeared to have an income from illegal activities but was cooperating with E2E for his own reasons.

I: Who put it you in touch with the course?

R: Connexions.

I: OK, how long have you been on the course for?

R: 5 weeks.

I: How long will you be staying on for?

R: Until I get my licence 'cos it costs too much money to do it, if you are on the dole. I don't want a job; don't know why, I just don't.

I: How are you managing for money?

R: How am I managing? I can't tell you that. I've always got money every day, I've got at least £20.

I: OK, officially how are you managing for money?

R: Off this place, the E2E, £40 per week.

I: Can I say that the impression I'm getting is that although you get money from E2E, you supplement this with other activities. Is it illegal activities?

R: Yep, I sell stolen goods and drugs, I don't rob them, I buy them and sell them for cheap.

I: How long have you been in the game?

R: I've been selling stolen goods all my life. When I was in school we used to nick pens and sell them, then it got on to mobile phones and things like that.

I: Have you ever been caught?

R: No.

I: What sort of plans, do you have plans for the future?

R: Just get rich.

I: How would you do that?

R: I can't tell you that, it's illegal stuff.

I: Have you ever thought of a life that not illegal, going straight?

R: Only when I was younger. I will go straight but I don't want to, I would rather stay like a boy gangster all my life. I've had it good and all that but I lost it though no, I didn't lose it, I threw it away on purpose. My Nan didn't know about it.

I: You say you'd rather be a gangster than work, why?

R: It's easy money, it's the only deal 'cos of the money. You can make like twenty grand a day. What job could you earn that? I'm going to run a brothel in Amsterdam, the red light district; it's the best place in the world.

H.6 The homeless and care leavers

► Ben was a very vulnerable 17 year old whose Connexions PA had been able to help in some substantial ways. His mother had died and he had been “kicked out” of the family home by his father. He had had a Special Needs statement, had been bullied at school and had left without any qualifications. When we first saw him, he was taking the drug Temazepan, prescribed by the doctor to “*calm him down*”, which he said just made him feel constantly sleepy. His PA had found him housing association accommodation, and had successfully helped him get JSA, in spite of his age. She had also tried to arrange bereavement counselling. He had told his PA that he did not really want to do training but wanted to find a job, so the PA was trying to help him with that. Eight months later, at a second interview, he no longer had any contact with his father, and was training to be a mechanic. What had made this relationship work seemed to be at least partly that his PA had listened and taken on board Ben’s wish to find a job rather than getting training. He also valued her dependability: if he could not speak to her straight away, she always got back to him.

H.7 Asylum seekers and refugees

► Ahmad is an 18-year-old asylum seeker from Afghanistan. He has been in the UK for approximately a year. Most of his family had been killed in Afghanistan before he came to the UK. He has never been to school and has no qualifications. He came into contact with Connexions through a referral from the Jobcentre and sees a PA weekly as a condition of receiving his benefits. He told his PA that he was actively trying to find employment but found that his limited English skills acted as a barrier to him finding work. His PA responded to this need by referring him to an ESOL course, his English skills have now improved and he hopes to start a job when the course finishes.

► Martha is a 17-year-old asylum seeker from the Congo. The Red Cross sent her to the UK in December 2003. She had been married at fourteen years old, but no longer has any contact with her husband in the Congo nor with any other of her family members. Martha had received little education in her country of origin. She came to Connexions as a condition of receiving her benefits. As well as being NEET, Martha was heavily pregnant and was living in temporary shared accommodation. Her PA was able to respond to her pressing housing needs by liaising with Social Services and the Housing Department to secure permanent accommodation for her and is now ensuring that she has the support she requires during the final stages of her pregnancy. After she has had her baby, Martha hopes to do an ESOL course to improve her English skills and in the long term would like to secure a job so that she can support her baby financially.

H.8 School resisters and truants

► One 15 year-old had had no contact with Connexions, despite longstanding attendance problems.

I: Have you ever come here to the Connexions centre?

R: I didn't even know it was here. I got an appointment card for an appointment but for family reasons I couldn't go. My sister wasn't well.

I: Is there any adult worker in your life that you talk to?

R: No...

I: How old are you now?

R: 15; I should be in Year 11.

I: So would you be doing your GCSEs if you were in school?

R: Yeah.

I: You left school in Year 10 because you missed so much of it, has anyone from school been in touch with you?

R: No, nothing at all.

I: Were you excluded?

R: No I just wasn't going in. I just stopped going.

I: And they haven't been in touch with you?

R: Only to put me in touch with alternative provision.

I: But you left there now?

R: Yeah, the last time was February, four months ago.

I: Anyone been in touch since?

R: No.

I: The school?

R: No

I: Alternative provision?

R: No

► One young man, who was 15, had stopped attending school about a year previously, after his grandfather died of cancer, and a young niece of pneumonia. He told us that “*things all boiled up*”, culminating in his not going to school. He took time off when his relatives died and it just got harder and harder to go back. At the time of the interview, he was attending school only to take some exams, but was finding it difficult. He had an extremely positive attitude to education, without which he thought we “*would be nothing, would be back where we started*”. He thought he would have to retake his GCSEs, and his PA was helping him apply for college. He became aware of Connexions while he was at school and an uncle phoned them for him, because he felt too shy to do it himself.

H.9 Young people with special needs

One 17 year-old Black British young woman attended a school for young people with special educational needs. The day before being interviewed she had attended an open evening where the Connexions PA was present. The interview illustrated clearly that she had great difficulty making use of the information provided.

I: If we come on to talking about Connexions now, what do you think Jane [PA name] does?

R: [shrugs]

I: Jane works for Connexions, doesn't she? What do you think Connexions is about?

R: It's about learning.

I: What else does Connexions do?

R: You use a pink folder.

I: You have a pink folder from Connexions? And what's in the folder?

R: Writing.....

I: Is that too hard a question?

R: Yeah!

H.10 Young people who were NEET, with other attendant risks

► Matt, who was 18, had been excluded from school at age 14. He was dyslexic, had hated school and said he had been a bully. He had no qualifications. He could not remember how he had heard about Connexions, but he had considerable contact with the service and believed that it was for helping with education and training. He said: *"I think it's good the way they keep checking up on you [with follow up letters]. It shows at least they give a shit."* He had seen several different PAs, which he admitted was mostly because he found it hard to stick with anything, but described telling his story to lots of different people again and again as frustrating. He thought that Connexions *"certainly haven't done anything bad for me"*, and so he would probably try to use them for help with getting more education or training. However, as he was living in a squat at the time of the interview, openly admitted to regular drug use, and was currently trying to avoid the police (he had a history of offending, including Actual Bodily Harm, being drunk and disorderly, theft, and shoplifting), jobs and education were not at the top of his agenda. By the age of 18, this young man was clearly not easy to help.

► Colin described how, when he was NEET, his PA intervened directly with the Jobcentre to secure his JSA claim. Their relationship is crucial to Colin, without it, he said he would *"probably end up on the streets"*. In our follow-up interview, he had made real progress, and was attending a mechanics project arranged through a new Connexions PA. They in turn were helping arrange a Modern Apprenticeship for him. Colin now sees his new PA less often, when he feels he needs to, and the relationship is less intense.

► Lindsey is 18 years old. She lives alone with her two daughters aged 2 and 4. She has no qualifications, as she left school because she got pregnant in Year 10. She now spends most of her time caring for her daughters. She would like to go back into education and get some GCSEs when her daughters are older, but she has not had any contact with Connexions. She did know they existed and that they visited her school, but she was not there at the time. She says Connexions has never tried to contact her, and she has not tried to contact them. She does not want any help from Connexions.

► A 15 year-old Somali boy illustrates how important it can be to deal with the risks so that young people do not drop out of education and inadvertently become NEET. He came to the UK ten years ago with his older mentally ill brother. They moved from London to live with an uncle on their grandfather's

side of the family until last year. The uncle was very abusive and eventually his wife, their aunt, left him taking the two boys. She also subsequently abandoned them. The young man was referred by his school to a Connexions PA who explained to him what his options were and gave him some leaflets. She was concerned about his potential instability or even homelessness and told him to go and talk to the relative he now lived with because he was too young to leave home. When asked what might have happened had he not had contact with Connexions he said, *“I’d be in deep shit ... I would have panicked, but she told me to keep going in my education.”*

Appendix I – Glossary and Abbreviations

APIR	Assessment, Planning, Implementation and Review This is a comprehensive 18-factor assessment framework for the use of Personal Advisers in Connexions, launched in 2001 and made “mandatory” in April 2004. The framework spells out the responsibilities, where other agencies are involved or specific requirements apply such as young people identified as “children in need” under the Children Act 1989 or young people with a statement of SEN.
ADHD	Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder
ASDAN	Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network. This is a charity founded in 1991 offering moderated youth accreditation awards in the personal and social development curriculum.
BME	Black and minority ethnic
CSNU	Connexions Service National Unit This unit at the DfES came into being in 2000. It was responsible for the implementation of the Connexions programme and monitoring of performance, until 2004 when its functions were absorbed into the Supporting Children and Young People Group.
DATs	Drug Action Teams
DfES	Department for Education and Skills
EET	(In) education, employment or training: a term used to describe the current status or destination of young people.
EHCR	European Convention on Human Rights
E2E	Entry to Employment
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
ESW	Education Social Worker, sometimes referred to as Education Welfare Officer. These staff are primarily concerned with school attendance.
GCSEs	General Certificates of Secondary Education. These are normally taken at age 15-16. Pupils can take a wide range of subjects and are tested by assessment of work during the course and examinations at the end of the course. Passes are graded from A* to G (A* being the highest grade.)
HAS	Health Advisory Service
IAG	Information Advice and Guidance: guidance services for adults and young adults.
ILP	Individual Learning Plan
LEA	Local Education Authority
LSC	Learning and Skills Council Local Learning and Skills Councils, formed in 2001, operate on a regional basis to commission training from providers and placements with employers. They hold responsibility for contracts with colleges of Further Education, sixth form colleges, vocational training providers and for the promotion of access to learning.
NAO	National Audit Office

NASS	National Asylum Support Service
NEET	Not in education, employment or training: a term used to describe the current status or destination of young people.
NVQs	National Vocational Qualifications NVQs are specific to occupations. They are made up of units based on industry-defined standards of occupational competence. Individuals are assessed against these standards by portfolio and observation in the workplace. NVQs follow a five-level framework from Level 1, foundation skills, through to Level 5, equating to professional/senior management qualifications.
OCN	Open College Network. This is a scheme which offers accreditation for prior learning.
OFSTED	Office for Standards in Education. This is a non-ministerial Government Department, independent of the DfES. It provides for the inspection of all schools in England, which are wholly or mainly state funded. It also inspects certain other services, including Connexions and the Youth Service.
PA	Personal Adviser This term is used for the main group of professional staff in the Connexions Service, who provide advice, support and guidance for young people. The term is also used for the Personal Adviser – Leaving Care, in the arrangements for children looked after by the local authority.
PAYP	Positive Activities for Young People
PSHE	Personal, social and health education: normally refers to elements in the national curriculum requirements for schools.
SCYPG	Supporting Children and Young People Group This division at the DfES is responsible <i>inter alia</i> for the Connexions Service. It includes the previous functions of CSNU.
SEN	Statement of Education Need
SENCO	Special Education Needs Coordinator
SEU	Social Exclusion Unit
SLA	Service Level Agreement
UN	United Nations
YOI	Young Offenders Institution
YOTs	Youth Offending Teams (often also termed Youth Offending Services)

Copies of this publication can be obtained from:

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Sherwood Park
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Nottingham
NG15 0DJ

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Fax: 0845 60 333 60
Minicom: 0845 60 555 60
Online: www.dfespublications.gov.uk

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Produced by the Department for Education and Skills

ISBN 1 84478 377 4
Ref No: RR607
www.dfes.go.uk/research