

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Name of Committee**

**The Cabinet**

**Date of Committee**

**7<sup>th</sup> December 2006**

**Report Title**

**Connexions Service**

**Summary**

To approve the transfer of funds from The Connexions Service to the County Council from the 1st April 2007 and to approve a three year commissioning of the Connexions Service with effect from the 1st April 2007.

**For further information please contact:**

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**Would the recommended decision be contrary to the Budget and Policy Framework? [please identify relevant plan/budget provision]**

No

**Background papers**

- Connexions Moving Towards Children’s Trust – a report to the DfES.
- Local Area Agreement (paper elsewhere on Cabinet agenda).
- Youth Matters – Government Green Paper
- Youth Matters: Next Steps - Government paper in response to the consultation

**CONSULTATION ALREADY UNDERTAKEN:-**

Details to be specified

Other Committees

.....

Local Member(s)

Not applicable

Other Elected Members

Cllr John Whitehouse  
CYP&F O&S Spokespersons for information:  
Cllr Helen McCarthy  
Cllr Richard Grant  
Cllr Jill Dill-Russell – “read and noted the report”

- Cabinet Member  Cllr Izzi Seccombe – *“support the papers for consideration at Cabinet”*
- Other Cabinet Members consulted  Cllr Alan Cockburn – *“Approved for consideration”*  
Cllr John Burton – *“Noted”*
- Chief Executive  .....
- Legal  Victoria Gould – *“Comments incorporated into report.”*
- Finance  David Clarke – *“No comments”*
- Other Strategic Directors  .....
- District Councils  .....
- Health Authority  .....
- Police  .....
- Other Bodies/Individuals

**FINAL DECISION**

**YES/NO**

**SUGGESTED NEXT STEPS:**

Details to be specified

- Further consideration by this Committee  .....
- To Council  .....
- To Cabinet  .....
- To an O & S Committee  .....
- To an Area Committee  .....
- Further Consultation  .....

## The Cabinet – 7<sup>th</sup> December 2006

### Connexions Service

#### Report of the Strategic Director for Children, Young People and Families

##### Recommendation:

- (1) That Cabinet approves an initial 3 year commissioning of the Connexions Service to deliver independent information, advice and guidance and targeted youth support as prescribed through the “Youth Matters” Green Paper.
- (2) That Cabinet agrees to the pooling of funds from the Connexions Service to Warwickshire County Council through the Local Area Agreement Children Young People and Families Block to commence 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

#### 1. Background

- 1.1 The Green Paper ‘Youth Matters’ was published in July 2005 and the Government responded to the consultation with “Youth Matters – Next Steps” in March 2006. One of its recommendations was that the funding of the Connexions Service would be transferred to the local Children’s Trust arrangement from April 2008.
- 1.2 The Children, Young People & Families Directorate have worked closely with Connexions towards delivering the 5 Every Child Matters outcomes through Warwickshire’s Children & Young Peoples Plan.
- 1.3 The Children, Young People and Families Directorate’s Division for Young People has included the Connexions Service in its strategic planning from its inception so that the ‘Warwickshire Youth Offer’ aligns itself with the Green Paper ‘Youth Matters’. The commitment of the Division for Young People is to offer all young people in Warwickshire access for “somewhere to go, something to do and someone to listen”.
- 1,4 The Department for Education and Skills (DfES) has produced an Action Note (3<sup>rd</sup> November 2006) regarding the changed funding arrangements in respect of Connexions services. This is attached as **Appendix A**.

## **2. Independent Advice, Information and Guidance**

- 2.1 The Warwickshire Youth Offer includes delivering independent advice, information and guidance for 13-21 year olds as directed through the Government's 'Youth Matters' Green Paper across the county of Warwickshire for all young people; the 'someone to listen'.
- 2.2 In order to have a coordinated approach that is built on firm foundations then the Connexions Service is the only service that can offer a county-wide resource with a sound history not only of the face to face work with young people but also in creating an excellent tracking database system. It currently delivers comprehensive information, advice and guidance and targeted youth support.
- 2.3 The Connexions brand name is appreciated and well known by young people, their families, schools and other agencies working with young people.
- 2.4 The Connexions Service is the only recognised service across Warwickshire that can provide this level of support for young people. It has a trained and experienced workforce of Personal Advisors, works well with partner agencies including the voluntary sector and has a strong commitment to the active engagement of young people.
- 2.5 Connexions Coventry & Warwickshire (operating through the Coventry, Solihull & Warwickshire Partnership) is one of the highest performing Connexions Services in the Country, and, there is no real competition to offer this service to the County.

## **3. Warwickshire's Local Area Agreement (LAA).**

- 3.1 The County Council has submitted a draft LAA and is in the process of negotiating the agreement with Government Office. The Children & Young People's block of the LAA has a mandatory target regarding the reduction of the percentage and young people at 16 who are 'not in employment, education or training' (NEETs) and Connexions is the lead partner for this target. They also have a significant role to play in many of the other targets.
- 3.2 Connexions has been a strong member of the Children & Young People's Strategic Partnership since its inception and has given a commitment to the Executive Board of the partnership regarding its contribution to the achievement of the targets within the LAA. It has also confirmed in writing its support for the pooling of budgets to underpin this commitment from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

## **4. Commissioning the Connexions Service**

- 4.1 As outlined in the Connexions Action Note the funding and responsibility for Connexions service will transfer to Local Authorities from April 2008 but the pooling of funding within the LAA takes effect from April 2007. In order to move to the new arrangements in as seamless a way as possible, it is recommended that the Council commissions Coventry & Warwickshire Connexions to provide the Connexions service to Warwickshire's young people from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.
- 4.2 To provide continuity of the service and stability of commissioning arrangements a contract for a period of 3 years is recommended. The contract would be let in accordance with the Council's usual procedures for the commissioning of services and the allocation of grant funding.
- 4.3 The current value of the service is £4.1million per annum and it is believed that the budget for 2007/2008 will remain the same. No figures have yet been published for 2008/2009 onwards.

## **5. Recommendations**

- 5.1 Cabinet approves an initial 3 year commissioning of the Connexions Service to deliver independent information, advice and guidance and targeted youth support as prescribed through the "Youth Matters" Green Paper.
- 5.2 Cabinet agrees to the pooling of funds from the Connexions Service to Warwickshire County Council through the LAA Children Young People and Families Block to commence 1<sup>st</sup> April 2007.

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December 2006



The best start in life for every young person

## Action Note

Ref No: CX 215

Date: 3 November 2006

### Connexions Business Planning 2007-08

#### For the attention of:

Connexions Partnerships

Local Authorities responsible for delivery of services funded under a direct financial memorandum

Government Offices

Local Authorities where Connexions funding is pooled into a Local Area Agreement (LAA).

#### Action to be taken and deadline

Connexions Partnerships, Local Authorities delivering Connexions services under a financial memorandum from 1 April 2007 and GOs, to agree a process for producing business plans for 2007/08 based on the guidance in this document (plans to be agreed and signed off before 31 March 2007).

Local Authorities where Connexions funding is pooled into a Local Area Agreement (LAA) and GOs to note.

#### Background

Connexions business planning for 2007-8 takes place in the context of the Government's commitment to transfer funding and responsibility for providing Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) and Targeted Youth Support (TYS) services to all Local Authorities from April 2008 and implementing an Integrated Youth Support Service in all Local Authority areas.

Annex 1 to this Action Note sets out the arrangements for production of Connexions Business Plans for 2007-08. As well as Connexions Partnerships and those Local Authorities who will deliver Connexions services under the Financial Memorandum, this provides important contextual information for Local Authorities who will receive Connexions grant funding pooled into local area agreements (LAAs) from April 2007.

In addition a number of other items exist or are planned that should be taken into account during planning. These include:

- The updated NEET delivery strategy – due December 2006;
- An announcement setting out expectations and future steps on Integrated Youth Support by the end of November to provide context for:
  - Draft standards for Information Advice and Guidance services. Publication of the draft standards for consultation is planned by end of November 2006;
  - Targeted Youth Support Prospectus. Publication is expected by December 2006;
- A decision on the use of the Connexions brand – notification of this is expected by end November 2006.

### **Clearance**

Clive Senior (Government Office for London) and Tony McGee (Government Office for the North West) have commented on the Business Planning Guidance. Final clearance has been provided by Mohammad Haroon (Deputy Director DfES, Supporting Children and Young People Group)

### **Contact**

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### **Feedback**

We would appreciate your feedback and comments on the usefulness of this note. Comments should be sent via email to [connexions.actionnotes@dfes.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:connexions.actionnotes@dfes.gsi.gov.uk) Please include the reference number and title of the note in the subject box of your email. Thank you.

## **Business planning and delivery of services funded through the Connexions grant in 2007- 08**

### **Introduction**

1. This document sets out the arrangements for planning and delivering services funded through the Connexions grant in 2007-08. The document is in two parts:

- **Part A:** is aimed at managers in Local Authorities and Connexions Partnerships responsible for planning and delivering the local Connexions service under a Financial Memorandum;
- **Part B:** is aimed at Local Authority managers with responsibility for Connexions grant funding to be pooled into local area agreements (LAAs).

### **Background**

2. For 2006-7 the Department established that services funded through the Connexions grant were to be delivered through one of two mechanisms:

- by Local Authorities through LAAs; or
- by Connexions Partnerships or Local Authorities delivering Connexions services under the Financial Memorandum which set out the conditions under which the grant is paid.

3. This reflected the need to facilitate a smooth transition of the funding and the responsibility for securing delivery of services to Local Authorities through children's trust arrangements by April 2008. In some areas, where funding has been pooled into LAAs, the transition has largely been put into effect. In others, planning is well underway, whilst in others planning is at an early stage.

### **Priorities for 2007- 08**

4. As in 2006-07, the Department's priorities for 2007-08 business plans are to demonstrate that robust arrangements are in place to secure:

- a continued focus on delivering the NEET and other PSA targets;
- maintenance of the scope and quality of front line services to young people so that they experience continuity and consistency of service delivery;
- a well-planned and smooth transition to Local Authority responsibility as soon as possible but no later than April 2008; and
- the continued delivery of statutory duties.

5. However, for 2007-08, the need to progress the transition is now all the more urgent. Funding and accountability for services funded by the Connexions grant is to transfer to local authorities no later than April 2008 and the Department needs to be assured that there are agreements and effective planning in place to maintain



consistent delivery of services to young people. School based services need to be planned around the academic year i.e. if operative from April 2008, these services actually need to commence from September 2007. Planning for this therefore needs to happen well before that date, taking account of legal lead in times for commissioning/procurement.

## **Funding**

6. The 2007-08 Connexions Partnership grant allocations will be announced in December 2006. We are happy for any dividing of funds between Local Authorities to be agreed locally but we will help with this if required.

7. We are working now on developing a funding mechanism to be used from April 2008 when the funding passes to Local Authorities. This will include developing the funding formula to make it more appropriate for Local Authority level allocations. As part of this, we will be seeking the views of Partnerships and Local Authorities, and we will be liaising with the NACP and LGA to agree the best way of doing this. We aim to announce notional 2008-09 Local Authority allocations by May 2007 and actual allocations by December 2007.

## **Involvement of young people**

8. There is a risk that activities relating to the involvement of young people will receive less emphasis in the future governance, design, management and delivery of services. GOs are asked to be alert to this possibility and to challenge as necessary the plans that come forward and ensure maintenance of the excellent progress made in involving young people in such arrangements.

## **Planning and delivery arrangements for 2007-08**

### **Part A – For Local Authorities and Connexions Partnerships delivering Connexions services**

9. Where Connexions Partnerships retain the funding for the whole of their sub-region or one or more Local Authority areas, they will be expected to produce a strategic plan covering that part of the sub-region for which they retain the funding *and* a delivery plan for each Local Authority area. Local Authorities delivering Connexions services will be expected to produce delivery plans for their areas.

10. Under both kinds of delivery arrangements, delivery plans should show how they will:

- deliver the NEET target in conjunction with partners including the Local Learning and Skills Council (LLSC) and other Local Authority services;
- contribute to other PSAs;
- deliver the *Specification for services funded through the Connexions Grant 2006-2008* (Connexions Action Note 211).

11. It is particularly important that these plans demonstrate that there are robust arrangements between Local Authorities for cross-border tracking and other inter-Local Authority/Connexions functions which may be jointly commissioned. Additional guidance on the targets for 2007-08 is set out in Appendix A.

12. A key task for GOs is to satisfy themselves that the strategic and local delivery plans cover the requirements referred to above.

## **Transition Plans**

13. A joint planning process between Local Authorities and Connexions Partnerships is now critical to achieving a successful transition. GOs have been monitoring the degree to which this is happening. Where there is a blockage to this process, whether from the Local Authority or the Connexions Partnership side, the GO will be expected to intervene early to alleviate the problem – alerting the DfES Connexions Transition team at an early stage.

14. The department's expectation is that no local delivery and/or sub-regional delivery plans for 2007-08 are to be signed off without being accompanied by a transition plan for each Local Authority area. These must be jointly developed and agreed between the Local Authority and the Connexions Partnership and agreed by March 2007. Guidance on the production of transition plans is set out in Appendix B.

15. Due to the urgency the DfES places on effectively moving ahead with transition and concerns around areas where movement appears limited, GOs should not sign off business plans unless there is a clear transition plan with definite milestones which has been shared with staff.

## **Part B – For Local Authorities with responsibility for Connexions grant funding to be pooled into Local Area Agreements (LAAs)**

16. Where Connexions Partnerships have agreed to pool their Connexions grant funding either in the whole of their sub-region or in one or more areas into LAAs, this is a stepping stone to children's trust arrangements and the full devolvement of funding to local authorities. It will be important, therefore, not to constrain the flexibilities inherent in LAA arrangements by rigidly applying planning requirements.

17. The *Local Area Agreements Guidance* states that Connexions can:

*“... be included subject to Connexions partnerships' joint agreement to include their funds and the involvement of Connexions Business Managers in the discussion process so that Connexions plans are properly reflected in LAAs...”*

What this means in practice, in individual areas, is for agreement between the Connexions Partnership, Local Authority and GO as part of the LAA negotiations. It will nonetheless be important that the agreement includes robust arrangements for the delivery of the specific elements which are linked to the inclusion of the Connexions grant:

- the NEET PSA target;

- meeting the statutory provisions; and
- a tracking and information returns system that meets the requirements of the *Client Caseload Information System Specification (CCIS)*.

18. The *Specification for services funded through the Connexions grant 2006-2008* provides more detail for Local Authorities on these items as well as information on the essential characteristics of those services funded through the Connexions grant.