

**CORPORATE PARENTING BOARD
12 JANUARY 2006**

CONNEXIONS

**COUNCILLOR PAUL THOMPSON
EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR EDUCATION AND SKILLS**

**ANDY WHITE
HEAD OF COMMUNITY EDUCATION**

PURPOSE OF REPORT

1. To update the Corporate Parenting Board of the specific support arrangements made by the Connexions Service to Children Looked After in Middlesbrough.

BACKGROUND & EXTERNAL CONSULTATION

2. In January 2005 I reported to the Corporate Parenting Board that the service had established links with the Leaving Care team and that there were plans for Personal Adviser resources to be channelled to this significant area of need.
3. In October 2005 the Local Management Committee of Connexions asked that more focus be placed on this area of work so that a robust, comprehensive system was established. Further, a request was made that the level of resource be examined to ascertain whether it was sufficient to meet the needs of Children Looked After, one of the most vulnerable groups within the Connexions remit.
4. In November 2005, after meetings between Children Looked After and Connexions, a new system was established within the Middlesbrough Connexions Service. There are now two named Personal Advisers (PA's) who work with a Children Looked After caseload aged 16+. These two PA's have developed a particular specialism and they attend case reviews and share other information during regular fortnightly meetings. Liaison with the Leaving Care team ensures that this is a comprehensive service and that every young person is allocated to one of the two PA's. The level of resource was also increased to a level where each PA now spends a full day with the Leaving Care team, an increase of 100%.
5. For those young people in care that are pre-16, another dedicated PA ensures that the Connexions Service is aware of all looked after children in education. It is the

role of this PA to liaise with the CFL to ensure that the school based Connexions PAs are involved in the Personal Education Plans for every Looked After Child.

6. Joint training and development for Leaving Care and Connexions PAs has taken place and is planned for the future. Job shadowing has also been undertaken with advisers visiting each other's organisation. One of the dedicated Connexions PAs also provides input into the Leaving Care "Independent Living Project" – providing benefits advice to participants, and there are plans for further Connexions input into a pilot Employability project.
7. Connexions were present at a Carer's event in February 2005. The event was attended by foster carers. Some foster carers met Connexions staff who act as PA's for the young people that they look after. The Connexions Service also offers a mentoring service specifically designed to support parents/carers and their families.
8. Connexions works very closely with the Leaving Care team based at Middlesbrough Independence Network, 3 Park Road North, together with the Middlesbrough Positive Activities for Young People (PAYP) Team who also staff a young people's drop in two afternoons per week.
9. Connexions is a town-wide service and young people from all wards have an entitlement. The headline performance indicator is the reduction of young people Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET). This has clearly led the service to concentrate a specific resource at Children Looked After in Middlesbrough.
10. There are no specific proposals contained within this report. However, it is anticipated that the provision outlined above will continue to develop. Connexions Tees Valley has a specific commitment to young people aged 16-19 who are Not in Education, Employment or Training. Children Looked After are more likely to be in this category and as such, are automatically seen as a special target group.

OPTION APPRAISAL/RISK ASSESSMENT

11. There are no realistic options in the way that the service is delivered to Children Looked After. All young people have an entitlement to a Personal Adviser and that entitlement has been met as outlined above. Clearly, the Connexions Service will be open to any suggestions of new methods of working and ways of giving fuller support to all young people.

FINANCIAL, LEGAL AND WARD IMPLICATIONS

12. All the funding for the Connexions Tees Valley Service is given directly to the Service, which is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Middlesbrough Council is a fifth part owner of the Company, with two named directors who sit on the Board. The current directors are The Executive Member for Education and Skills and the Head of Community Education. The liability to the Council is both limited and protected.
13. The Service is generic and is provided as an entitlement to all young people throughout all Wards in Middlesbrough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

14. That the Corporate Parenting Board recommends that the Executive accepts the contents of the report.

REASONS

15. The Corporate Parenting Board is asked to accept the contents of this report to enable Members to become familiar with the way that the Connexions Service is providing support to Children Looked After.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

- Report to Corporate Parenting Board – January 2002.
- Report to Corporate Parenting Board – January 2005

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