

Connexions update for EYC and YP Development and Scrutiny Panel

23rd September 2013

CONNEXIONS BACKGROUND

Connexions is the name of specific services provided by Learning Partnership West on behalf of Bath and North East Somerset.

LPW was formed in 1994 as an ordinary company limited by guarantee. The company's primary function is to provide services to young people for four West of England local authorities: Bath and North East Somerset, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Councils. In 2008, responsibility for the Connexions Services was transferred from central government to local authorities. This meant that the four West of England local authorities could now commission services directly. In response to this transfer of statutory commissioning powers, LPW converted to a local authority controlled company (otherwise known as a "Teckal company", named after the key legal case in this area). The four local authorities became the sole members of LPW and so gained control of the company.

In August 2011, LPW was converted to a Community Interest Company ("CIC"). CICs are companies dedicated to serving their communities, as such; CICs are prevented from using any of their profits or assets to benefit their shareholders / members. LPW operates on a not-for-profit basis and the conversion to CIC status formalised the company's altruistic business model. The conversion to a CIC did not affect the existing membership structure and the four local authorities are still the controlling members of LPW as a Teckal company.

Bath and North East Somerset receives an annual funding allocation from central government through the Early Intervention Grant Programme to deliver the functions provided by Connexions. In recent years this grant and the Bath and North East Somerset direct funding to Learning Partnership West has been significantly reduced. For 2012/13 the funding to LPW was £884,043. For 2014/15 the budget for Connexions work will be reduced to £400,000.

Key Functions of Connexions Service

- 1) Section 139a Assessments for Young People with learning Difficulties.

Statutory duty on Local Authorities to assess the needs of all 16 year old young people with learning needs to ensure they have appropriate education or training post 16. This includes the 'Duty' to undertake assessments for those young people with statements (cohort 40 students in 11/12) and the 'Power' to undertake an assessment without a statement but who have special needs (cohort 37 students in 11/12). [SEN Code]. Connexions PAs undertake 139a assessments.

2) Data Management.

Statutory duty to identify 16-19 year olds who needs support and check progress to achieve September Guarantee. (A suitable place for every 16 and 17 year old in education or training).

Key data is concerned with the approximately 500 16-19 year olds who are NEET at some point in the year, but all of the 16-19 cohort needs to be accounted for, plus all LLDD to age 25.

3) Tracking Young People.

Statutory duty on LAs, to identify who needs support, to check on the Guarantee of a place on a course or employment and to report to DfE. (all 16-19s + LLDD to age 25)

Provision of annual activity (destination) surveys for students completing compulsory education, showing participation in education, employment and training

4) Direct work with Young People in danger of becoming NEET.

Statutory duty on LAs to encourage, enable or assist young people's participation in education or training. Early Intervention Grant to help LAs to support vulnerable young people to engage in education and training, intervening early with those at risk of disengagement. No obligation to provide a universal careers service once National Careers Service and duty on schools commenced – September 2012

In 11/12 the 'targeted service' has engaged with 942 young people spread across years 9 to 15 in schools and colleges. Vulnerable young people has in particular included LLDD, young parents and in-care/care-leavers

Recent Changes in Legislation Affecting this Commissioned Work.

Local Authorities retain their statutory duty to encourage, enable and assist all young people's participation in education or training.

From September 2012 schools have the duty to secure impartial careers advice and guidance, no longer a duty of the Local Authority.

Raising of Participation Age from September 2013 for all 17 year olds (Place in Education or employment with training for all 17 year olds in September 2013 and all 18 year olds September 2015).

SEN Green paper not implemented yet. Major changes in funding for pupils with SEN and single education, health and social care plan to replace statements, which has implications for 139a assessments (see above)

OBJECTIVES TO BE ACHIEVED FROM 1ST APRIL 2014

- Reduce budget from £880,000 to £400,000 with effect from 1/4/14
- To restructure the Connexions Service to continue to provide a quality service to schools whilst making the financial savings required.
- To undertake key functions currently provided by Connexions through direct Local Authority provision within the new 11-18 Preventative Services team. This will require the TUPE transfer of key staff to the Local Authority from 1/4/14
- Improve integration, co-ordination and efficiency and re-design the way we work so we are flexible and more efficient.
- Ensure that the right skills are retained and enhanced in order to deliver the challenges of the future by developing workforce planning and succession planning.
- To continue to offer a traded Service to schools for impartial careers and education guidance.

CURRENT PROGRESS AND NEXT STEPS

- LPW formally told that contract will cease from 1/4/14 (1 year notice required)
- All Connexions staff working in Bath NES have been briefed
- Informal consultation paper on restructure of Youth Service and Connexions to create a single integrated service has been drafted and will be issued to affected staff in September 2013.
- Staff TUPE transfer on 1/4/14 is being planned
- Once staff have transferred to Bath NES (1/4/14), formal consultation will begin on the Youth Service / Connexions restructure.
- Review of IT requirements for data management, pupil tracking and reporting to DfE has been undertaken. Software system now needs to be purchased.
- Work is underway with LPW to transfer data on all 16-19 year olds prior to 1/4/14.