

**REPORT NO. 1**  
**EVALUATION OF THE COVENTRY AND WARWICKSHIRE CONNEXIONS**  
**SERVICE 2000 - 2001**

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**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The *Learning to Succeed* White Paper (DfEE: 1999) set out the government's commitment to setting up a Connexions Strategy. One of the main aims underpinning this strategy is to "give all young people access to the highest standard of education and training and give them the best possible support in the transition from adolescence to adulthood". The report by the Social Exclusion Unit, *Bridging the Gap* (SEU 1999) proposed a new multi-skilled support service working with all young people to assist them between the ages of 13 and 19. The new Connexions Strategy aims to ensure that all young people achieve the most from the learning opportunities available to them and get the best possible start to their working lives
- 1.2 Coventry and Warwickshire have been chosen as one of the first areas in England to pilot the new Connexions Strategy. The pilot is designed to trial new ways of working in local communities. Within this context, research and evaluation will play a crucial role in helping to assess the impact of the Connexions Strategy on the local community and supporting policy-makers and practitioners to determine what works and why.

**2. Evaluation Model**

- 2.1 The Centre for Guidance Studies (CeGS) is a research and development unit based at the University of Derby. It was established in 1998 to promote excellence in research and to extend good practice in the field of guidance and lifelong learning. CeGS will undertake an evaluation to support and assess the development, delivery and management of the new Connexions service within the Coventry and Warwickshire areas.
- 2.2 The evaluation will focus on four main areas:
- management and organisation of the new Connexions service;
  - the delivery of the service including the role of Personal Advisers;
  - young people's involvement in the development of the Connexions service;
  - partnerships and collaborative arrangements at both local and sub-regional levels.

2.2 The overall evaluation plan is specifically related to the key areas identified in the Coventry and Warwickshire Connexions 2000 plan. It is proposed that evaluation activities will include the following themes:

**a) Overview of the service**

- *Shared vision, culture & ethics* - how are these achieved and developed
- *Development of the new service* - innovative policies and practices.
- *Delivery mechanisms;*
  - how the aspirations of young people are raised;
  - identifying and meeting individual young people's needs;
  - self-help packages to promote the inclusion of young people;
  - equality and equal opportunity measures;
  - ICT developments.
- *Management arrangements;*
  - added-value of a sub-regional approach
  - evidence-based practice through internal and external evaluation.

**b) The delivery of the service**

- *Delivery*
  - the role of Personal Advisers;
  - how is work with specific groups of young people being developing work with the unemployed, the cared for and young offenders;
  - how is case loading determined;
  - how are the needs of young people being assessed.
- *Dual management*
  - how successful are different methods of management in educational institutions;
  - the supervision of Personal Advisers;
  - quality assurance arrangements;
  - how is practice being evaluated;
  - common evaluation framework for this.
- *Training*
  - how has this been undertaken;
  - who has been involved;
  - how effective has this been;
  - how have the training needs been determined;
  - what training is envisaged for school and college personnel to support this initiative.

### **c) Involving Young People**

- *Strategy*  
-how are young people involved in planning at a strategic level;
- *Purpose* - why are participants involved;
- *Methods* - what works best from the young person's perspective;
- *Innovation* - examples of good and interesting practice.

### **d) Partnerships**

- *Effectiveness of partnership*
  - at a strategic and operational level;
  - contribution of employers.
- *Added-value of partnerships*
  - contributions in terms of funding, expertise, delivery.
- *Community and voluntary sector involvement.*
- *Promotion of inclusion by partners*
  - professional working relationships;
  - effect on other agencies such as the careers service, education welfare service and youth service.

### 2.3 The evaluation seeks to identify:

- the main strengths and weaknesses of the Pathfinder Connexions pilot;
- lessons learned and how these can be transferred across agencies locally and nationally;
- good and innovative policies and practices;
- added-value measures.

By fostering close working links with a range of organisations and young people, CeGS seeks to support agencies to analyse the process of development and to build on evidence-based practice which clearly identifies 'what works best' and how this can be transferred across the sub-region.

### 3. September to December 2000 Evaluation Plan

3.1 From September to December 2000, the evaluation will focus on the work of the Connexions Service in schools and colleges. The following educational institutions will pilot the service:

- i. Alderman Callow School and Community College, Coventry
- ii. Caludon Castle, Coventry
- iii. Champion School and Community College, Leamington Spa
- iv. Pupil Referral Unit, Leamington Spa
- v. Queen Elizabeth School, Atherstone
- vi. Southam School, Southam
- vii. Stratford College, Stratford upon Avon
- viii. The Meadows, Coventry
- ix. Tile Hill College, Coventry
- x. Warwickshire College
- xi. Whitley Abbey, Coventry
- xii. Woodway Park, Coventry

3.2 In order to identify early messages and highlight potential issues, each institution will be visited during September/October 2000. By then at least one of the Personal Advisers will be in place. Visits will include discussions with a range of staff including the Headteacher/Principal, Personal Adviser/s, link member of staff, special educational needs co-ordinator (SENCO), educational welfare officer (EWO) and youth tutor, as appropriate. The key themes will be addressed during the visits.

- *Management*
  - management of Personal Advisers;
  - value of the Partnership Agreement;
  - identification of management information;
  - record keeping including confidentiality;
  - monitoring, review and evaluation;
  - setting targets - how will these be determined.
- *Delivery of the service*
  - identification of the key problems/issues that the service will address in each institution and how have these been identified;
  - how will the service be delivered in order to address these issues/problems;
  - what difference will the service make to the institution;
  - how is the service planned to impact on the curriculum;
  - how will the impartiality of the service be ensured;
  - how will the skills and expertise available in the institution be identified and utilised.
  - what training needs have been identified for:
    - a) institution staff,
    - b) Personal Advisers

- *How will young people's views* be taken into account during the planning and delivery of the service.
- What will be the *added-value* of the service.
- What are the early, key messages.
- What problems have been encountered.

3.3 At the end of the visits the following documents will be produced:

a) A brief confidential report for each educational institution covering:

- Planning of the service.
- Strengths and development areas.
- Targets identified.
- Issues.
- Recommendations.

b) A mini-report, produced by the end of October 2000, covering the twelve educational institutions, to inform the overall development of the Connexions Service including:

- Strengths of Connexions in Coventry and Warwickshire.
- Areas for development.
- Good practice.
- Problem areas.
- Lessons learned.
- Recommendations.

3.4 Additional evaluation includes:

Coventry

1. Examining the work of the Connexions Service with young offenders and young people in care. This will be undertaken during October/November 2000. This will include visits to the centres and focus on the relationships and arrangements made for these young people. A brief, mini-report will be produced by the end of November 2000.
2. Examining the work with African-Caribbean young people as part of the Neighbourhood Support Fund Project. This will take place during October/November 2000 and focus on community engagement. A brief mini-report will be produced by the end of November 2000.

## Warwickshire

1. Visits to six additional non-Connexions institutions as part of a control group to identify comparisons and improvements. An initial overall report will be produced by the end of November 2000.

### **4. Areas of evaluation January to March 2001**

- 4.1 The evaluation aims to incorporate maximum flexibility to respond to issues and challenges as they arise. The areas of evaluation to be covered during January to March 2001 are, therefore, provisional and are planned to include:

- Follow-up of all the educational institution visits in February 2001.
- Partnership structures and development.
- Added-value of the service.
- Effectiveness of the Mapping Tool.
- Key messages from young people and how these are used to inform and develop the Connexions Service.
- Specific curriculum initiatives.

### **5. References**

Department for Education and Employment (2000) *Connexions: The best start in life for every young person*. Sheffield: DfEE.

Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Learning Gateway Specification*. Sheffield: DfEE

Department for Education and Employment (1999) *Learning to Succeed: a New Framework for Post-16 Learning*. London: Stationery Office.

Social Exclusion Unit (1999) *Bridging the Gap: New Opportunities for 16-18 Year Olds Not in Education, Employment or Training*. London: Stationery Office.