

CONNEXIONS APRIL 2008 and Beyond...

What is happening and why?

All local authorities have to establish new arrangements for the way they provide services to children, young people and their families. These new arrangements are often referred to as Children's Trust arrangements as they are the new organizations through which all services for children, young people and families will be organized. This emphasis on "going local" means some changes to the way services are made available in your area. This will affect Connexions Tyne and Wear.

Instead of the Connexions service being organized and managed at a Tyne and Wear level, each local authority area will offer its own Connexions service e.g. Connexions North Tyneside or Connexions Newcastle. This will allow each local authority to fit their Connexions service into its Children's Trust arrangements and join it up with other services that work with children and young people in the local area. This will create a new organization that is most likely to be called an **Integrated Youth Support Service**. For example, Connexions Gateshead will be an integral part of Gateshead Integrated Youth Support Service.

What changes will this mean?

As far as the local Connexions teams in each area are concerned, the relationships they have built up with learners, families, schools, colleges and work-based learning providers will continue. Each local authority has agreed that, in accordance with the operation of Transfer of Undertaking (Protection of Employment) Regulations 2006, all staff in the local Connexions teams will transfer to the local authorities, with the same conditions of service as they have now. This will be subject to consultation with the appropriate Trade Unions.

So-service delivery should not be affected by the change from Connexions Tyne and Wear to, say, Connexions South Tyneside or Connexions Sunderland. That is not to say that some changes will not happen. Most local authorities are trying to make the way they work with children and young people more effective by ensuring services such as the Youth Service work in a more integrated way with the Connexions teams. This means that some local authorities are looking at the best place for Connexions teams to be based.

Similarly, the local Connexions teams will continue to work closely with schools, colleges and work-based learning providers and will tailor the provision they make to fit their local circumstances. This will give each of these learning providers the chance to consider the best way of working with their local Connexions team and associated Youth Support Services – again this may mean some change to further develop and integrate the services provided.

Some funding is available to support the transfer from a Connexions Tyne and Wear service to a local authority based Connexions service. Each team will have access to this to help manage the inevitable costs associated with this process.

A team of senior staff from each local authority in Tyne and Wear is working with Connexions Tyne and Wear staff to ensure a smooth handover – this is scheduled to be finished for the 1st April 2008. If there is a change in the way services are provided, the local authorities will make sure that this is communicated to you effectively.

Will anything continue to be provided at the Tyne and Wear?

Yes – these services are likely to be referred to a Connexions Hub Services. The local authorities have determined that some common services required by all the local teams are best to be continued at a Tyne and Wear level. For example, all of the local teams need to have good information on how well young people are doing and what choices they make as they leave Year 11 and go onto some form of further education or employment. This is held in one database that is managed by a central team. It is currently best to retain that service rather than try to re-create it in each local area. There are a small number of other related services that will continue to be provided by the Connexions Hub.

What does this mean for the staff who currently work in the Hub?

It is likely that, as the local teams transfer to the local authority children's trust arrangements and their management, this will impact on the number of staff who will be needed for the Connexions Hub after April 2008. All of the Tyne and Wear local authorities have committed to do their utmost to ensure that all staff have the opportunity to remain employed by one of the local authorities. We will be working closely with our colleagues in the trade unions to manage this process as effectively and sensitively as possible.

Looking forward

The change to the local organization and direction of Connexions services is part of a much wider initiative to give local communities, through their local Councils, a greater say in the way they receive services. We are seeing some exciting developments emerge from this approach. The creation of integrated Youth Support Services in each local authority will provide the framework for innovative, effective joined-up working by all the main agencies that work with children, young people their families. The systematic engagement of young people themselves in the development of integrated Youth Services will be a feature of all the local arrangements. Local Connexions Services will play a vital part in this framework, leading the development of high quality guidance services in all the settings that work with young people