



CHILDREN AND LEARNING SCRUTINY PANEL

FINAL REPORT

MIDDLESBROUGH YOUTH SERVICE AND CONNEXIONS

PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1. To present the Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel's findings, conclusions and recommendations following its investigation of Middlesbrough Youth Service and Connexions.

BACKGROUND/AIMS OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

2. The purpose of the Youth Service is to support the personal and social development of young people through informal education. The service is a specialist provider of social and informal education for young people aged 11-24 years, with a particular focus on the 13-19 age group. Youth work aims to recognise the special needs of young people in society and works to support them through the transition to adulthood.
3. Connexions is a service which provides 13-19 year olds (and those aged up to 24 with a learning difficulty or disability) with information, advice, guidance and practical help in preparing for adult and working life and to help young people engage in learning and work. The service uses a multi-agency approach to provide impartial information, advice and guidance, including careers advice.
4. The scrutiny panel sought to assess how both services are operating and to examine their roles and service provision.

TERMS OF REFERENCE OF THE SCRUTINY INVESTIGATION

5. The terms of reference of the scrutiny investigation were as follows:
 - *To examine how youth services and Connexions are organised and their service provision - including the youth service's front line targeted work, geographical coverage and its outreach service.*
 - *To consider how accessible services are to young people, including levels of take up and whether service users are involved in planning and decision making to ensure that their needs are met; and also to examine the relationship between schools and Connexions.*
 - *To examine the impact/effectiveness of the services - how is this assessed or measured?*
 - *To examine the influence of the youth service and Connexions in reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET').*
 - *To examine the development of the 'My Place' programme for young people and the Youth Capital Fund Plus/ Youth Opportunity Fund, including local aims and objectives.*
6. The scrutiny panel undertook an in-depth investigation and met formally on seven occasions between 6 November 2008 and 19 March 2009 to gather evidence. A summary of the methods of investigation is outlined below:
 - (a) Detailed officer presentations, supplemented by oral evidence and relevant documentation.
 - (b) Discussions with staff from two Middlesbrough schools.
 - (c) Discussions with staff from the Hemlington Detached Youth Work project (Linx).
 - (d) Consideration of relevant documentation in respect of Government policy, national guidance etc.
7. This report has been compiled on the basis of evidence gathered using the sources above.
8. A Scrutiny Support Officer from Legal and Democratic Services co-ordinated and arranged the submission of written and oral evidence and arranged witnesses for the review. Meetings administration, including preparation of agenda and minutes, was undertaken by a Governance Officer from Legal and Democratic Services.
9. A detailed record of the topics discussed at Panel meetings, including agenda, minutes and reports, is available from the Council's Committee Management System (COMMIS), which can be accessed via the Council's website at www.middlesbrough.gov.uk.

MEMBERSHIP OF THE PANEL

10. The membership of the scrutiny panel was as follows:

Councillors Ismail (Chair), Williams (Vice-Chair); and Councillors Carter, Davison, Dunne, Mrs H Pearson OBE, Sanderson, Taylor and JA Walker. Plus co-optees: C Hodds, Father G Holland and M White.

THE PANEL'S FINDINGS

11. The scrutiny panel's findings in respect of each of the terms of reference investigated are set out below.

TERM OF REFERENCE: *"To examine how youth services and Connexions are organised and their service provision - including the Youth Service's front line targeted work, geographical coverage and its outreach service."*

12. The Youth Service and Connexions fall within the remit of Middlesbrough Council's Children, Families and Learning Department. Both are involved in contributing to supporting young people to achieve all five outcomes of the Every Child Matters agenda, that is:

- Be healthy
- Be safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic wellbeing

13. In addition, although each service is distinct, both provide universal services within a targeted setting; cover the 13-19 age range; and provide services up to age 25 in the case of a learning difficulty or disability, or for young people looked after by the local authority.

14. The scrutiny panel considered information in respect of the two service areas as follows:

- Background information on the Youth Service
- Main roles of the service (ie front line targeted work)
- Youth Service outreach work
- The Linx Project, Hemlington
- Background information on Connexions
- Main roles of the organisation.

Background information on Middlesbrough Youth Service

15. The Youth Service operates town-wide via a wide range of centres and projects. The key purpose of the service is to support the personal and social development of young people aged 13-19 through informal education. This is provided mainly through group work sessions in youth clubs, schools and outdoor and adventure activities. The service works closely with the voluntary youth sector and other agencies. Support is also provided up to age 25 for young people with learning disabilities and difficulties and for looked after children (ie those young people in the care of the local authority).

16. The Youth Service's Mission Statement is as follows:

"We will deliver a professional and quality service for and with young people within a partnership framework. We will support young people to actively participate in diverse and imaginative processes which combine enjoyment, challenge and learning. This will broaden their horizons, encourage choices and realise potential, thus enabling all participants to contribute positively to society."

17. The service accredits young people's learning within the areas of personal and social education utilising both internally and externally recognised processes. Young people are encouraged to take part in a range of activities and to commit to their development within them. Achievement is measured by using the following awards:

- Middlesbrough Youth Service Award
- The Duke of Edinburgh Award
- The Youth Achievement Awards
- Open College Network
- Junior Leader Award

18. Young people's achievements in respect of these awards are recognised at local celebration events.

19. Services are provided at nine youth centres across Middlesbrough and also via outreach work. This can involve contact with young people in a range of settings, including parks, leisure centres, schools, on the street and other open spaces. The aim is to engage with the young people to form positive relationships which may support them to become engaged in other mainstream services, including those offered by the Youth Service.

20. An Outreach Co-ordinator works with agencies across the town, particularly those involved in detached work (ie work which is non-centre based) and also delivers an outreach service in the town centre and east Middlesbrough areas. The Youth Service is also involved in the following schemes/projects:

- International Youth Exchange
- Stainsacre Hall
- Teesside Nautical Studies
- Youth Council
- Directly supporting young people through homework clubs, anti-bullying support and internet provision.

Main roles of the youth service

21. The scrutiny panel went on to examine detailed information in respect of the Youth Service's targeted work.

22. The Youth service had a full OFSTED inspection in Nov 2004 when it was identified that the Service was good at working with those young people that present themselves but that it did not have any specific targeted provision for marginalised groups. Following this report, part of the action plan that was developed in response was to establish youth provision for groups around issues of disability, for those not in education or employment (NEET); for black and minority ethnic (BME) groups

and for children looked after by the local authority (CLA). These were identified as national target groups and core groups locally.

23. Within the Youth Service's 2005 Operational Plan, staff were tasked with developing work around the targeted groups and an allocation of 25% of front line time was allocated in this area. In some cases this resulted in the establishment of discreet groups - for example a youth group at North Ormesby for young people with disabilities and a youth group at the Manor for children looked after.
24. At that time, work was already underway at Newport Settlement with an established BME group, and all sites were contributing to reducing the number of NEETS, through work with year 11 school leavers over the summer period. In addition, Thorntree Centre was tasked with the role of working alongside Connexions to develop programmes for NEET young people as it was identified that that area had the highest number of NEETS at that time. More detail on service provision and work in respect of NEETs is covered elsewhere in this report (see [paragraph 148](#) onwards).
25. More recently, this work with target groups has moved on and developed further. Also, other areas where targeted resources were required across cross-cutting themes became apparent, for example in respect of health issues, sex and relationship education and the co-ordination of town wide youth activities.
26. Information was submitted to the scrutiny panel in respect of current levels of youth service provision on a centre by centre basis. This illustrated how centres are involved in targeting specific areas of service provision, such as children looked after by the local authority, young people from black and minority ethnic (BME) groups, or provision of sexual health services. A summary of this information is attached at **Appendix 1** of this report. The appendix also highlights youth services that have been co-ordinated/provided on a town-wide basis.

Youth Service outreach work

27. The scrutiny panel was informed of the structure and operations of the outreach service. The Outreach Team operates from a base at Beechwood Centre and the manager also co-ordinates the youth centre-based sessions at Beechwood. The team operates alongside other partners, including street wardens, police, neighbourhood teams and voluntary sector to contact young people on the streets and in open spaces to try and engage and encourage them to be involved in positive activities. Young people are directed to appropriate services, for example youth clubs or specialist support through drugs workers. The operational focus of the team (as at January 2009). This changes on a six monthly basis according to intelligence received from the Problem Solving Groups of the Safer Middlesbrough Partnership.
28. The outreach team currently employs seven sessional staff and a full time manager. The manager is also responsible for youth service provision at Beechwood Youth and Community Centre. Each week the outreach team delivers a maximum of eight 2.25 hour sessions. Areas covered by the workers are those which are known as "hotspots" in terms of young people "hanging around" the streets. In 2008 the outreach team worked across the whole of Middlesbrough town centre and its outskirts - ie Gresham and University wards, St John's Gate, Breckon Hill, Longlands, North Ormesby, Grove Hill and Kader.

29. The team aims to work with all young people who “hang around” on the streets, especially those young people who do not access mainstream youth provision. The outreach team also works closely with the Welcome Project, which works with refugee and asylum seekers.
30. In addition to work in hotspot areas, the outreach workers also deliver two sessions of outreach in the catchment area of Beechwood Youth Club. This includes Beechwood, Easterside, Saltersgill and Grove Hill. This work is undertaken to promote the youth club to those young people who do not already access the club and also to meet with young people who do access the club in their own environment. This helps to develop stronger links with the Youth Service.
31. The Outreach Service is also closely involved with a group of refugees and asylum seekers at Newport Settlement. This involves the young people accessing a drop in provision, advice and guidance, playing pool and table tennis and having access to a gym. The group has also accessed funding through the Youth Opportunity Fund. The group obtained funding for activities in summer 2008, and also applied for funding for activities in the February 2009 half term. The Youth Service works closely with the group’s support worker and is also encouraging the young people to access youth provision throughout the week. Once this group becomes fully established it will link into the Youth Forums and Youth Council.
32. As part of the panel’s investigations concerning the Youth Service’s outreach work, arrangements were made for a panel Member to accompany outreach workers to see first hand how this aspect of the youth service operates. It was found that:
- Outreach workers operate in pairs - usually one male and one female - and walk around the streets to attempt to engage with groups of youths who are generally perceived to be “hanging around.” The outreach service covers main “hot spots” in the town but does not cover all areas. The panel Member saw the operation of the service in the Newport area.
 - Young people, both as individuals and groups, are approached to try to build relationships and encourage attendance at youth clubs/youth service events and activities. Support is provided from a mobile unit which houses PCs for the use of young people and which is also used for education/information relating to drugs and alcohol. The youth workers do not approach any young people who they consider to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.
 - The service has proved to be an effective means of engaging with young people who have previously been unknown to other services. It has also been a useful intervention which has helped to prevent some young people from becoming youth offenders.
 - A number of successes have arisen from the service - there are examples of young people have been diverted from involvement in anti-social behaviour and hanging around the streets to active participation in sport; and from virtually living on the streets to employment and home/car ownership.

- Relationships built up between the youth workers and young people mean that information concerning under age drinking or drug taking can sometimes be obtained by youth workers. However, youth workers do not generally share this information with agencies such as community police officers or street wardens. They are, however, able to direct young people to relevant services dealing in drug or alcohol abuse where this is deemed appropriate for the young person concerned. It was confirmed that information is passed to the relevant agency where more serious crimes such as drug dealing or vehicle theft is involved.
33. In considering the geographical coverage provided by the Youth Service, reference was made to the Linx project in Hemlington. This was established as an independent service by local residents in 1993 in response to the growing needs of young people in the area and a lack of youth facilities.
34. Arrangements were made for a panel member to visit the project, where they spoke to the Project Manager. Findings from the meeting were as follows:
- Although Linx is an independent project, the Council agreed to fund two youth workers as there is no direct Youth Service provision in Hemlington. Otherwise all funding is raised by Linx. Securing funding is an ongoing, annual issue.
 - Linx is a “detached “ project - which means that workers meet with young people “on their territory, eg streets, play areas, cafes, schools. The aim is to form relationships/engage with young people who do not (or choose not to) access centre-based youth facilities.
 - The service is involved in developing young people’s social, personal and educational awareness through relationship building, involvement in various projects and access to recreational opportunities.
 - Relationships are built on mutual trust - workers identify a young person’s needs and either provide support directly or assist in accessing appropriate support.
 - Outcome and achievement targets are set by Middlesbrough Council’s Youth Service as part of a Service Level Agreement. There is close working with a number of partners/agencies such as the Youth Service, police, street wardens and Children, Families and Learning in working towards the five ‘Every Child Matters’ outcomes.
 - Successful outcomes are difficult to define - and can very much depend on the starting point of the young person. This can vary from providing excursions and activities which young people find enjoyable and fulfilling to assisting with NEET reduction work.
 - A wide range of programmes is provided - from healthy living/smoking awareness and sexual health to work-shadow programmes, life skills and self esteem. Linx also participates in award schemes such as the Duke of Edinburgh Award.
 - A Hemlington Youth Forum has been established. This aims to make a difference for young people. This has involved developing a community garden, a London residential, a regular newsletter and involvement with the Youth Opportunity Fund to both apply for and allocate funding bids.
 - A Young Men’s Group and a Young Women’s Group have been established. These have improved self-confidence, formed good relationships with youth workers, promoted health and lifestyle issues and been involved with arranging various courses and sports activities.

Background information on Connexions

35. The Connexions service was established as a national programme in 2001 with the aim of providing a comprehensive service to meet young people's needs for information, advice and support and as part of a Government strategy to reduce social exclusion among young people. Connexions Tees Valley was launched on 1 September 2002, as one of 47 sub-regional partnerships, and incorporated the five local authorities in the Tees Valley. In April 2007 the disaggregation of the Connexions service nationally brought about the creation of Connexions Middlesbrough. Since that date, Connexions has operated as part of Middlesbrough Council, rather than as part of a separate Tees Valley-wide organisation.
36. Through multi-agency working, Connexions provides high quality, impartial, information, advice and guidance (including careers advice & guidance), together with access to personal development opportunities to help remove barriers to learning and progression and to ensure young people make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. The Connexions service brief is, essentially, to provide a service to all young people encompassing a careers advice and guidance function whilst also providing more intensive and targeted support to those most at risk of disaffection. As part of the service, a dedicated national website, Connexions Direct, is also available (see www.connexions-direct.com).
37. Connexions is a universal service designed to help all young people aged 13 to 19 regardless of need. The service is also provided up to a young person's 25th birthday in the case of a learning difficulty or disability. In Middlesbrough, the service also works with young people in care ('looked after children') until they are 25 years old.
38. The service has a particular focus on those at risk of not being in education, employment or training ('NEET'), or of being socially excluded. NEET levels in Middlesbrough have been identified as being particularly high, and although this is still the case, a significant reduction has been achieved through targeted work. This aspect of Connexions' work is covered as a separate term of reference in this report. Details of how Connexions is organised in terms of levels of support and allocation of resources are also covered separately - in the section of the report that deals with the term of reference relating to accessibility of services and levels of take up (see [paragraph 63](#) onwards).

Main roles of Connexions

39. The bulk of Connexions work is undertaken through Personal Advisers working directly with young people in schools and colleges. Further information on how this aspect of the service operates is shown from [paragraph 64](#) onwards.
40. In addition to the work which Connexions undertakes directly with schools, the organisation is also involved in the following key activities:
 - Annual Choices Event
 - Statutory responsibilities under Section 140 of the learning and Skills Act 2000
 - The September Guarantee
 - Work regarding intended destination
41. Information was submitted to the panel in respect of these areas of the service's work.

Annual Choices Event

42. On an annual basis, Connexions Middlesbrough organises a careers fair for young people at a prestige venue, usually the Riverside Stadium. This is aimed primarily at year 11 pupils in local schools, but is also available to post-16 students and to those young people who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). This year's event offered a series of workshops for young people and was followed by an evening event, which was open to the public.
43. The event offers the opportunity for young people to consult with college representatives, training providers and employers. Approximately 1000 young people and their parents attended the last event.

Section 140 Assessments

44. Section 140 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 places a statutory responsibility on the Secretary of State for the assessment of young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities (up to age 24) who are in their final year of compulsory education. These assessments are required only if the young person is progressing from compulsory education into further education, training or higher education. If the young person is moving into employment an assessment is not required. The Secretary of State has placed the duty of preparing the assessments on Connexions.
45. The Personal Advisers working in the Middlesbrough schools, colleges, and special schools complete these assessments after consultation with the young person and their parents/carers. In addition, the views and expertise of the people who have been involved in supporting the young person (such as a school's special educational needs co-ordinator, educational psychologists, social workers and teachers) are sought. Assessments are passed to relevant agencies with the consent of the young person. This can include colleges and training providers. In addition, the Learning and Skills Council receives a full set of the assessments in order to inform local learning provision requirements.
46. Connexions reports to the Department for Children, Schools and Families annually on the number of Section 140 assessments completed. In 2008, 84 assessments were completed for young people with Statements of Special Educational Needs, which represented a 100% return.
47. For the 2008-2009 academic year, in addition to assessments for young people with a Statement of Special Educational Needs, Connexions is also undertaking assessments for pupils involved with School Action Plus. (School Action Plus is part of the graduated response to meeting a child's special educational needs, as set out in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice.) This will improve the transition of pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities and will assist in preventing young people dropping out of education/training. This will, in turn, reduce the overall numbers of NEETs with learning difficulties and disabilities.

The September Guarantee

48. This was first implemented nationally in 2007, and is an important element of the Government's strategy for reducing the proportion of young people who are NEET. It constitutes an offer of a place in learning by the end of September to all young people completing compulsory education. In 2008, the guarantee was extended to 17 year olds enrolled on one year or short courses and also those who had left the activity they first chose on leaving school. In the case of school leavers the offer is required to be one of the following:

- Full or part-time education in school, sixth form college, independent learning provider or college of further education.
- An apprenticeship or programme-led apprenticeship, including a training element and a job or work placement.
- Entry to employment (E2E)
- Employment with training to NVQ level 2

49. The guarantee has a number of key elements, as follows:

- Ensuring all young people in year 11 receive the information, advice and guidance they need to apply for appropriate post-16 provision.
- Making an offer by the end of September of a place in learning that takes into account the level of provision required by the young person, its location, occupational sector and learning method.
- Tracking applications and offers of learning made to young people so that those who have yet to apply for learning or to receive an offer, can be identified and given ongoing support.
- Collating and sharing the intended destinations data with partners so that provision can be planned and commissioned to meet the needs of young people
- Ensuring that there are sufficient appropriate learning places to meet the needs of young people in the area.

50. The guarantee is delivered to all young people completing compulsory education. Schools, Connexions services and the Learning and Skills Council Area Partnership Team work together to ensure that the relevant processes are in place and that each has a clear understanding of their responsibilities.

51. In the post-16 sector, follow-up exercises were carried out on all young people in the 17-year old cohort to ensure that students on one-year or short courses were in receipt of offers of places in learning for the following year. By end of August 2008 93.87% of Year 11 pupils and 95.88% of year 12 students had satisfied the September guarantee.

Intended Destination

52. In order to make progress towards the September Guarantee, it is important to ascertain as soon as possible an idea of what a young person would like to do after compulsory education. All Personal Advisers organise their programme of Year 11 interventions to offer advice and guidance to the maximum number of young people before the end of the autumn school term. Their plans are then aggregated and discussed with the Learning and Skills Council so that adequate local provision can be made. The scrutiny panel heard that (as at January 2009) preparations for the work for the current academic year are well advanced, with in excess of 85% of year 11 students having discussed an intended destination with their PA.

53. Examination of this term of reference highlighted the wide range of services for young people which are provided by the Youth Service and Connexions and provided the basis for the scrutiny panel's further investigations.

TERM OF REFERENCE: “To consider how accessible services are to young people, including levels of take up and whether service users are involved in planning and decision making to ensure that their needs are met; and also to examine the relationship between schools and Connexions”

54. The above term of reference involved the scrutiny panel examining information on the following areas:

For Youth Services:

- access to service provision
- engaging young people in planning and decision making in respect of the service
- service take up

For Connexions:

- how resources are allocated in schools
- college input
- work with training providers
- one-stop-shop

Youth Services: access to service provision

55. Of the Council’s nine Youth and Community Centres, eight are situated in communities with areas of high deprivation. The exception is Kader Youth and Community Centre in the Brookfield Ward.

56. The centres are within walking distance for the service users of the area and all have been audited to ensure that they will be compliant with access provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act. All of the centres have achieved the “Ask us we’re included” award through the Children’s Society. This recognises that all the centres have appropriate facilities and provision to meet the needs of young people who have disabilities.

57. All centres operate an open door policy for young people aged 13-19 with some provision for junior youth clubs to work with children aged 8-12 through Middlesbrough Council play workers, overseen by Youth Service staff. All centres have achieved the “Healthy Youth Club” standard and offer options of healthy eating, activity and emotional well-being support, information and advice.

58. There is a small charge to young people to access services. This generates income, which can be spent in a number of ways, such as on new equipment or visits for the young people. There is also provision, at each Centre Manager’s discretion, to allow young people access to services where they are unable to pay the charge.

Engaging young people in planning and decision making

59. Each centre consults with young people with regards to opening hours and all are open at least four evenings a week, many with extra sessions at weekends, depending on resources, to meet the needs of the young people. All centres have drop-in sessions for young people to access to discuss issues, engage in projects etc.

60. To meet the needs of young people in terms of provision, each centre is asked to complete a user survey expressing what - if any - issues the young people have on current provision, with suggestions for any changes, or improvements. This survey is done annually and published each February. This information forms the basis of the Youth Services annual review and is fed into an Operations Plan. Individual Centres then act on actions identified by the young people, where appropriate and feasible, and also discuss with them any of the suggestions made.
61. In terms of how young people are actively involved in decision making, the scrutiny panel heard details as follows:
- Youth Centre Management Committees have representation from young people. These young people have voting rights on decisions.
 - The Youth Opportunity and Youth Capital Funds have enabled many young people aged 13-19, whether involved in the Youth Service or not, to identify gaps in services or provision and apply for grant funding to meet their needs. Young people are responsible for awarding grants against funding criteria decided by them. This aspect of the Youth Service's work is detailed in the section of this report which relates specifically to the Youth Capital and Youth Opportunity Funds (see **paragraph 117** onwards).
 - *Myplace* is a Government initiative to develop 'world class' youth facilities. From early 2008, many young people were consulted in respect of proposals to develop a *myplace* facility in Middlesbrough. This aspect of the Youth Service's work is detailed in the section of this report which relates specifically to the *myplace* proposals (see **paragraph 129** onwards).
 - The Youth Council supported by the Youth Service is a constituted group of Young People from Middlesbrough. They have been formally recognised as the official group that the Council will consult with and engage young people in the scrutiny process. This will empower Young People to be involved in decision-making processes.
 - Young People led by the Youth Council produced a DVD to accompany the *myplace* application to highlight the extensive consultation with young people.
 - The Youth Service has an annual event to link with Local Democracy week and 'I'm a Councillor get me out of here' initiative. This is known as "Time for answers" and is a youth-led debate where local Councillors answer young people's questions. As part of this exercise a Councillor is elected as Young People's Champion by the young people involved. This is currently Councillor Jeanette Walker.
 - Each youth club has an open forum to discuss many issues affecting young people. Help, advice and guidance is then sought for the young people. This can be drug related, careers advice or requests to access 'C-Card' facilities (ie confidential relationship and sexual health advice and condom distribution).

Service take up

62. There are approximately 14,000 young people in Middlesbrough in the age 13-19 cohort. Information was submitted in respect of the number who have accessed/participated in Youth Service provision and received recognition and accreditation for their endeavours over the three years up to and including 31 December 2008. This was summarised as follows (full details of participation figures are shown in the table at **Appendix 2**):

Contact Target Rate	Actual	Particip'n Target Rate	Actual	Recorded Outcomes Target Rate	Actual	Accredit'n Target Rate	Actual
3350	2403 (72%)	2015	1314 (65%)	1213	913 (75%)	604	561 (93%)

Connexions: Access to services and takeup

63. Detailed information was submitted to the scrutiny panel in respect of access to Connexions services, including how service users are involved in service planning, as follows:

- resource allocation in schools and colleges
- college input
- work with training providers
- one-stop-shop

Resource allocation in schools and colleges

64. This aspect of the Connexions service accounts for the biggest part of its workload. Approximately 45% of officers' time is spent working directly with young people in schools, in direct partnership with each school. Remaining time is divided between activities such as training, administration and meetings, operating drop in sessions at the town centre one stop shop, post-16 working and individual case work. Work is also undertaken across a fairly broad range of areas such as 'E2E' (entry to employment), teenage pregnancy, substance misuse and working with agencies such as Jobcentre Plus.

65. In 2005, Connexions Tees Valley decided that different levels of support would be required from the service's Personal Advisers for different geographical areas and also for different students. In essence, levels of support were to reflect local indices of deprivation, with more intensive support provided in the most deprived areas. This principle is still applied and provides for three levels of support, as follows:

Tier 3: The lowest level of support - where a pupil can be supported through a mix of information, advice and guidance.

Tier 2: Where more in-depth guidance is required - for example where a young person is thought to be at risk of disengaging or is confused in respect of vocational choices.

Tier 1: The highest level of support - for example where support might be required on a continuing basis due to the specific needs of the young person. In the case of this level of support it is hoped that the young person can progress through Tiers 2 and 3 as their situation is addressed.

66. In general, support provided by the three tier system is broken down as shown by the following model:

Tier 3: 50%
Tier 2: 25%
Tier 1: 25%

67. This model is applied flexibly across Middlesbrough in that separate amounts of Personal Adviser time is allocated according to the needs profile of each school. This is based on a time allocation per pupil, as follows:
- Tier 3: 30 minutes
 - Tier 2: 90 minutes
 - Tier 1: 180 minutes
68. These times can cover several types of interventions over a flexible timescale - for example one to one interviews, group sessions or class talks.
69. In addition to the above, 10% of Personal Advisers' time is allocated to working with Year 9 and 10 students and there is also service provision for local colleges for work with students in further education. Connexions is a universal service, and all year 11 students are offered an interview in school. All young people have a named Personal Adviser.
70. Since this system was introduced, discussions have been held with schools to ensure that the service reflects their needs. Proposed hours of provision are then adjusted as necessary and are reflected in a Partnership Agreement drawn up with each school. This effectively allows the school to determine a local level of service provision specific to its requirements. Detailed information was submitted on how the total amount of Personal Adviser time (with 24 full time equivalent posts) is matched with school requirements.
71. The scrutiny panel considered details of tier allocation among schools. This illustrated (as outlined earlier) that service provision reflects the needs of each school - for example Unity City Academy's Tier 1 support (ie the highest level) is currently 40% of the school's total allocation, while that of Macmillan Academy is 10%.
72. An issue considered by the panel related to support for pupils with special needs. The disaggregation of Connexions Tees Valley brought with it the demise of a Special Needs team, which had been based at Stockton Head Office. In order to ensure that sufficient resources were made available to bridge this potential gap in service provision in Middlesbrough, the decision was taken to allocate more hours in special needs establishments. For the current interviewing year, it was decided to allocate more Personal Adviser time across these establishments by allocating the maximum time (3 hours) for each pupil across all school year groups. This allows for maximum flexibility across the year groups.
73. In addition to special needs support for schools, a total of 30 days special needs support is provided to Middlesbrough College. This is used to carry out group work and individual interventions, as well as to provide a presence at enrolment and open evenings to offer assistance.
74. An allocation of Personal Adviser time is also made available to other further education establishments. Twenty days of support is allocated to each of St Mary's College and Cleveland College of Art and Design and 109 days to Middlesbrough College. Six days of support for further education is provided to The King's Academy and to Macmillan Academy.

Work with Training Providers

75. As with learning providers (schools and colleges), Connexions has Partnership Agreements with all training providers, and a link Personal Adviser system also operates. For the eight E2E (Entry to Employment) providers, one hour of PA time is allocated weekly to each provider for every 10 young people. This is generally adequate to provide the support required by young people who are attending the scheme, and to help them to move on. For the 12 mainstream training providers, a named PA works on a response basis to provide support as and when required.

Accessibility via the One-Stop-Shop

76. This is located in Church House in Middlesbrough Town Centre. The One Stop Shop is the main public access point for Connexions and is traditionally the place that young people come to in order to register for work. Here they can be told about learning or employment vacancies as well as personal development opportunities. The shop contains a resource centre where young people can obtain assistance with preparing CVs and making job applications. Various training providers make use of the premises (by arrangement) to offer a drop-in or interviewing facility. A team of Personal Advisers is on hand each day on a rota system. This provides a wide variety of advice and assistance and directs young people to appropriate services.

77. The numbers of young people using the facility varies according to the time of year - for example from 725 in October 2008 to 327 in December 2008. A total of 6826 young people used the One-Stop-Shop during the year. During the same period, telephone calls to the service (from all sources) numbered 16,232.

78. Examination of this term of reference illustrated how services are made accessible to young people and how steps are taken to ensure that their needs are addressed.

TERM OF REFERENCE: *“To examine the impact/effectiveness of the services - how is this assessed or measured?”*

79. The above term of reference involved the scrutiny panel examining information on the following:

- measuring the impact of Youth Work
- measuring the effectiveness of Connexions
- the views of careers staff from Middlesbrough schools in respect of Connexions services

Measuring the Impact of Youth Work

80. In terms of how the impact of youth services are measured, some measures are easily recognisable/tangible such as accreditation for recognised courses/schemes. However, it can often be the case that for a lot of young people who access youth provision it can be the first time that they have had any achievement recognised formally. This is predominantly done through the Duke of Edinburgh Award scheme, although other forms of accreditation are also accessed e.g Open College Network (OCN).

81. The recorded outcome indicator used by the Youth Service recognises “the distance travelled” by a young person - that is how far they have personally developed through youth service involvement. In some cases a young person may attend youth provision for some weeks without making eye contact or entering into conversation with staff. Following youth work intervention over a period of time, this can lead to the young person growing in confidence, entering into discussions, expressing their needs and going on to lead on projects or become involved in funding applications.
82. As a result of youth work intervention, many young people have become engaged in their local community - for example through inter-generational activities such as work on allotments and elderly citizens’ lunches.
83. The service is often requested to redeploy its outreach team to “hotspots” to help reduce anti-social behaviour. Where this has been done, and also by working in partnership with other agencies, there has been a reduction in the figures of anti-social behaviour and criminal damage. Summer programmes have engaged large numbers of young people in positive activities and work concentrated around the October half term has reduced incidents of anti-social behaviour around mischief and bonfire nights.
84. Each centre works directly with year 11 students to help direct them and support them in respect of post-16 routes such as education or training. Work is undertaken with partners such as Connexions to devise individual action plans of support for the more vulnerable young people. This has contributed to reducing levels of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).
85. It was indicated that, often, young people do not realise the impact of youth work until they are older, usually into their twenties. For example, young people have stated that if it had not been for the youth club which they had been involved with, they would have become involved in serious trouble, or would not have had anyone to turn to when parents had problems. This can be measured by the number of young people who have come through the youth club route to become junior leaders. In some cases some have then gone on to become youth work apprentices, volunteers or youth workers.
86. Youth work outcomes are currently measured as part of the outcome measures which are monitored through the Positive Contribution Group of the Children’s Trust. These measures have included an increase in young people taking part in positive activities, a decrease in young people’s use of substances, a decrease in the number of first time entrants to the youth justice system, a decrease in the number of teenage pregnancies, and an increase in the voice and influence of young people.
87. Although good youth work contributes in some way to all of the above outcomes it is not solely responsible. Other agencies and bodies, such as schools and colleges, the Primary Care Trust and youth justice bodies/organisations have also been closely involved. The Youth Service works to meet the needs of young people but looks to refer to specialists for extra support. The service does, however, stay in contact with young people within an informal support framework - which may be a key element for many young people.

88. During consideration of this term of reference, reference was also made to the new Youth Public Service Agreement (PSA) which was launched in 2008. The Government has recognised that increasing the proportion of young people participating in positive activities is critical to increasing the number of young people on the path to success. PSAs set out the key priority outcomes the Government wants to achieve in the next spending review period (2008-2011). Each PSA is underpinned by a single Delivery Agreement shared across contributing departments, with each of the new PSAs requiring the contribution of a number of Government Departments.
89. At a local level, progress against this PSA will be determined by a range of indicators. These include measuring increases in participation in both learning and positive leisure-time activities, as well as the reduction in negative outcomes. Negative outcomes include substance misuse, teenage pregnancy, entry to the criminal justice system and the proportion of young people not in education, employment or training (NEET). Issues around young people who are NEET and concerning positive activities are covered elsewhere in this report - see [paragraphs 148 and 117](#) onwards.

Measuring the effectiveness of Connexions

90. Members considered information on how the effectiveness of Connexions service delivery is assessed and measured and how young people are able to comment on the quality of service.
91. Connexions has a number of measures in place to ensure performance management and accountability. These are used to determine how Connexions resources will be deployed. The information submitted to the panel illustrated the accountability of Connexions through existing arrangements - namely the Children and Young People's Plan and the NEET Reduction Strategy, both of which apply to the period 2008-11. From April 2009, reporting back will be effected by means of the Children Families and Learning Departmental Plan and the Connexions Service Plan.
92. Information was submitted in respect of the following, which have all been measures used as aspects of the Connexions' performance management framework:
- Partnership Agreements
 - Allocation of caseloads among Personal Advisers
 - Key Steps Observations
 - Information, Advice and Guidance Quality Standards Self Assessment
 - "Tell Us What You Think" questionnaire
 - Mystery Shopping

Partnership Agreements

93. To assure the robustness of the Partnership Agreements which are drawn up with learning establishments, a system of monitoring and evaluation was introduced. This means that every school and college's Partnership Agreement is reviewed and possibly re-negotiated every year at the end of the summer term. This annual agreement is also supported by reviews each term. The final document is signed off by the Head or Principal of the establishment and the Connexions Manager. Reviews are carried out each term. In this way, minor amendments or changes of emphasis can be effected, such as re-arrangement or re-timing of particular activities.

Allocation of caseloads among Personal Advisers

94. All caseloads are reviewed regularly and responsibilities are allocated according to several criteria. A major consideration is consistency, as many agencies prefer to have the same Personal Adviser all the time. However, due regard is given to staff development, and the desirability of widening the experience of all staff. It is usually possible to make every PA the lead for at least one area of work, where they can act as a point of reference and a source of expertise.
95. A current schedule of PA duties and responsibilities was submitted to the scrutiny panel to illustrate caseloads.

Key Steps Observations

96. This is when a Personal Adviser Team Leader, observes a Personal Adviser (or Keeping Touch Worker in their practice. This can be done through observing a one to one interview or a group work session. The Team Leader then completes a pro-forma scoring the quality of the member of staff's intervention. Immediate feedback is also provided to the member of staff regarding their performance and written feedback is provided within two weeks. Key Steps is a national framework that is used throughout the country as a means of monitoring the quality of work within Connexions. Within the scoring on the form there is also a section where the Team Leader observing the member of staff seeks the young person's views on the advice that has been provided. This is done once the PA has left the room. Middlesbrough Connexions has been using this as a quality measure for four years and it is viewed by staff as a positive tool to highlight good practice. Assessment documents are checked by an external person to ensure fairness and a quality approach. Linked to Key Steps is six-weekly supervision for staff. This provides an opportunity to look at personal/professional development, which ties in with the development section on the Key Steps form.

Information, Advice and Guidance Quality Standards

97. All Middlesbrough Connexions staff took part in a self-assessment day in March 2008 to look at the National Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) Quality Standards. As a result of this an improvement plan was drawn up to ensure that Connexions Middlesbrough is able to meet these standards. This process is to be re-visited on an annual basis at a Connexions Staff Development Day dedicated to this task.

“Tell Us What You Think” questionnaire

98. This is completed twice a year. Over the course of a week, all staff invite young people that they come into contact with to complete a questionnaire. This enables the service to measure the quality of the work that staff are doing with young people. This was last carried out in November 2008, when 226 forms were returned. The questionnaire was next scheduled for completion in March 2009.
99. The questionnaire results help to inform the service about how well young people feel it is performing and also to inform possible changes in working practice. Responses are analysed by an outside provider and recommendations are made in respect of where service provision can be improved.

Mystery Shopping

100. This initiative was first carried out in March/April 2008 and will be undertaken again in early 2009. An outside company took on the work to ensure impartiality. The company engages young people from a local agency, who then use the Connexions One Stop Shop facility in the town centre. The young people are trained in what to ask the personal advisers and then complete an evaluation exercise in respect of their findings. In 2008, nine young people were involved in the mystery shopper exercise. As a result, several measures were put in place. These included confidentiality posters for every interview booth at the One-Stop-Shop and also at schools and colleges, a new system for booking in young people to provide more confidentiality and also a door buzzer for the front shop.
101. The outside company fed back to the mystery shoppers so they could see what had been done as a result of their involvement. Direct quotes from the young people in respect of their findings were as follows:

Good practice:

"It was easy to talk."
"They gave me things to take away and look at."
"I got good answers and they also gave me the help I need to have."

Suggestions for improvements:

"(Needs to be) more accessible for disabled people" (this was their perception as nobody had a disability themselves).
"They should tell you about confidentiality."

Customer Satisfaction Survey

102. This was a telephone survey by an independent company in March 2008. It involved them contacting 544 young people (at random) from 2500 Connexions service users. The findings of this survey were very positive in respect of service provision.

Visits to schools

103. As part of its investigations regarding the relationship between schools and Connexions, arrangements were made for Members of the scrutiny panel to speak to teaching staff at Middlesbrough schools to discuss their views in respect of the service.
104. Of six schools and academies contacted, members of staff from Ormesby Comprehensive School and Acklam Grange School agreed to meet with panel members.
105. A discussion was held at Ormesby Comprehensive with the Careers Co-ordinator, who is the link between the school and the Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs). The school has a team of three part-time PAs. A lead PA works in school three days each week with the other two available when she is not there. One PA is male to cover circumstances where male students would prefer to speak to him.

106. It was found that services are provided at the school as per the information which had previously been submitted to the scrutiny panel by Connexions. Services are provided on the basis of an annual agreement which is drawn up with the school in July each year. Every Year 11 pupil receives a one-to-one careers interview and information is also delivered to different year groups. For example, each Year 10 student completes a questionnaire which helps to assess the appropriate amount of time that will be allocated to them individually in Year 11, in accordance with Connexions' three tier system based on need. PAs begin to work with students from Year 9, which means that good relationships can be formed.
107. The school also receives additional support from Connexions in the case of pupils with Statements of Special Needs and also for those involved with School Action Plus. (School Action Plus is part of the graduated response to meeting a child's special educational needs, as set out in the Special Educational Needs (SEN) Code of Practice. It is triggered when a pupil continues to make little or no progress despite having received extra support from the school through School Action. School Action Plus involves seeking advice or support from specialists outside the school, whereby the school may draw up an Individual Education Plan for the pupil.) Personal Advisers also attend all reviews for pupils with special needs.
108. PAs are also involved through acting as the link to local colleges. Visits are arranged for prospective students so that they can familiarise themselves with the college environment.
109. The personal advisors relate well to students and have formed good relationships with some of them. Although some of the PAs have not come from a careers background (having been involved in youth work) they receive training from Connexions and have attained, or are working towards, appropriate qualifications. This will help to improve the service further.
110. While the school is unaware of students' views of Connexions, it is known that the pupils do talk to each other about the advice they receive. This is considered to be a good indicator that the service is working.
111. The school is generally pleased with the service offered by Connexions. At the end of the last academic year, the time Connexions had spent working with the school had exceeded the service level agreement by approximately one hundred hours. While the school had been pleased to receive the additional support at no extra cost it was indicated that the paperwork which PAs have to complete can be time consuming and that much of this time had been used for writing up action plans rather than contact time with students.
112. An issue which was identified relates to Year 11 students' one to one interviews with personal advisors. It was highlighted that although it had been expected that (in the current academic year) all Year 11 students would receive their one-to-one interview with a PA before Christmas, this had not been the case. This information has been logged with the Connexions Manager and a specific request for interviews to be completed before Christmas would be written into the service level agreement for 2009/10. In general there is a good working relationship with Connexions staff and any problems that have arisen have been adequately resolved once they had been highlighted. An example of this related to a change of PA at the end of a school year. Also, on occasion, pupils have not received information which they have been promised from the PAs and it is necessary to follow this up.

113. The school also has an “Aimhigher” Co-ordinator who assisted pupils with completing application forms and CVs. (The national Aimhigher programme was established to promote the fact that higher education, with all the benefits it can bring, is open to anyone with the ability to succeed, whatever their background). The co-ordinator has met with the Connexions PAs to ensure that there is no duplication of support being offered to pupils. Connexions also offers drop-in sessions for help with application forms and CVs and the school had attended the major Connexions event held at the Riverside Stadium in October 2008. Students attended the event in the morning and then worked on producing CVs at school in the afternoon.
114. This was found to be a very useful event which helped the students to focus on what they wanted to do in the future. The school is aware that its students do visit the Connexions Office in the town centre from time to time, as queries from individuals have been forwarded by the PAs.
115. In terms of the visit to Acklam Grange School, a panel member spoke to the Head of Inclusion at the school. The findings from the meeting were as follows:
- The school has an excellent and close working relationship with Connexions. For example, the school determines how it uses its allocated time. The system has worked very well owing to this flexibility. Also, the school’s Transitions Officer (who supports year 11 students) works very closely with Connexions and is also trained by them.
 - The service is well integrated into the school. It has a high profile and a visible presence within the school and is not regarded by students as an external service but as part of the school’s team of staff.
 - The school also has a member of staff who works in Careers Advice Information and Guidance - they also work closely with Connexions.
 - The Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs) undertake duties over and above those expected - for example forming links with Year 9 students in relation to options choices. This helps to build good working relationships for the future.
 - The disaggregation of the Connexions service (from a Tees Valley-wide service) has improved the service. There are now closer relationships between PAs and students.
 - Close working has also taken place in respect of the NEET reduction strategy - Acklam Grange has been particularly successful in this area and consistently achieves low levels of NEETS among its Year 11 transition pupils. This has been achieved by good work (involving Connexions) in respect of pre-16 students.
 - The school finds the service invaluable - support for young people has moved on from the past position of a single discussion with a careers adviser (when a student would be asked “What do you want to be?”) to a system where students are assisted in making informed choices through specific guidance.
116. Examination of this term of reference illustrated that there are procedures and indicators in place to measure the effectiveness of Youth Services and Connexions.

TERM OF REFERENCE: “To examine the development of the ‘My Place’ programme for young people and the Youth Capital Fund Plus/Youth Opportunity Fund, including local aims and objectives.”

117. The scrutiny panel heard that the Government has committed substantial funding to developing strategies and initiatives for young people. In examining the *myplace* proposals and the Youth Capital Fund Plus/Youth Opportunity Fund, and in seeking to examine the implications of such initiatives in Middlesbrough, the panel also considered information in respect of the national strategies underpinning these developments. Information was considered in respect of the following:

- The national strategy ‘Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities.’
- The operation of the Youth Capital Fund Plus and Youth Opportunity Fund
- The local funding bid and proposals in respect of the ‘*myplace*’ programme.

Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities

118. This strategy was published by the Government in July 2007. It set out the long-term vision for improved services and opportunities for young people. ‘Aiming High’ builds on the programme of reform and integration of children’s and young people’s services set out in ‘Every Child Matters: Change for Children’ and ‘Youth Matters: Next Steps’. All local councils are implementing these initiatives.

119. The strategy includes 55 commitments intended to increase young people’s participation in constructive leisure-time activities. These respond to new evidence on the importance of participation in the development of social and emotional skills and play a vital role in enabling young people to make a successful transition to adulthood.

120. The six key objectives of Aiming High, which is being supported by national investment of £840m between 2008 and 2011, are shown below, together with work which is to be undertaken in Middlesbrough to support them:

1. *Rebalancing the public narrative about young people* - that is counteracting the unrelentingly negative perception of young people by celebrating the achievements of the majority. Local initiatives include:
 - The Mayor’s Youth Agenda.
 - Work with the media to report positive stories.
 - Celebration events.
 - Promoting awards and accreditation.
 - DVD production by young people on issues affecting their lives.
2. *Empowering young people to increase their influence over the design and delivery of services for them* - when young people are involved in the design and delivery of services they are more likely to access them and sustain their participation. Local initiatives include:
 - The Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund where young people lead on allocating funds to other young people.

- Ongoing work towards the aim that by 2018 young people should be actively shaping decisions on at least 25% of local authority budgets for positive activities.
 - Using the Youth Council as the main consultation mechanism for young people.
3. *Increasing the number of local places for young people to go* - the lack of 'somewhere for young people to go' remains a concern for teenagers, their parents and communities. Local initiatives include:
- The development of *myplace*, which will be a state of the art facility for young people.
 - Use of Youth Capital Fund Plus funding to improve facilities in areas of deprivation and high anti-social behaviour.
 - The use of leisure facilities for weekend working with young people.
4. *Removing barriers and supporting young people to access local opportunities and services for them* - these may be practical barriers or personal barriers requiring intensive support. Local initiatives include:
- Reforms lead through the targeted youth support process will look to engage young people in a range of services to meet their needs.
 - The Positive Activities for young People programme will engage with young people, particularly in school holidays, to promote positive use of leisure time.
 - Further development of extended schools facilities.
 - Development of a website to inform young people of events and activities.
 - Involving young people in an NHS Team Life Check, which will assess their health and determine future requirements.
5. *Improving the capacity and quality of services for young people* - services for young people should be those which are known to be high quality and to have a real impact on outcomes. Local initiatives include:
- Using Youth Crime Action Plan funding to support youth facility opening on Friday and Saturday evenings.
 - The use of young people inspection teams for youth facilities/services.
 - Use of service quality marks, such as the Healthy Youth Club standard.
 - Work with voluntary sector sports, arts and music providers for young people.
6. *Supporting and developing the youth workforce* - that is to employ the very best practice in working with young people. It is the work adults do with young people in and alongside participation in constructive activities which makes the difference. Local initiatives include:
- Staff training by the Children's Workforce Development Council.
 - Aiming to have a recognised "Youth Professional" workforce.

121. As has been indicated earlier in this report, a new Youth Public Service Agreement (PSA), to be measured by local indicators, was launched in 2008 and is aimed at increasing the proportion of young people participating in positive activities (see [paragraph 117](#) onwards). Positive activities include a wide range of non-formal, cultural, sporting and recreational activities and opportunities for volunteering. The key is that activities are structured, good quality, adult-led and support progress towards the 'Every Child Matters' outcomes. Activities can take place in a wide variety of settings including youth clubs, sports clubs, outdoor recreation centres, museums and libraries.
122. Such activities include both structured activities (for example sports and physical activities, attending clubs and societies and volunteering activities) and unstructured activities that young people choose to engage in during their leisure time (for example swimming and other similar leisure pursuits).
123. It has been indicated that it is the level of 'structure' in the delivery of activities that is considered to be most important. The activity should have a goal and a purpose and some level of organisation and facilitation by a trusted adult or older peer. It can still be spontaneous and enjoyable but with an underlying purpose and goal. Structured activities are characterised by strong leadership and planning and should provide or result in recurring opportunities for participation.
124. The commitments in 'Aiming High' support councils in fulfilling their duty both by increasing the quantity and quality of positive activities and places to go for all young people. There is a particular focus on securing the participation of the substantial minority - around 25 per cent - currently not participating and who are more likely to be facing disadvantage.
125. Effective local implementation of 'Aiming High' will make a significant contribution to progress against the Youth PSA. For maximum effect, councils and their partners will need to ensure that delivery is aligned with, and complements, the wider package of measures to increase opportunities for young people. These include:
- the roll-out of extended schools, providing out-of-school activities for young people and, from September 2008, increasingly subsidising access for disadvantaged young people - the 'Extended School Subsidy'
 - the local implementation of the Physical Education (PE) and Sports strategy, providing five hours a week of sporting opportunities for five to 16-year-olds, and three hours a week for 16 to 19-year-olds
 - a commitment to offer all children and young people access to a wide range of cultural opportunities in and out of school
 - the delivery of more volunteering opportunities, led by volunteers and local volunteer-involved teams
 - the implementation of 14 to 19 reforms such that by 2015 all young people have access to a wide ranging curriculum offer and stay on in education and training to age 18 and beyond.
126. The delivery of 'Aiming High' is dependent on securing effective contributions from the full range of local partners working through integrated services. This includes:

- youth offending teams
- sports and arts bodies
- primary care trusts (PCTs)
- schools and colleges
- third and private sector organisations
- young people and their parents and communities.

127. Also involved are the wider transport, leisure, housing and community services, which work to support young people. Delivery of 'Aiming High' will be supported at local level by the new Youth Taskforce (YTF). This will focus its influence and resources in 50 of the most deprived areas where young people experience the greater levels of disadvantage. The YTF will focus in particular on helping to accelerate progress on youth facilities by enhancing Youth Capital Fund allocations in these areas. In addition, the taskforce will ensure that activities and facilities:

- are open when they are needed, particularly in anti-social behaviour hotspots.
- bring young people and communities together to shape activities and facilities in their area.

128. This will also ensure that local authorities are fulfilling their statutory duty to publicise information on positive activities.

Myplace

129. '*Myplace*' is a new Government capital investment programme which will deliver £190m of new funding for youth facilities over three years. This will be via grants of between £1m and £5m in two funding phases. The programme has the following aims:

- Creating world class youth facilities driven by the active participation of young people, their views and needs;
- Encouraging a cross-sector partnership approach to the design and delivery of youth projects;
- Actively involving young people in all areas of development, from planning and design to delivery and day-to-day management;
- Demonstrating long-term sustainability for capital youth projects.

130. The Government contracted the Big Lottery to administer a bidding process to consider schemes of between £1m and £5m. Funding is not lottery funding but is to be provided from central government. Funding can contribute to the whole or part costs of a capital project, although financial or in-kind match funding is encouraged to demonstrate long term sustainability.

131. Initial indications were that *myplace* would only fund projects that would make a significant local impact. It is therefore important that, in submitting funding bids, local partners work together to identify and develop high quality proposals that will lead to:

- more young people, parents and communities feeling that young people have attractive and safe places to go in their leisure time where they can get involved in a wide range of exciting activities

- more young people, particularly the most disadvantaged, participating in positive leisure-time activities that support their personal and social development
- more young people having access to information, advice and support services from within places they feel comfortable
- stronger partnership working between councils and their private and public sector partners, as well as voluntary organisations, charities and social enterprises, to plan, deliver and operate financially sustainable facilities with and for young people.

132. *Myplace* will only fund projects that will deliver on all four of these outcomes. Middlesbrough's bid had ensured that all of these issues would be addressed and that projects would demonstrate real participation by young people, particularly disadvantaged young people, in the development, design and future running of the project.

133. In particular, extensive consultation with young people and stakeholders was undertaken throughout summer 2008 to develop the Middlesbrough *myplace* project. The consultation identified a wide range of activities and services that young people want to access and also identified a range of partners who could assist in delivering these activities and services. The results of the consultation had entirely informed the funding bid.

134. In terms of services and advice which young people would wish to see included as part of the proposals, the following services had been identified via the consultation process:

Health clinic, including advice on drug and alcohol abuse, sexual health and teenage pregnancy; Job Centre providing information, advice and guidance; E2E ('Entry to Employment'); training centre.

135. Qualifying criteria for funding had indicated that funding would focus on projects/facilities which:

- Are open at times that suit young people. Middlesbrough's facility will be open all through the day and late into the evening. Different activities will be available at different times to cover a wide age range.
- Give young people access to co-located support services. This would be achieved by links with advice and information services such as Connexions and health services, such as the Primary Care Trust's (PCT's) Lifestore.
- Provide the widest possible range of exciting, high quality activities. Young people were widely consulted in suggesting numerous activities which could be developed. These included a World Music Centre (recording and filming studios), music practice rooms, a performing arts centre and additional activities such as a climbing wall, various sports, internet café, beauty salon, alcohol-free night club and film studio. Other suggestions included a restaurant and catering, DJ skills, art & ceramics, garage for building/repairing karts, bikes and cars and increased entrepreneurial opportunities.

136. The location chosen for the facility was the Customs House in Middlehaven. This is a grade 2 listed building owned by the Council. Full costings were obtained for developing the building into a world-class youth facility. These had been verified through a full feasibility study. An application for funding of £4.3 million had then been submitted for the project in September 2008.

137. The Council had led on compiling and submitting a *myplace* funding bid for Middlesbrough. The bid was submitted in September 2008. At the time of the scrutiny panel's discussions in respect of the possible development of *myplace* in Middlesbrough, the outcome of the Council's funding bid was not known. However, towards the end of the panel's investigation (in March 2009) the authority and scrutiny panel were pleased to learn that the bid had been successful and that funding of £4.3m was to be made available to develop the Middlesbrough project.
138. Following the funding submission, development work was continued on the project. A number of workshops were arranged for young people's participation. These included environmental sustainability, interior design, marketing and branding.

Youth Opportunity Fund and Youth Capital Fund Plus

139. The Youth Opportunity Fund (YOF) and the Youth Capital Fund (YCF) were launched as a two-year scheme in April 2006. The *Aiming High strategy*, published in July 2007, announced the extension of the funds for a further three years.
140. The main aims of the funds are to:
- Give a voice and influence to young people aged 13 - 19;
 - Change the way local authorities and their partners commission and provide activities and facilities for young people;
 - Increase their participation in positive activities;
 - Provide opportunities for young people to develop their confidence, knowledge, skills and abilities;
 - Increase the wellbeing of young people by contributing to the achievement of the five Every Child Matters (ECM) outcomes;
 - Increase young people's engagement with their services more generally and with democratic processes at the local level.
141. Funding allocated to Middlesbrough over the next three years is as follows:

	YOF	YCF
2008/09	£201,300	£115,700
2009/10	£269,000	£115,700
2010/11	£269,000	£115,700

142. The funds operate through young people deciding the allocation of grants. A young persons grants panel has been established in Middlesbrough as a mechanism for distributing the funds. The management of the process is undertaken by the Voluntary Sector Liaison and Grants Team based within the Children, Families and Learning Department. Grants have been awarded for a wide range of projects including capital refurbishment of a farm building into a young persons training facility and also a mountainbiking project.
143. In March 2008, Central Government's Youth Taskforce Action Plan introduced a new dimension to the Funds, by providing additional funding through Youth Capital Fund Plus (YCF Plus). YCF Plus is for one-off capital funding projects for new or refurbished youth facilities in neighbourhoods with high levels of deprivation, crime and anti-social behaviour and which currently lack good quality youth provision. YCF Plus is aimed at encouraging groups of young people from disadvantaged groups to participate, should they wish to do so.

144. During 2008 Middlesbrough was advised that, subject to satisfying criteria in relation to spending, it had been allocated YCF Plus funding of £452,000. An exercise was then undertaken to identify priority areas for investment. The audit reviewed existing youth provision, police data and local indices of deprivation. This exercise identified Middlehaven as the ward with greatest need but this was already subject to a bid for myplace funding. As a result, University Ward was selected for possible YCF Plus funding investment, as the ward with the next greatest need.
145. The scrutiny panel was informed that, following extensive discussions with the Government's Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) it had not, ultimately, been possible to proceed with the YCF Plus spending proposals in University Ward. This was because:
- It had been difficult to identify suitable premises for a youth project that could be suitably adapted within the funding sum that would be made available.
 - There was a requirement that building work would need to be completed by the end of March 2010 to secure funding. This would not have been achievable given the need to secure planning permission and undertake the required procurement exercise.
146. As the *myplace* bid was ultimately successful, this will provide a significant resource which will be specifically for young people, who will have a significant say in the activities to be made available. There is now further work to be done to develop facilities in the University ward and to make effective use of the Government funding which is available.
147. Examination of this term of reference illustrated Central Government's involvement in committing funding to developing strategies for young people and the effects of such initiatives in Middlesbrough.

TERM OF REFERENCE: *"To examine the influence of the youth service and Connexions in reducing the number of young people who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET')."*

148. The scrutiny panel considered information in respect of work being done by the Youth Service, Connexions and partners towards the reduction of the number of young people in Middlesbrough who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET'). Information was submitted in respect of the following areas:
- Background to the establishment of NEET
 - The National NEETs Reduction Strategy and targets
 - Middlesbrough NEET Reduction Strategy and Action Plan 2008-10

Background to the establishment of NEET

149. As has been indicated, the Connexions service was established as a national programme in 2001 with the aim of providing a comprehensive service to meet young people's needs for information, advice and support and as part of a Government strategy to reduce social exclusion among young people.

150. One of the main principles behind Connexions was the tracking of all young people from age 13 up to their 20th birthday. In the case of those with Learning Difficulties and Disabilities, this extended up to the age of 25. The term NEET was devised in relation to the tracking system and applied to those young people who were “Not in Education, Employment or Training.” It was ascertained that being NEET at age 16-18 is a key predictor of later unemployment, low income, teenage motherhood, depression and poor physical health and that action was therefore needed.
151. The term “NEET seeking” signified those who were actively looking for employment or training, while those whose destination could not accurately be traced, or who could not be contacted, were “not known”. NEET also included those not available for work, for example through illness, pregnancy, or being a young carer.
152. The panel was advised that while much of the work of Connexions in relation to NEETs is carried out under the spotlight of reduction targets, it must always be remembered that behind each statistic is a young person, with each one facing a unique set of circumstances. Accordingly, the level of support from Connexions is tailored, as far as possible, to each young person’s needs.

The National NEETs Reduction Strategy and targets

153. Reducing the proportion of 16 to 18 year olds who are NEET has been identified as a priority for the Government, with all agencies which deal with young people having a part to play in reducing numbers.
154. Since 2004, Connexions Partnerships have had to report back to the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF) on a monthly basis regarding young people and their current situation. The figures for October 2005 showed that 17.2% of young people aged 16-18 in Middlesbrough (878 in total) were classified as NEET.
155. When targets concerning levels of NEETS were introduced in 2005, Middlesbrough became known as a NEETS “hot spot”. At that time, Middlesbrough, along with Hackney, had the highest rate of 16-18 year old NEETS in the country. At one point this averaged 20% over a summer period (ie when levels are usually at their highest). As a result, Middlesbrough was set the second most stringent target for NEET reduction in England over the period 2004-2010. A 30% reduction was required by 2010 in order to reduce the figure from 15.5% to 10.8%
156. By October 2008, the NEET figure was reduced to 10.5%, or 689 young people - which meant that Middlesbrough had achieved its target two years early. As a result, a new target of 10.1% has been set, which the Council is working towards achieving. During the same time period, those who were ‘not known’ to Connexions was reduced from 13.8% in 2005 (823 young people) to 2.7%, or 185 young people, in October 2008. This figure continues to reduce and means that virtually all young people have been contacted and assisted by Connexions.
157. Linked to the NEETs reduction is the fact that between October 2006 and October 2008 there was an increase in the number of young people in learning from 69.1% to 80.9% (5608 young people). Details were submitted of the breakdown of the current (as at 31 October 2008) makeup of the 16-20 year old NEET population in Middlesbrough as follows:

	16	17	AGE 18	19	20+
% of NEET 16 to 18 year olds	13.7	24.4	29.8	27	5.1

158. Information was also submitted in respect of the ethnic breakdown of the 16-18 year old NEET population as shown in the following table:

Ethnic Origin	Percentage
White British	87.0
Other white	3.8
Pakistani	3.6
Indian	0.5
Other Asian	0.5
Other	4.6

159. The split between male and female NEETs in respect of the above figures is 52.2%(M) and 47.8%(F).

Middlesbrough NEET Reduction Strategy and Action Plan 2008-10

160. The scrutiny panel was interested to learn how the level of NEETs has been reduced in Middlesbrough and what is planned to ensure that the stringent target for 2010 is achieved. It was ascertained that the Middlesbrough NEET Reduction Strategy embraces four themes, which are outlined in the national Department for Children Schools and Families' (DCSF) 'NEET Toolkit'. These are:

- a) Careful tracking of teenagers. Connexions actively supports the Core client management system which is Tees Valley wide. In addition, Connexions, working closely with schools, identifies at an early stage those young people who are in danger of disengaging so that the requisite support can be applied. Data sharing arrangements are in operation to enable us to share with partners any information which might be helpful to the young person. This helps to identify where there are gaps in the provision of suitable opportunities.
- b) Personalised Support and Guidance. Young people are supported in making informed choices by providing accurate and up-to-date information. This is underpinned by adherence to the Information Advice and Guidance Quality Standards. Young people who require targeted support are identified early on to help reduce barriers to engagement. Advice is also given regarding the financial support which may be available to the individual while in learning. Connexions Middlesbrough has a policy of all Personal Advisers being qualified up to NVQ4 or the equivalent in Information, Advice and Guidance or a related field. All PAs have had the opportunity to upgrade their qualification base, and only one PA is now without the qualification, but is working towards it. An example of Targeted Support is the Long Term NEETS project which is projected to extend to 2011, whereby young people who have been NEET for 180 days plus, can be offered extra help by Personal Advisers. The young people being worked with are

predominantly those with learning difficulties and disabilities or single parents. The concept of universal support is exemplified by the work being done in conjunction with Middlesbrough College in following up the students who have left or dropped out since enrolment in September 2008. Over 400 students who left prematurely were followed up and moved on as appropriate. Connexions dedicated four PAs and two other workers to this project with the aim of engaging with the young people and ensuring that they had alternative opportunities before Christmas 2008. This enterprise was carried out with the active co-operation of partners (Learning and Skills Council, local E2E providers) to maximise the chances of rapid re-engagement of young people into employment or training.

- c) Provision of sufficient flexible learning opportunities to meet demand. The aim is to establish the profile of learning provision which is required ie to determine the style and location which is required for this. The focus of Connexions is on improved re-engagement, retention and achievement in learning at age 17 and 18. Initiatives are also in train which will bring about an increased flexibility in start dates to enable young people to access learning at the time of their choosing. Closer involvement with employers is encouraged in order to facilitate the successful transition of young people into training and employment. Examples of this are the project currently proceeding at Cleveland College of Art and Design, where the opportunity is being given to a cohort of 19-year olds and over to study art-related subjects on a flexible, 10 hours per week basis. Similarly, at Middlesbrough College, "Get Fit For..." courses were provided to offer experience and training in a range of job areas at a time (November) when the more traditional full-time courses have started. These were also available from January 2009.
- d) An emphasis on rights and responsibilities of both services and young people. The focus of Connexions efforts has been the offers made to young people at 16 and 17, under the terms of the September Guarantee prior to 2013. In the case of 18-year-olds, those claiming Job Seekers' Allowance and who have a history of being NEET are encouraged to access New Deal where this is appropriate. Alongside this, every effort is made to ensure that lessons learned from national activity pilots are effectively mainstreamed.

- 161. As part of its investigations the scrutiny panel was also supplied with a copy of the updated NEETS Reduction Strategy 2008-10. Information was also submitted in respect of the Youth Service's involvement with NEET reduction. The Youth service had had a full OFSTED inspection in Nov 2004. At that time it was identified that although the service was good at working with those young people that make themselves known, it did not have any specific targeted provision for marginalized groups such as young people not in employment, education or training. Reference was also made to the need for youth provision for groups around issues of disability, black and minority ethnic groups and children looked after (CLA). Actions arising from the OFSTED report therefore included establishing youth provision for young people who were classified as NEET.
- 162. All youth services and sites have contributed to reducing the number of NEETS, principally through work with year 11 school leavers over the summer period. In addition, Thorntree Centre was tasked with the role of working alongside Connexions to develop programmes for young people who were not in employment, education or training as it was identified that that area had the highest number of NEETS in Middlesbrough.

163. A drop-in service for young people who were NEET was developed at Thorntree. This aimed to offer information, advice and guidance about careers and also support the young people with their personal and social development. As the drop-in was used by only a few young people, mainly on an occasional basis, the service had sought to find out why this was the case. It had been found that the young people generally did not wish to talk about their own issues in a drop-in environment as it was not very private. As a consequence the Youth Service began to see young people on an individual basis to discuss their issues mainly around employment.
164. Young people with additional needs, such as increased alcohol consumption and other health matters, have also been supported. The drop-in sessions were cancelled but the Youth Service has indicated that it plans to consider-establishing the service in the future in conjunction with the Connexions Service and other Partners.
165. In terms of current work with NEETs, the Youth Service has provided positive activities such as Team Building, Environmental Work through the Dream Scheme and motorbiking with Right Trax. Several young people achieved an Open College Network (OCN) accreditation in motor biking with two gaining employment with Right Trax. A computer suite at Grove Hill Youth Centre is used by young people to access the internet for job vacancies and to prepare job applications and CVs. The Youth Service also provides references for young people. Most Year 11 service users are now in college, employment or undertaking an apprenticeship. Some have also accessed E2E (Entry to Employment) programmes.
166. Examination of this term of reference highlighted the significant work which has been undertaken to improve the local position concerning the numbers of young people who are not in employment, education or training (NEET).

CONCLUSIONS

167. Based on the evidence gathered in the scrutiny investigation the Panel concluded that:
 1. The Youth Service provides an extensive range of facilities and services for young people which support them directly in their personal and social development. The service has also developed good links with other agencies and youth-related initiatives, such as Connexions, extended schools, Safe in Tees Valley and Council leisure facilities.
 2. Connexions, through multi-agency working, provides information, advice and guidance on a wide range of issues, as well as helping young people to access personal development opportunities such as training, education or employment. The bulk of the organisation's work is undertaken directly with young people in schools, via a flexible service which is tailored to the needs of each school.
 3. Both services play an important role in supporting the Mayor's Youth Agenda.
 4. The fact that both services are now provided by Children, Families and Learning (following the disaggregation of regional Connexions services) has meant that good joint working has been developed between the services. The continued integration of the Connexions service into Children, Families and Learning, and the further development of its close working relationship with the Youth Service, is supported by the scrutiny panel.

5. The *myplace* facility will provide a significant resource specifically for young people and will be a very positive addition to youth facilities in the town. There is a need to ensure that the facility is financially sustainable in the long term and that it is accessible to all young people across Middlesbrough.
 6. Eight of the Council's nine youth centres are located in areas of higher social deprivation. In addition, there are ten community centres which offer some youth facilities and services. Some areas are well provided for in terms of services for young people. In other areas - for example Linthorpe, Marton and Nunthorpe - service provision is more patchy, although there are examples of external service provision (such as the Linx Project in Hemlington) which have covered some gaps.
 7. The Youth Service has had some success in targeting marginalised and disadvantaged groups - though further progress is needed in respect of black and minority ethnic (BME) females. There has been particular success through the Disability Youth Club at North Ormesby Youth and Community Centre, which is used by young people from across the Tees Valley.
 8. Connexions has led on work to reduce the number of young people in Middlesbrough who are not in education, employment or training (NEET). Significant progress has been, and continues to be, made in this area.
 9. The Connexions service has also been very successful in contacting the vast majority of its target group of service users - the number of young people who are "not known" to the service has been massively reduced.
 10. Work is undertaken by Connexions to promote employment and training opportunities through events such as its annual 'Choices' event. It may also be possible to improve/better-develop links with local employers to offer ongoing, updated information in relation to targeted sectors of local employers, in respect of current opportunities.
 11. The national target which is set for the Youth Service is to contact 25% of young people, which would equate to 3350 young people in Middlesbrough. Locally, in 2008 the service reached 2015 young people, which represents 72% of the target.
168. Although it was outside the scope of its detailed investigation, the scrutiny panel also made reference to service provision for the under 13 age group. While it is acknowledged that statutory provision is required from post-13 upwards, the panel did wish to place on record its view that the local authority can play a key role to play in such provision. This may be through its involvement in areas such as extended schools and in ensuring that facilities for under 13s are not solely left to schools or to limited junior youth club provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

169. Following the submitted evidence, and based on the conclusions above, the scrutiny panel's recommendations for consideration by the Overview and Scrutiny Board and the Executive are as follows:
1. That work is continued to ensure that the Connexions service is fully integrated into Middlesbrough Council to ensure that it operates at maximum efficiency and effectiveness.
 2. That Connexions explores the development of links with targeted sectors of local employers (for example the petro-chemical industry, local information and communication technology (ICT) providers), to assist in identifying training/employment opportunities for young people.

3. That work is undertaken by the Youth Service to improve contact rates and move towards achieving targets in this area. This should include continued work with disadvantaged groups as well as promoting the service across the whole of Middlesbrough.
4. That work is undertaken in respect of areas which currently have little or no youth service provision - such as Nunthorpe, Linthorpe and Marton - to examine how young people in these areas can be encouraged to access services. This could include, for example, use of the Outreach Team in such areas and a detailed examination of whether facilities could be provided at non-youth centre locations, such as community centres or schools, through initiatives such as the Youth Opportunities Fund or Extended Schools.
5. That the extensive work which has resulted in the Council achieving reductions in excess of its target for young people who are not in education, employment or training ('NEET') is welcomed and that work is continued in this area to ensure that the latest, more stringent, targets are also met. The Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel should be kept apprised of developments.
6. That, with regard to *myplace*:
 - a) steps should be taken to ensure that the project is financially sustainable in the longer term - such as by ensuring that provision is made for mainstream budget funding, that income generation schemes are viable and that all external funding avenues are explored.
 - b) the issue of transport links should be fully addressed to ensure that the service is accessible to all young people. This should include links with developments such as the Boho project and Middlesbrough College and ensuring that transport is available to/from all areas of Middlesbrough at all times when *myplace* is open.

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 Pat Estall - Project Manager, Linx Detached Youth Work Project
 Martin Burnett - Head of Inclusion, Acklam Grange School
 Jane Rose, Careers Co-ordinator, Ormesby Comprehensive School
 Wendy Kelly - Voluntary Sector Liaison and Grants Manager, Children, Families and Learning

171. Special mention should be made of Jackie Lodge, Youth Services Manager and John Keelty, Connexions Manager, who were the main contributors from Children, Families and Learning and who provided the bulk of the information for the scrutiny panel.

BACKGROUND PAPERS

172. The following background papers were consulted or referred to in preparing this report:

- Minutes of Children and Learning Scrutiny Panel meetings held on 6 November, 24 November and 17 December 2008; and 7 January, 28 January, 24 February, 19 March and 14 April 2009.
- Notes of visits to Ormesby Comprehensive School, Acklam Grange School and the Linx Project, Hemlington.
- Notes of panel member's visit to view the operation of the Youth Service's Outreach Service.

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28 April 2009