

Summary Fair Treatment Assessment (FTA)

Area for Assessment:	
Name of service or function etc	Connexions Service for 18 year Olds in the NEET (Not in Employment, Education or Training) Group
Which Service does this affect?	Connexions
Is this a new, existing or revised function?	Existing function
Summary of findings:	
Main conclusions on the likely impact of the function on different equality groups (protected characteristics):	
<p>Not being in employment, education or training can be difficult at any age, however at 18 years of age, young people are facing major transitions in relation to services and access to further education, training and employment. It is the beginning of their move from young peoples' services to adult services, and the practical implications this has, such as travelling to different buildings and forming new relationships with services.</p> <p>The Fair Treatment Assessment was undertaken to establish whether the services from Connexions were meeting the needs of these young people. Feedback from most young people has been positive with many stating that "Connexions has been helpful, it's good that you can see the same Personal Adviser "as this assists with consistency and reduces repetition. Young people also felt that they were given time and were listened to.</p> <p>However, issues around transition from young people to adult services were raised by some young people as they are unsure about what is on offer from Connexions and the role of Jobcentre Plus. The assessment reviewed young people's experiences leading to not being in employment, education or training. This showed a number of transition points when young people fall out of education, training or work and become unemployed:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Redundancy. • Dropping out of college early. • Completing a college course/achieving a qualification but unable to find work. <p>The assessment shows that in general young people were satisfied with the services from Connexions, though some work around the communication of what is on offer from Connexions is required. However, the assessment did highlight that many young people are concerned about the suitability and availability of the education, employment and training opportunities open to them. Though this is a common theme raised by many 18 year olds, there were differences within some groups regarding their specific needs. Although Connexions is not a deliverer of provision, as a service, Connexions does have an important role in advocating on the behalf of young people for better and appropriate provision. The following details some of the differences between the needs of various groups:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More provision for young people with disabilities is required in the borough, and this is particularly pertinent at the age of 19 years old. Most young people with disabilities stay in statutory provision until they are 19 years old; at present there is only limited provision 	

available within the borough. Although many young people do receive provision within the borough other young people do have to travel out of the borough which to receive provision. To address this Solihull Council's 14 to 24 Education Team are working with a range of providers to bring more provision into Solihull,

- Looked after children and care leavers require more support to gain work experience, and support into education, employment and training, again this is a growing issue at 19 years old.
- Teenage parents want appropriate provision and this is not always the bespoke programmes just for teenage mothers. They want mainstream programmes that recognise their additional needs, support with childcare and preparation to enter education or training.
- Sex/gender: it is clear that more young people in NEET are male (45.7% are female). From our research, there is a view from many females that most of the targeted NEET provision is male orientated, and more provision is required to match their needs.
- There are more young people in the north of the borough who are in the NEET group. The north of the borough has significant areas of socio-economic disadvantage; hence it is right that most of the NEET provision is in the north. Young people in other areas of the borough that do not face significant economic disadvantage are also in the NEET group.
- Young Offenders: Provision of the kind most young offenders want is limited, and for many this is vocational provision. There is also an issue regarding start dates, providers do need to ensure that this is 'roll on, roll off' provision. It takes time to build relationships with young offenders, and once they are motivated they need the provision to be available almost immediately, otherwise the young person may lose confidence or motivation. Given the complexity young offenders with sexual offences require specific provision which can be difficult to source. However, joint work with Connexions, 14 to 24 Education Team and the Youth Offending Service have secured a European Social Fund contract to provide specific provision These are clearly important issues for young people, and Connexions will continue to raise their concerns with the appropriate partners, at strategic and delivery levels, respective forums, and with commissioners of provision etc.

Given the severe pressure on Area Based Grants and their future merging into a single budget, it is difficult to envisage that Connexions will be able to maintain the existing levels of support for young people.

At present Connexions have dedicated Personal Advisers working with specific vulnerable groups of young people with complex needs. This delivery is very resource intensive; a reduction in funding may result in a contraction of the resources available to these groups. It may mean that the threshold levels to access services would have to increase, and the ability to do outreach work minimised. The result of these changes may be that more young people fall through the gaps and into NEET.

Access to Connexions services may also have to reduce; this could involve the closure of certain Connexions Centres to public access, not producing a range of publications for young people and their parents/carers etc. and stopping the funding of careers software that is open to all Solihull young people.

The amount of service given to Schools, Colleges and work based learning providers would also have to be reviewed. This is an important area for early intervention and the prevention of young people going into NEET. Various studies have shown that young people, who have received

good initial advice and guidance and established a goal, have better performance and achievements, their attendance is improved and they are less likely to move into NEET. Connexions have maintained a high level of support to schools, college and work based learning providers, and this has seen a reduction in the number of first time entrants into NEET from school leavers. This has been particularly evident in the north of the borough which has seen first time entrants of school leavers fall from 11% in 2006 to 8.1% in 2009, 2010 leavers information is still being processed but it is hoped the trend is continuing downward. Reduction of Connexions provision to schools, colleges and work based learning providers could see a change in this position, and the long term affect on NEETs and participation rates.

The possible changes to the delivery of Connexions may impact upon the performances of NEETs, various vulnerable groups of young people, and participation rates in education, employment and training in Solihull.

Actions:

Actions identified to address negative impacts identified or to better promote equality, human rights, cohesive and sustainable communities and safeguarding issues:

Action	Outcome	Timescale
Re-launch Connexions Offer to 18 year olds in the NEET Group.	More 18 yr olds using service and aware of Connexions offer	March 2011
Further develop work with Jobcentre Plus	Jobcentre Plus delivering from Connexions Chelmsley Centre, and data sharing	March 2011
Advocate on behalf of young people for more appropriate provision	Increased appropriate provision in the borough	March 2011
Date Assessment Signed Off	December 2010	