



LINCOLNSHIRE & RUTLAND

**EVALUATION OF THE  
LINCOLNSHIRE CONNEXIONS PILOT**

**REPORT 7: DEVELOPING SCHOOL BASED  
CONNEXIONS SERVICES**

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## **PREFACE**

We are greatly indebted to principals, senior managers and teachers working in the schools who were involved in the pilot project. They offered for continuous support and a genuine willingness to test out new ways of improving and delivering services to young people. The schools involved were Queen Eleanor Community School, Stamford; St. Bede's R.C School, Boston; and Yarborough School, Lincoln. Much of our work involved piloting the role of Personal Advisers (PAs) and we are extremely grateful to Marcus Burnett, Jon Burrow, Andy Croft, Andrew Marsay, Cathy Pegrum; Patrick Prince; and Emma Titley for their enthusiasm and determination to further develop services for young people in schools. A special thanks is also given to Carole Lang, Connexions Manager, Lincolnshire for her ongoing support, and to staff within the Lincolnshire Youth Service and Lincolnshire Careers & Guidance Services Ltd. Finally, we wish to acknowledge the invaluable participation of all young people involved the project; this gave us an opportunity to listen to their needs and involve them in helping to shape the new service.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report outlines the findings of a key pilot project that aimed to develop a range of approaches to delivering a Connexions service within schools. It reviews the lessons learned from the pilot and some structural issues, including that of management of the Personal Adviser and involvement of key school staff. It discusses some of the strategies developed in Lincolnshire to support a young people within schools.

*Section 1* covers the need to develop an effective model for a school-based service and details the aims and objectives of the project. These included examining the relationship between the institution and the Connexions service and ensuring that systems and processes were established to monitor and review progress. In addition, the role of the Personal Adviser was to be explored and different working practices trialed, in order to influence future developments.

*Section 2* describes the methodology adopted by two project managers with different backgrounds and the involvement of Personal Advisers from both the Careers and Youth Services. The senior management of the three schools who participated had volunteered to be included and were fully involved in the development of the project. This section also covers the use of a wider group of professionals to supply key inputs to the emerging project.

*Section 3* details the key findings from this pilot. These cover the need for clear lines of accountability for the Personal Adviser within the institution and the continuing involvement of senior management. The pilot established that there was much that needed to be done in explaining the concept of Connexions throughout institutions and involving all staff in future developments. The target group of young people responded well to initiatives designed to improve their self-esteem with group work sessions and mentoring activity being particularly effective. In some cases, the Personal Adviser had developed and co-ordinated multi-agency activities within the institution and this had worked well. Impact on the young people involved had already included an improvement in attendance levels and an apparent increase in responsibility and application.

*Section 4* outlines a number of recommendations that will have an impact on the future delivery of a school based Connexions service. Much depends on the clarity of expectations between the institution and the Connexions service coupled with a regular detailed review of performance. The targeted young people benefited from regular patterns of Personal Adviser (PA) attendance and wished for continuity and reliability in 'their' PA. The management of the PA requires further development, in order to provide an appropriate approach for specific institutions, and the PA will require ongoing professional support and supervision. The selection of the PA to ensure appropriate attitudes, knowledge and understanding are essential for the effective delivery of the new Service.

*Section 5* provides a set of recommendations to inform the future development of the Connexions service at a local and national level.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

### Context

- 1.1 Within the Lincolnshire Connexions Pilot, the school-based Connexions project aimed to trial a model for the delivery of the Connexions service to pupils aged 13-16 in school. There were some links with other pilot projects, namely the project defining the role of the personal adviser, and that on consulting young people. The school-based model was identified as a way of delivering the Connexions service in partnership with the school, and agencies working in the schools, bearing in mind that for 80% of young people their contact with the Connexions service will be during the ages of 13-16 and within the context of full time education.

### Aim

- 1.2 The aim of the project was to:

*'Increase our understanding of the ways in which Connexions services can be delivered in schools/PRUs to appropriate quality standards, paying particular attention to the role of PSHE/Citizenship/Careers Education and pastoral systems, and taking into account the principle of universality.'* (Pilot Project Development Plan, 2000)

### Project milestones:

- Establish a multi-agency project team.
- Develop recommendations on a range of Connexions services relevant to schools and across all pupils.
- Identify options for curriculum delivery.
- Refine existing quality frameworks to ensure relevance to Connexions.
- Pilot quality assured school-based Connexions Service in at least three schools.
- Produce a model for a school-based Connexions service: within this, to consider the factors influencing the relationship between Connexions and the school, and to devise a partnership agreement to structure, monitor and review the relationship.
- Agree the role of the personal adviser within the pilot, including the management of the personal adviser, and the range of activities delivered by them.
- Test the possibility of the personal adviser co-ordinating multi agency links in the school.
- Monitor and evaluate the progress and development of the project.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1 The chosen methodology included:**

- the appointment of two project managers, from both Lincolnshire Careers and Guidance Services and Lincolnshire Youth Service;
- a selection of three schools, which had volunteered to become involved in Connexions pilot activity, following a letter from the Director of Education. The participating schools are named overleaf:
  - Queen Eleanor Community School, Stamford
  - St Bede's R.C. School, Boston
  - Yarborough School, Lincoln
- the identification of personal advisers, from careers advisers working in the three schools, and from youth workers who had experience of working in schools. (In two of the three schools, the pilot project proceeded without the existing careers advisers for those schools being involved, due to preferences on their part. This issue is discussed later in the report);
- through discussion and negotiation with each of the schools, mutual aims and needs were identified, and a programme of activities agreed. These activities were then recorded in a partnership agreement;
- the identification of a target group of pupils likely to benefit from the agreed programme of activities with the personal adviser and the programme delivered to them between November 2000 and March 2001;
- the management of the personal advisers was jointly undertaken by the two project managers, in order to establish relevant issues likely to impact on later Countywide delivery;
- multi agency groups were established in each of the schools to investigate best practice in developing referral systems and support structures;
- a wider group of professionals from a range of organisations were consulted in order to collect feedback and disseminate information about the early findings from the project;
- the project managers maintained regular contact with key individuals within the schools, the personal advisers, and those on the consultative group in order to make the most of the learning coming from the planned activities, to inform evaluation and further developments;
- through review with pupils in both target and non target groups, different teaching and learning styles were contrasted and compared with particular reference being made to personal and social education and careers education.

### **Rationale**

- 2.2 The methodology outlined above was chosen as the practical exercise of trialling aspects of the Connexions service, by introducing the new role of personal adviser within the school setting would provide the opportunity to monitor and evaluate the effects throughout the pilot project. The identification and dissemination of key learning points emerging from the delivery of the service through regular contacts with key school staff, personal advisers and the wider audience of agency representatives was felt to be crucial.

### **3.0 FINDINGS**

#### **Management and planning**

- 3.1 Firstly, the management arrangements for the personal advisers had to be decided. A decision was taken by the project managers to directly manage the personal advisers themselves, rather than offering the management to the schools. Connexions national strategy provides a range of possible management models for personal advisers, including day-to-day management by the institution. However, this was not attempted within this project. The main reasons for this included the very short lead in time to the start of the project, much of which was taken up with identifying key aims and objectives around the role of the personal adviser in schools coupled with the starting point of the selected schools who were not in a position to take on day-to-day management at such short notice. It should also be noted that trialling the day to day management of the personal advisers by the institution was not a key objective of this pilot project.
- 3.2 The personal advisers were managed through regular monthly meetings, where ongoing reviewing, planning and updating took place, as well as identifying mechanisms for data collection to inform evaluation. These meetings also had an element of training and development, where personal advisers shared good practice, and emerging issues were identified and discussed. This was identified as good practice by the personal advisers. As well as the meetings, the project managers were in frequent one to one contact with the personal advisers, addressing individual points. Part of the management function included some administrative tasks in connection with travel or time claims and reflective learning records.
- 3.3 One management issue identified by the personal advisers was the need for counselling support for them, when undertaking mentoring with young people with complex needs - both in terms of identifying appropriate strategies to help the young people as well as for their own emotional support. A request for counselling support was proposed to the Pilot Manager and personal advisers were then referred to an existing telephone help-line service already retained by Lincolnshire Careers and Guidance Services Ltd for members of staff who wished to talk in confidence to a trained counsellor, about an issue related to or emerging from their work.
- 3.4 Relationships between staff from the two agencies involved, namely careers advisers and youth workers, have been on the whole very positive. Relationships worked best when there was a reciprocal understanding of each other's strengths, and what each other was bringing to the pilot, coupled with a willingness to take on something new.

Some anxiety was expressed by individuals about the impact of change and at times this needed managing carefully. Where this occurred, the project managers spent time with the individuals concerned, listening to their concerns to try to provide further support, but for one individual the preferred solution was to withdraw from the pilot project.

- 3.5 Evidence of the benefits of the joint approach to working has come from the key contact at one of the schools, who identified the pairing of the careers adviser and the youth worker as a factor contributing to the success of the initiative. Both brought a mixture of skills and experiences to the project and identified that this was a valuable opportunity to learn about different approaches to working with young people and the range of resources available. There has been appreciation on the part of careers advisers and youth workers of the insight the joint working has given them to find out about each other's work.
- 3.6 In the initial stages, the project managers identified priorities for the project and devised an approach for negotiation with the three pilot schools. This resulted in a questionnaire (Appendix 1) which defined the scope of delivery of pilot activity, and was used in early discussions with the schools to identify their reasons for becoming involved. Ongoing planning meetings between the project managers have ensured effective management of the consultative group, personal advisers' meetings, and meetings with key staff in schools.
- 3.7 An expectation at the start of the project was that personal advisers would develop a co-ordinating role with agencies working in the school, such as education welfare officers, emotional and behavioural support services, school nurses, social services, community police officers and specialist health workers. It was anticipated that this co-ordination would bring agencies together, raise awareness of each others' roles and responsibilities, establish referral systems and generally improve the service for individual young people thus reducing the chance of young people losing contact with the agencies which were trying to help them.
- 3.8 When this idea was put to the schools in early negotiations about the pilot project, it was not immediately recognised as either a role for the personal adviser, nor as an activity which needed to be carried out. Consequently, in the agreements reached with all three schools, 'testing the feasibility of the personal adviser carrying out a co-ordinating role' was stated as an objective, rather than establishing this as part of the role without question.
- 3.9 In one of the schools, the Headteacher and deputy were already actively exploring links with a wide range of agencies working in the school and the local community, and the personal adviser developed further agency links to support sessions with the young people in the target group. Here, the personal adviser worked with the deputy to establish a regular multi agency meeting.
- 3.10 In another school, the personal advisers arranged an initial meeting with agencies working in the schools, including the education welfare service, the school nurse, the careers adviser, and school staff including the special educational needs co-ordinator, a learning support assistant - also working as a school counselor, and the Headteacher.

After this meeting, the heads of year were asked to identify young people who could benefit from the pilot project activities, and when this multi agency group met again a few weeks later, they reviewed and made further recommendations about specific young people for referral. As a result of putting this referral process into place, the multi agency group identified good practice and developed a referral form which collected more detailed information on young people demonstrating 'at risk' behavior (Appendix 6).

- 3.11 In this school, the multi agency meetings have continued on a regular half termly basis and have considered a broad range of issues concerned with the programme and help for young people in the target group. This included contributing ideas for a survey of young people about the personal, social and careers education programmes, where the education welfare worker and the school nurse both suggested ideas for questions.
- 3.12 In the third school, the multi agency group did not meet after the first meeting, and the school indicated that in previous years they had convened multi agency meetings but had discontinued them due to low attendance on the part of agency representatives. In this school, the Headteacher stated that he saw the role of liaising with agencies within the personal adviser's responsibility, rather than adding this task to the job of the teachers.

#### **Role of personal adviser**

- 3.13 In all three schools there was a careers adviser from Lincolnshire Careers and Guidance Services Ltd delivering the careers service. In one school this person became one of the pilot project personal advisers and continued with the careers adviser role, and in the other two schools the existing careers advisers worked closely with the personal advisers drawn from elsewhere in the careers service, and the youth service. Two of the personal advisers, one a careers adviser, and the other a youth worker, were also studying for the new Diploma for Personal Advisers. Other agency representatives working in the schools with young people in the target group, were education social workers, and emotional and behavioural support services workers.
- 3.14 The range of the personal advisers' interventions included working with young people in the target group on a one to one and group basis, and networking with agencies working in the schools. They did not undertake any work with whole year groups, and did not have a role in effecting curriculum change or influencing teaching and learning styles across a wider range of teaching staff.
- 3.15 One to one work with the young people took the form of mentoring. Certain young people in the target group were selected for mentoring by the personal advisers in one school. They were identified either because they had particularly complex needs (these individuals were all female), or because they were under-achieving (these were all male). In another school, where the target group was very small, the personal adviser undertook regular one to one sessions with the young people, many of whom are dealing with multiple problems in their lives which impact on their attitude to learning.

- 3.16 In terms of skills and experience in one to one work, the careers advisers were drawing on their existing guidance skills, and the youth workers on training coupled with experiences during their work in the youth service. During review meetings with personal advisers, it emerged that the theoretical bases underpinning the approaches taken by the careers advisers and the youth workers were different. The skills and attitudes of the personal advisers in establishing relationships were crucial in achieving the right balance, being able to relate easily to young people, being able to effectively challenge behaviour and attitudes, and to develop their own skills and understanding.
- 3.17 The mentoring work has been particularly successful in helping young people to articulate their thoughts and feelings about the problems they have. For the group of boys needing to overcome obstacles to learning in school, the mentoring initially gave them space to 'sound off', giving reasons or excuses for their behaviour. They were then able to move on to discuss strategies to avoid situations arising. In another school, a personal adviser related a discussion she had had with a boy with a medical condition which affected his behaviour, who had now begun to identify the consequences of reacting violently when provoked and was trying out different ways of dealing with these situations, including walking away.
- 3.18 For the careers advisers, the opportunity to establish a better relationship with an individual young person through seeing them on a regular, more intensive, basis differed from their normal experiences within the careers service. For the youth workers, regular mentoring work was very similar to their normal work practice.
- 3.19 The trust which has been built up between the personal advisers and the young people has allowed the personal adviser to explore in more depth any underlying problems faced by young people in their home and school lives. Both the careers advisers and youth workers have raised the need for some personal support, perhaps in the form of access to a counselor, to help them deal with emotions generated by the issues presented to them by the young people. These issues have included coping with the implications of teenage pregnancy, dealing with a bereavement for the first time and the challenge of managing themselves in a drug-taking culture.
- 3.20 In two schools, regular group sessions took place with target group young people in Year 10 and Year 11, and in the third school just with Year 11. Early in the discussions with the schools, it was agreed that the group sessions would concentrate on self-esteem and confidence building, as this was identified as a common need for young people in the target group. From this, it was anticipated that it would then be possible to move on to developing career planning skills. (Appendix 3) In one of the schools, the personal adviser devised the programme for the group sessions in consultation with the young people in Year 11. This resulted in a series of sessions delivered by external speakers on a range of topics that directly met the needs identified by the young people. (Appendix 4).

#### *Groupwork*

- 3.21 The decision to focus on self-esteem and confidence building was further endorsed as the personal advisers got to know the young people in the target group. In one school they described themselves as 'thick' and said that this was how other pupils and some staff also saw them.

When asked by the personal advisers what they would personally like from the sessions, some of them said they would like to have their work displayed on the school noticeboards, and to have their achievements recognised in school assemblies, as this was something which did not happen for them. In two of the schools, the personal advisers have helped the group to design their own group website, and to produce personal profiles, complete with photograph to show what they can do. At the request of the young people, they have also arranged for folders to be provided so that the young people can keep and display the work they have produced in group sessions. As a postscript, it is interesting to note that young people and the personal advisers from one of these schools have featured on a promotional video for the Connexions service, talking enthusiastically about the progress they have made in the pilot activities.

- 3.22 In two of the schools, the teachers who have been most closely involved with the pilot project activities have commented on how readily the young people talk to them about what they are doing in the sessions with the personal advisers. They particularly noted this, as in their experience of working with these young people, they do not readily volunteer information about what they have done in class.
- 3.23 Following the model shown in Appendix 4, once some basic work on self-esteem had been started, and the young people began to feel they could trust the personal advisers, it was possible to move onto a range of other topics. With those in Year 11, the emphasis was very much on themes of career exploration and career management, whilst for Year 10 there was some discussion around preparing for work experience. In one school, the Headteacher asked the personal advisers to use the group sessions to explore the rewards and sanctions strategy she was using, from the perspective of the young people.

#### *Careers work*

- 3.24 In terms of career exploration, in one school the personal advisers have taken the young people to the local careers centre to make use of the careers information and ICT resources, and have arranged visits to the local college and local employers. These activities have helped the young people to get a better idea of what is involved in further study and work. The personal advisers commented on how well the young people behaved on these visits, arriving punctually for the bus to take them there, and asking questions which they had planned in advance. The personal advisers followed up and consolidated the learning from the visits as soon as possible by undertaking both group and individual discussions. This seemed to work well.
- 3.25 In another school, where the school's careers library is under development, the pilot project has paid for a weekly visit of a Newstart/Rural Bus, which is equipped with computers loaded with careers software plus a drugs action programme, and all young people in Years 9, 10, 11 have visited the bus to try out these resources.
- 3.26 In the third school interest was expressed early on by the school in the establishment of a young people's Information and Advice Centre, along the lines of the model which had been developed in other parts of the county by the Youth Service. The personal adviser collected a wide range of leaflets from agencies, reflecting the types of information young people in this group were asking about, to go towards the establishment of an Information and Advice centre in the school at a later date.

- 3.27 Career management skills have been addressed in all the schools by the personal advisers running sessions on application and self-presentation. This approach helps to draw a link between the gradual improvement in self-esteem on the part of the young people, and their confidence to present themselves for post 16 opportunities.

*Managing group dynamics*

- 3.28 The approach to group management by all the personal advisers empowered the young people to take responsibility by devising their own ground rules which they then managed themselves with support. For example, at one school, the young people would challenge an individual whose behaviour was unacceptable. The style of group working encouraged individuals to support each other both through the example set by the group leaders (the personal advisers) and by using the pupils' knowledge of each other's strengths when compiling personal profiles. In one school, the personal advisers commented on how some members of the group offered help and support to a girl who had previously excluded herself from the group through her own behaviour, once they saw that she wanted to rejoin the group. In the largest of the schools there was no existing group which became the target group, and the personal adviser commented that at the start of the pilot project, the young people did not know each other. By the end of the project, they have now exchanged mobile telephone numbers and regularly phone each other.
- 3.29 The teaching and learning styles employed by the personal advisers focused on ensuring that each individual within the group was benefiting from the activities, and able to participate as fully as they could. With some young people who were very withdrawn, their involvement appeared to be passive in the early stages, but later on when they felt able to speak up in group discussions, it was clear that they had been attending from the start.
- 3.30 In all the group sessions, the personal advisers started the sessions with a round up of how the preceding week/fortnight had been for the individual young people. This gave each pupil the chance to raise anything, either from their school or home life, which had had an impact. It also gave the personal advisers a chance to note any particular emerging problems for which they could offer help on a one to one basis later in the session. Two of the personal advisers commented on the ease with which young people spoke of incidents at home involving visits by social workers, and of the support which others in the group then offered, reassuring them that this happened to others as well. These review/round-up sessions also served the purpose of re-engaging the young people in the planned learning, helping the personal advisers to locate the next activity in the personal experiences the young people had brought.
- 3.31 Another strategy which was used by one of the personal advisers to help the young people get the most out of the group sessions was to spend some time at the start of the session explaining what it would be about, and how it could affect and help them. The personal adviser developed a programme of inputs by external speakers, in accordance with the list produced by the young people at the start of the pilot. It was therefore essential that the young people were prepared, and had thought of some questions by the start of the session to get the most out of it.

- 3.32 The appearance of the personal adviser was not a contentious issue, but young people commented on it, and it is worth describing the approaches taken by the personal advisers. For many of them, they dressed as they would normally for their existing role of careers adviser or youth worker, which meant that the men wore shirts and sweaters rather than jackets or suits. One of the careers advisers who normally wore a suit chose to dress differently on the days when he met his group of young people. The women did not wear suits either. The Headteacher from one of the schools commented on the appearance of the male personal adviser when considering a question about why he felt the personal advisers had been successful in establishing relationships with these young people who were harder to help. One of the personal advisers said that when he did turn up in suit, the young people commented that he looked like a teacher.
- 3.33 More will be said about multi agency work, but it is worth mentioning here this aspect within the role of the personal adviser. It was agreed with each of the schools at the start of the pilot project that the personal adviser would test the feasibility of their carrying out a co-ordinating role in multi agency work within the school. The personal advisers began with a mapping exercise, identifying which agencies were active in the schools, and what was the nature of the intervention work they were carrying out. This was done by the personal advisers convening meetings early on, and in two of the three schools, the personal advisers continued to work with a senior manager - in one school the Headteacher and in the other the deputy head - to convene and chair further meetings. In these two schools, there is an acknowledgement that there is value in having a planned approach to bringing agencies together, and that the personal adviser has a role here.

### **Relevance to national developments**

- 3.34 The development of the role of the personal adviser within the 13-16 school-based Connexions service has been particularly significant. The pilot has provided the opportunity to explore the needs of young people who require intensive support to prevent them dropping out of education, and to trial and evaluate activities with them. From a careers service perspective it has been a valuable opportunity to work alongside colleagues from the youth service who have brought experiences and an insight into the task of engaging young people who are harder to help.
- 3.35 Through the management of the personal advisers by the project managers, and the regular reviews with schools, it has been possible to identify key skills and attitudes required in personal advisers, to enable them to undertake work with young people in the target group. These are explored in more detail elsewhere in the report, and have informed the related pilot project that is developing a training programme for personal advisers.

### **Schools and colleges**

- 3.36 In this pilot project, only schools were involved. The three schools varied in size from a Year 11 cohort of 48 to a Year 11 cohort of 186, and were spread across the County. In all three schools the 5 x A\*-C GCSE percentage was lower than the County average of 51%, and in one school it was significantly lower. In the largest school, in the previous year there had been a number of permanent exclusions, and a large number of fixed term exclusions. In the other two schools, there had been a few fixed term exclusions and one or two permanent exclusions. One of these schools had taken in a boy who had been excluded by another school, and he was a member of the target group. All the schools were mixed.

- 3.37 The catchment area for all the schools reflect higher than average levels of poverty and deprivation, characterised by poor housing, unstable relationships within families, temporary and casual employment opportunities, and a level of drug and alcohol misuse and crime. In one of the schools, with a wide catchment across a rural area, there were issues related to rural poverty, such as poor transport links and isolation. For most of the young people in the target groups in the three schools, many of the deprivation factors applied. In all the schools, a significant percentage had special educational needs statements or were on the special needs register.
- 3.38 In two out of the three schools, the pilot project helped the schools start the process of addressing the needs of young people for whom the mainstream National Curriculum was not appropriate. In early discussions with these schools, it emerged that their reasons for expressing interest in the pilot project was primarily to access some additional support for these young people, whose needs they could see were not being met in school. One deputy head said 'we have a significant minority of students aged 14+ who are at risk of 'dropping out' of mainstream education either of their own accord or by exclusion ... (we need) a personal adviser for vulnerable individuals to help them manage the external influences which put their education in jeopardy.' There was a tacit admission by these schools that existing provision was not addressing these needs, and that the way of dealing with young people who were not participating in learning was 'mainly by sanctions against those who misbehave. We recognise that preventative and advisory work would be of more benefit but up to now this has not been possible.' The schools were keen to help trial the personal adviser role with these particular young people, and saw the role as '...a facilitator. He/she would have a direct line to individuals or resources to support the social needs of the young person, as well as their career and skill needs ... (this role) ...would centralise and extend the pastoral role and careers advisory role (and) co-ordinate views, skills and work of outside agencies.'
- 3.39 An approach to building working relationships with the schools was developed and is shown in Appendix 5. With each school, the project managers felt it was important to find out why the school had expressed interest in being part of the project. This included identifying the school's current provision for young people in the target group, and how the school felt the project could help them, including what the school wanted to remain in place at the end of the pilot. A questionnaire was sent to each school in advance of initial meetings between school staff and project managers, and the questions were further explored in the meetings. (Appendix 1) By this process, the project managers aimed to identify objectives which could be mutually agreed between school and project, and then to propose an appropriate method of delivery. This approach resulted in broad agreements being reached fairly easily, though it took at least two and in one case three meetings between schools and project managers before the partnership agreements could be signed by both parties. (Appendix 2)
- 3.40 This took time, which was frustrating as no delivery could start in the schools until the agreements had been signed, but on reflection the project managers felt that the time taken allowed for more considered decisions. Modifications were made by both the schools and the project managers during this time, and this proved to be important in establishing trust and ensuring that the agreements were 'right' for each school. Personal advisers were not involved in these discussions, although the project managers kept them informed through the regular monthly meetings as well as during individual discussions.

*Relationship between project managers and the schools*

- 3.41 The relationship between the project managers and the schools was important, both for the effective management of the activities in the schools, and for the evaluation of the project. The intention was for the project managers to visit the schools to meet with key contacts, mainly managers, on a half termly basis, and on the whole this was kept to. At these meetings, the project managers would review progress according to the Partnership Agreement, and then discuss planning for forthcoming activities. In all cases, the project managers then met with, or spoke with, the personal advisers to feed back from these meetings. The schools appreciated regular meetings, and one Headteacher said she found them, and those she had with the personal advisers, very helpful in keeping her in touch with progress. Meetings were held in school to save institutional time.
- 3.42 In all three schools there was little involvement of a wider circle of staff, beyond those who were primarily responsible for the target group. This has been identified, in varying degrees, as an issue to tackle differently, as the Connexions Service is rolled out to all young people in all schools. In one school the staff involved with the pilot described how a small minority of staff viewed the personal advisers and their activities with suspicion. The Headteacher of this school said that if they were launching a similar activity in the future, he would arrange for a presentation to all staff, and ensure that staff were kept updated weekly with developments through the normal staff briefings. Industrial action through the period of the pilot had made it difficult to hold more than a bare minimum of after-school meetings. In another school, the deputy commented that in retrospect it would have been beneficial to involve a wider audience of key staff.
- 3.43 The identification of young people to form the target group for the pilot project was carried out in all three schools by the school, without the involvement of the personal advisers. In one school the target group was an existing group of young people undertaking a modified curriculum. In the other two schools, pupils were selected at the start of the pilot project against school criteria indicative of behaviour that might lead to dropping out of education.
- 3.44 The approach taken by some schools towards the selection of pupils for a modified curriculum is significant. In one of the schools, the modified curriculum had been operating for a few years, and was seen by the young people, teaching staff and school management as a programme appropriate for young people who are not responding to the National Curriculum as it was being taught in school. The young people felt they were being selected for the programme because they are perceived by their peers and the institution as 'thick', whilst some staff perceived the alternative curriculum as a soft option to reward 'bad behaviour'.

The issue here is about whether the prime reason for offering a modified programme was to meet more appropriately the specific needs of certain young people who were experiencing difficulties adapting to the way the mainstream curriculum was being delivered, or whether it was a means of removing this group of young people from mainstream delivery to reduce the disruption they were causing. The negative effect on the self-esteem of young people who identified themselves as part of this group meant that it was even more important to offer support for them as a group or individually to address self esteem.

#### *Feedback on teaching and learning styles*

- 3.45 Early on it emerged from the group sessions that the young people found some of the teaching and learning styles which they were experiencing in school less helpful. They mentioned specific teachers by name to the personal advisers. The decision

about whether or not to feed this back to the school, either in an anonymous sense or by mentioning specific names was discussed by the personal advisers with the project managers, and in informal discussions with key school contacts it emerged that the school were aware of some of the specific issues. For the project managers, it added another factor to the proposed model for day to day management by the school of the personal adviser, which though not in practice in the pilot, was being explored by the project's consultative group.

- 3.46 The potential for influencing teaching and learning styles in school, through the pilot project was not explored, as this was not a key priority for the project, but in discussion with the personal advisers and the key school contacts, there was a feeling that efforts to change teaching and learning styles would have limited effect. This was much more to do with the image of teachers in school, as people whom the young people primarily see in a teaching role. It was the experience of many of the young people in the target group that some teachers were not very accessible, and just by being a person external to the school, the personal advisers were able to gain the trust of the young people more easily. . 'There is a grey area of topics which they (the young people) won't talk to teachers about ... they talk to someone who is independent, who they can trust' (a personal adviser.) 'A lot of time the young people just want to get it off their chests – you are just someone to talk to' (personal adviser
- 3.47 In the school where the list of topics for the group sessions was proposed by young people in the target group, the Deputy Head commented that outside agencies delivering the sessions gave them more credibility with the young people. She said that in her experience young people had less confidence in their teachers to deliver sessions on these topics, and preferred to be able to access experts.

#### *Quality standards*

- 3.48 One of the pilot project objectives was to draw recommendations from the delivery and evaluation of the project for further development of the existing quality award for careers education and guidance in the East Midlands - Career Mark. This is an award for excellence in careers education and guidance in schools and colleges. None of the schools involved in the pilot project has Career Mark, though one is working towards it.

Career Mark standards relate to the management and resourcing of the careers education and guidance programme, the range and scope of the programme and related activities which make it up, and the impact of the programme on the students in terms of demonstrated learning.

- 3.49 During the period of the pilot project, information was collected by the project managers during discussions with personal advisers, key school contacts and others from a wider range of agencies, to identify effective systems and standards which should be present in schools in order to meet the needs of all young people. These related to referral systems, the collection of data on individual young people to inform referrals, the dissemination of information about Connexions to all staff, and the management of the relationship between Connexions and the schools.

A development meeting was held with partners involved in the East Midlands Careers Consortium, which owns Career Mark, to consider the impact on Career Mark standards of the introduction of Connexions, and how the quality award could be developed to support schools and colleges working in the new environment. This work is ongoing, and in the first instance, is likely to result in a trial of some modified standards.

### **Young people**

- 3.50 Many of the young people involved in the target group were already receiving support from other agencies, or extra support in school through learning support. Many of them had problems in their home lives which contributed to their reduced participation in learning. In each school, there were young people in the target group with full special educational needs statements and more who were on the special needs register. In one school, one third had statements and 75% were already receiving help from one or more agency.
- 3.51 Many of the young people in the target group were showing signs of reduced participation in learning. This manifested itself in a variety of ways, from truancy, arriving late for lessons, intermittent concentration in lessons and failure to produce coursework on time, or at all. Some had excellent attendance, but were disruptive in class. Others were extremely withdrawn. Many of them were aware that they were seen by their teachers as having difficulties, or even being a disruptive influence, and this was a difficult image to shake off. They felt that the personal adviser was someone new, who did not have preconceived ideas of who they were. One girl, who had a history of exhibiting volatile behaviour in school said to her personal adviser 'it doesn't matter what I do, I get picked on by teachers because of my reputation - but you sit and listen'.
- 3.52 Young people, their lives lacked the stability and predictability which are the foundation for sustaining participation in learning. In one of the schools, the personal adviser noted with regret towards the end of the programme of group sessions that one of the girls in the group had announced that she was about to move out of the area, due to family changes, and would not be taking her exams. In two of the schools, two boys from the target group were involved in steady relationships with girls who were considered by the key school contacts to have a stable influence on them. The teachers involved with these boys expressed some concern about how these boys would cope if these relationships were to end.

- 3.53 Though the pilot project activities only ran for five months, it was possible to detect an improvement in attendance and punctuality on the part of the young people in the target group with respect to group and mentoring activities. In one school, the teacher who was most closely involved with young people studying the modified curriculum said that the attendance on Tuesdays by this group was 'outstanding' in comparison with previous year groups. (Tuesdays were the days when the personal advisers were in school to deliver the group and mentoring activities). He commented on the responsible approach taken by some of the Year 11 boys, who took care to check with the personal adviser the time for their mentoring appointment, to make sure they did not miss it. He felt that these boys would not have behaved so responsibly before they became involved in the mentoring.
- 3.54 In another school, the personal adviser commented at the end of the pilot project, that although there had not been a significant *improvement* in the attendance of the target group in school overall, there had not been a *reduction* in their attendance, which for the second term of Year 11 is often a difficult time for young people approaching exams with little confidence. In terms of punctuality, he said 'I have held 16 sessions and not once has a student been late. More often, the students are 10 to 15 minutes early.' His sessions took place on Friday afternoons, a time when for all young people it can be difficult to maintain concentration.
- 3.55 Many of the young people in the target group had been having difficulty applying themselves to the challenge of studying, and for Year 11, responding to the demands of the approaching exams. The deputy Head at one of the schools said that for two of the Year 11 pupils in the target group the group sessions had really helped them to 'keep their heads down' during the Spring term, and that without the support of the personal adviser, they could well have dropped out of education.
- 3.56 The key contacts in schools commented that the young people in the target group were happy to talk to them about what they were doing in the sessions with their personal advisers. In their experience of working with this type of young person at risk of dropping out of education, they did not voluntarily talk about the learning they were involved in. One deputy Head said that the young people were enthusiastic about what they were doing in the group sessions. In the school where the pilot project activities took place on the Newstart/Rural bus, the Headteacher reported that on Thursdays (when the group activities took place) young people were keen to consult the pinned up notice showing which groups were expected on the bus at which time.
- 3.57 The development of personal confidence in individual young people was noticeable and commented on by personal advisers, the young people themselves and their teachers.  
In one of the schools, a boy who had arrived at the school having been excluded by another school was very withdrawn and had a fulltime learning support assistant attached to him. He was part of the target group and at first said nothing in group sessions. The personal advisers felt they had made a breakthrough with him when he voluntarily spoke up in a group discussion about the difficulties of speaking on the phone. In another school, a young person who was very quiet in group sessions presented a difficulty for his peers when they were involved in an activity where they had to say something about each other. The personal advisers reported that the young people in the group said, that they didn't know anything about X because he never talked about himself. The young person then began to open up and talked a little about himself, which helped him to integrate better with the others.
- 3.58 Young people also showed increased confidence about challenging teachers and others when they were making negative comments about them. In one school, the

personal adviser said that the young people reported that they will now challenge teachers who refer to them as 'thick'.

- 3.59 As the pilot project progressed, increased interest was shown in the activities, particularly those being developed and delivered by the personal advisers and the effects these were having on the young people.  
When the young people at one school were told that an external evaluator was coming to the school to meet some of them to find out about the project, they responded very positively, organized themselves into pairs, agreed the order in which they would talk to the evaluator, and were keen to tell others about the impending visit.
- 3.60 The following are quotes from young people gathered at the end of the pilot project, when commenting on what they had gained from the activities: -

*'It got me talking to people I wouldn't have normally spoken to.'*

*'It gives you a wider reading of life, about your choices.'*

*'You get to know yourself better.'*

*'Makes you more confident around others.'*

*'I felt I could speak out more confidently without feeling embarrassed or shy.'*

*'It made me learn more about myself and other people. I feel confident about giving my ideas.'*

*'Helps you to understand things better. Chance to talk about things.'*

*'I enjoyed just being on the bus because it gave me a chance to relax and get away from normal school life to be myself a bit more.'*

## **4. CONCLUSIONS**

- 4.1 The effective delivery of the school-based Connexions service to young people in the target group is very dependent on the qualities and competencies of the personal advisers. They must have good listening skills, be able to build relationships with young people, and be non-judgmental. They must also be able to challenge behavior and attitudes and move young people forward in terms of skills and understanding. They should be open to new ideas, and able to engage in reflective practice to review their work in the light of feedback from young people, and a wider circle of agencies working with young people.
- 4.2 Continuity in the individual personal adviser and reliability on their part are essential for establishing and maintaining the relationship with young people, a key element in the effectiveness of school-based Connexions. The type of group and one to one activities which have been delivered have helped to build trust between the individual young people and the personal advisers. This is a prerequisite for further learning. Once trust is established, it is not easily lost, but also it is not easily transferred to another professional. Young people invest in a relationship with their personal adviser, and resent it if they are then asked to work with someone new. This has implications for the way personal advisers are managed and deployed by the Connexions service to keep changes of personal advisers to a minimum.
- 4.3 Young people have appreciated the regularity of the pilot project activities on a weekly or fortnightly basis. This has also helped schools to accommodate the pilot project activities, and to fit them into existing programmes for the target group.
- 4.4 If the personal adviser diagnoses that referral to specialist help is appropriate, they should remain accessible to the young person for the duration of the specialist referral, and afterwards. Though the personal adviser may feel that another professional is now appropriate, the act of referring the young person on asks them to extend the trust they have given to the personal adviser to another individual or organisation and it is important to retain contact and support.
- 4.5 Personal advisers should receive support to handle the issues which they are encountering in their work with young people in the target group. This could be provided by a trained counsellor with experience of working with young people, and should offer personal advisers support, both in the form of strategies to help young people with the problems they have and emotional support to cope with their own reactions and feelings to the problems which the young people are presenting.
- 4.6 In mentoring, where a relationship between the personal adviser and young person is built up gradually, the topics for discussion come from the young person and can touch on any aspect of the life and experiences of the young person. Though client-centred guidance, which underpins the approach of most careers service practitioners, also has the client working with the adviser to agree the agenda for discussion, it is more likely that issues and topics agreed have a clear relevance to careers learning outcomes. This needs to be recognised within schools and youth support services and further development work is required.

- 4.7 Young people need to see personal advisers as separate from the school and teachers and to have some independence from the school in which they are working. At the same time, it is important that they are integrated into the staff and agencies working in the school, so that they can access information on young people and make prompt and appropriate referrals. It is also important that the school knows what is being delivered by the personal adviser in the group sessions, and that there is a regular means of keeping key school staff informed of progress made by individual young people. This indicates a two way process which is established during negotiations about the Partnership Agreement, and is reviewed regularly throughout the year.
- 4.8 Multi agency working has value and personal advisers have a role in co-ordinating this. There should be a clear purpose to multi agency meetings, and those emerging from the pilot project include identification of young people for target group activities, sharing expertise through discussion of anonymous case studies, and a joint approach to reviewing and developing key areas of the curriculum such as careers, personal, social and citizenship education.
- 4.9 The *process* of negotiating the partnership agreement with the schools is more important than the *document* that the agreement represents. The process establishes a working relationship, which should be based on mutually agreed objectives and have a clear 50:50 balance of responsibility between the Connexions service and the school.
- 4.10 The pilot project activities have shown that even in the relatively short period of five months, young people can achieve significantly through participating in group sessions on building self esteem, confidence and learning to work together. It is to their credit that these activities are positive learning opportunities for themselves and each other. In one school, the personal advisers identified the ASDAN Youth Award as a suitable qualification. (The ASDAN award progresses through various levels designed to develop, assess and accredit Key skills and recognise personal achievements).
- 4.11 All of the personal advisers felt strongly that the mentoring and group sessions could have had even more impact if they had begun earlier in the lives of the young people, perhaps in Year 9 or even earlier.

## **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 Personal adviser activities should be planned well in advance and provide a consistent approach to service delivery ideally, this should take place at the same time on the same day of each week, to make it easier to integrate into the school's planned programme. Nearly all respondents i.e the young people, school staff and the personal advisers, commented on the importance of reliability and keeping promises.
- 5.2 Connexions Lincolnshire and Rutland should explore contrasting models for supervision, counselling and support for personal advisers particularly those working with hardest-to-help young people in order to help determine what works best.
- 5.3 The style and content of group work should be carefully designed to meet the needs of the young people in the target group. Traditionally, group work in the careers service has usually been designed to help individuals progress towards specific careers learning outcomes, and whereas these will apply to many young people, the learning environment of the group session has to be 'right'. Time spent on building trust, self- esteem and confidence, and establishing a supportive group dynamic will engage the young people in the learning which the group can offer, and from this base, it is possible to move on to more specific careers or other learning outcomes.
- 5.4 Personal advisers with mentoring responsibilities should receive training and ongoing support to manage group and one to one work in line with the disparate needs of young people in the Connexions target group.
- 5.5 All staff and agency representatives working in the school should have an awareness of what the Connexions service is delivering in the school, how young people are selected for the target group, and how groupwork and one-to-one activities are planned. This should be given high priority in schools and could be delivered in a variety of ways, from a whole staff INSET event to regular weekly updates on individual student progress.
- 5.6 There should be a clear purpose to multi agency meetings within schools to include the identification of young people for target group activities, sharing expertise through discussion of anonymous case studies, and a joint approach to reviewing and developing key areas of the curriculum such as careers, personal, social and citizenship education. Multi agency meetings should include key school staff, such as the special educational needs co-ordinator, inclusion co-ordinator, heads of year if they have a pastoral role, and any others involved in supporting young people who are at risk of dropping out of learning.
- 5.7 Planning for the partnership agreement process should take into account the time of the year when most schools start institutional development planning, and the Connexions service should contribute at this stage, in a joint activity with the school to review and identify areas for curriculum and staff development in the following year.
- 5.8 The learning which young people achieve in their Connexions activity should be acknowledged and where possible go towards an accredited award.
- 5.9 Quality awards for careers education and guidance should be developed in line with Connexions, to reflect the systems which are important to support the identification of need, referral systems and multi agency working.

## QUESTIONNAIRE USED IN INITIAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SCHOOLS

What do you know about connexions?

Why are you getting involved with connexions pilot?

(What are you hoping to get out of it? How does this align with your school priorities?)

What do you want to remain at the end of the pilot? How would you take forward the pilot at the end?

How does your school's curriculum meet the needs of all 13 – 16 young people in terms of PSHE, Citizenship, careers education and guidance etc? (ref the list of connexions curriculum which we have produced)

How are individual needs of yp identified in relation to their access to participation in learning?

How are issues which affect this access met within the school?

What do you perceive are the barriers to participation in learning in this school?

How do you view the role of the PA? (in relation to the provision outlined above?)

How does this relate to existing roles in your school? a) your staff b) other people's staff who work in your school

What are the external agencies which work in your school? What are they doing and how do you call on them?

What purpose do they serve in terms of addressing the needs of young people?

Who co-ordinates the involvement of external agencies in your school?

What are you expecting from us, as pilot project managers, and how can we support each other to make it work?

What access to a) pupils, b) key staff c) management will you give us? (We are assuming that we will have access to ....)

If you were to be the manager of the Personal Adviser, what model would you use?

# LINCOLNSHIRE CONNEXIONS PILOT PROJECT – SCHOOL-BASED CONNEXIONS SERVICE

## AGREEMENT BETWEEN

Lincolnshire School-based Connexions Pilot Project and

(Name of School)

## EFFECTIVE FOR THE PERIOD

30 October 2000 to 31 March 2001

## NAMED PERSONS/KEY CONTACTS

for Lincolnshire School-based Connexions Pilot:

Andy Storer

Carol James

for (Name of School)

(Key School Contact)

(Key School Contact)

Personal Advisers:

(Name of Personal Adviser)

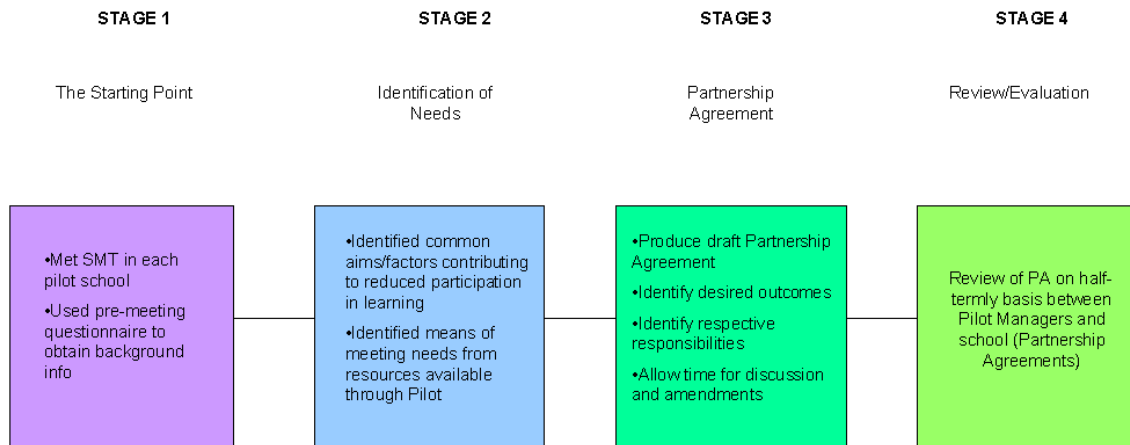
(Name of Personal Adviser)

## AIM OF SCHOOL-BASED CONNEXIONS

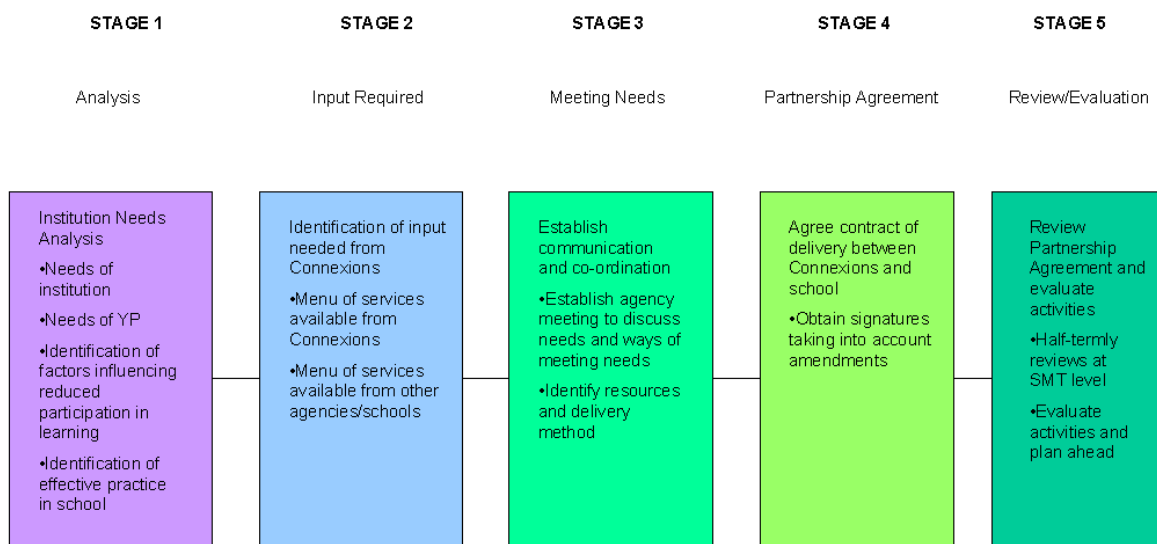
To increase our understanding of ways in which Connexions services can be delivered in schools/PRUs to appropriate quality standards, paying particular attention to the role of PSHE/Citizenship/Careers Education and pastoral systems, and taking into account the principle of

Model for group work

**Pilot Model for negotiation of Connexions Partnership Agreement**



**Recommended Model for negotiation of Connexions Partnership Agreement**

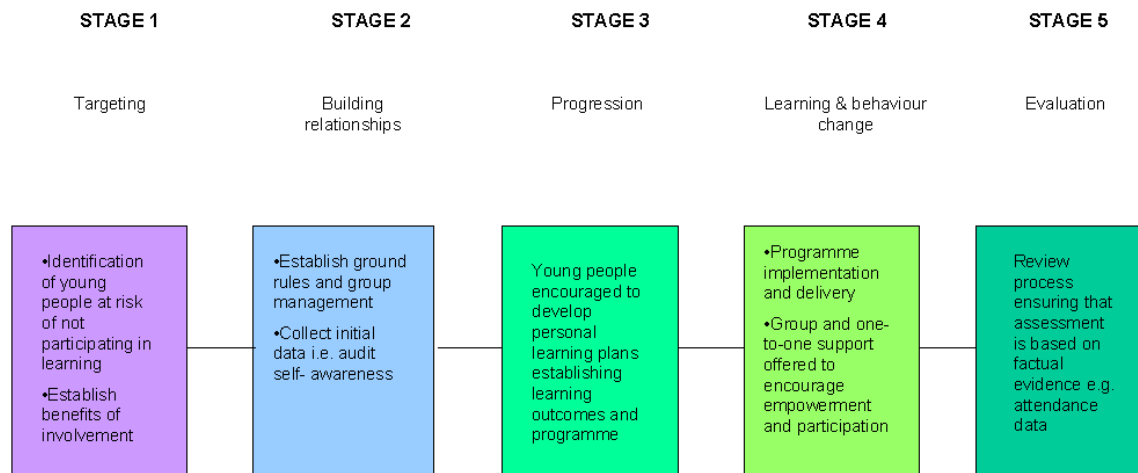


**LIST OF DISCUSSION TOPICS SUGGESTED BY YOUNG PEOPLE**

*USEFUL INFORMATION WHICH STUDENTS WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE ABOUT  
AND WOULD BE ESSENTIAL IN AN INFORMATION AND ADVICE CENTRE*

Colleges/sixth forms  
Drugs  
Nurse/STIs  
Contraception  
Alcohol abuse (the risks of)  
Rights young people have at 16, 17, 18 etc  
Street wise issues  
Money, how to set up accounts  
Driving, how and when  
Pregnancy  
Counselling  
Crime  
Voting  
Gambling addiction  
Smoking  
Abuse – physical, verbal, sexual, emotional  
Sex issues – experimenting  
Eating disorders  
Mental issues  
Women's issues, e g Breast cancer  
Family issues  
Childline  
Health and Safety  
Influential advice (how not to be influenced)  
Lesbian/gay  
Leisure activities in the area  
Religious beliefs  
Substance misuse  
Personal hygiene  
Bullying (what to do)  
Homelessness  
Travel/transport  
HIV and AIDS information

**School-based Connexions Pilot – Model for intervention**



- When working with young people who are excluded or at risk of exclusion, resources should be found to make worker/young people ratios as high as possible
- Young people should be involved in all 5 stages of this model with support offered to their families where possible

REFERRAL FORM DEVELOPED BY THE MULTI-AGENCY GROUP  
IN ONE OF THE SCHOOLS

CAREERS AND GUIDANCE REFERRAL

DATE: \_\_\_\_\_

NAME OF PUPIL: \_\_\_\_\_ FORM: \_\_\_\_\_ DOB: \_\_\_\_\_

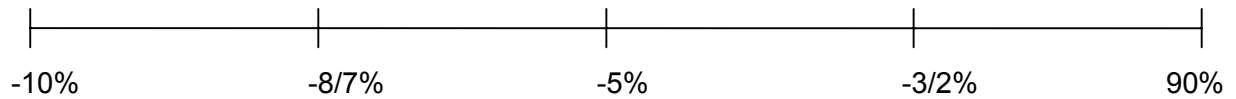
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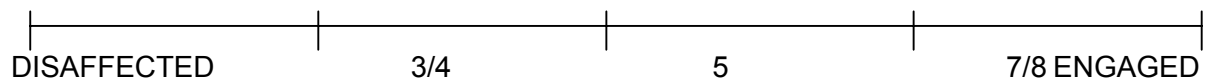
	COMMENT
PHYSICAL	
LEARNING	
BEHAVIOURAL	
EMOTIONAL	
SOCIAL	

LEVEL OF ATTENDANCE

NATIONAL  
AVERAGE  
ATTENDANCE



LEVEL OF ENGAGEMENT



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION: Please supply details to support your referral. Please include any known interests/aptitudes

Signed: \_\_\_\_\_ Department: \_\_\_\_\_