

**REPORT TO:** Executive Board

**DATE:** 29 November 2007

**REPORTING OFFICER:** Strategic Director, Children & Young People's Directorate

**SUBJECT:** Youth Matters/Connexions Transition

**WARDS:** Boroughwide

## **1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

1.1 To provide the Executive Board with information on the transition of Connexions funding and responsibilities to Local Authorities from April 2008.

## **2.0 RECOMMENDATION that agreement is sought in principle to:**

- (1) Commission Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership, as a strategic and delivery partner in the Children and Young People's Partnership, to deliver Connexions services to all 13 – 19 year olds for the period from April 2008 to March 2011, initially.
- (2) Collaborate with partner Local Authorities in the City Region to jointly commission shared services that underpin and provide additional value to local Connexions services for the same period, initially.
- (3) Review the Local Authority's position as a member of Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited to ensure that accountability to the Local Authority is maintained avoiding conflicts of interest. (Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Board is reviewing its structure and Governance in view of the impending changes.)
- (4) Consider, where appropriate, commissioning other services from Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership or other providers to meet the needs of young people as identified in local plans.
- (5) Confirm that the grant allocation for Connexions is passported to Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership for the period 2008-2011 in line with a specified service requirement, and that the Local Authority will seek agreement from it's Strategic Partnership to this undertaking; and
- (6) Act as Guarantor to the Merseyside Pension Fund in respect of a share, based on population, of the Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited.

### **3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION**

- 3.1 “Youth Matters” requires that by April 2008, responsibility for commissioning Information, Advice and Guidance (IAG) and the funding that goes with it to be devolved to Local Authorities working through children’s trusts, schools and colleges. Local Authorities are expected to lead a genuinely collaborative approach and develop new arrangements for delivering IAG that clearly meet the needs of Young People in the area. These arrangements will be planned and implemented in a way that not only supports the delivery of the 14-19 learning entitlement but are integrated into a wider set of youth support services for teenagers and their parents.
- 3.2 The Department for Children, Schools and Families has commissioned the production of national IAG quality standards to cover all work with young people, which will be launched by the Minister in October 2007 with an implementation date of April 2008. The Local Authority will be responsible for ensuring the implementation of the IAG quality standards across all work with young people, including in schools and colleges.
- 3.3 Local Authorities are now responsible and accountable for youth policy in their area and are taking responsibility for integrated planning and commissioning of the full range of services for teenagers from universal activities through to more specialist and targeted support. This will enable, over time, universal and targeted services to work closely together to provide integrated support for Young People.
- 3.4 “Youth Matters” also made it clear that the support and guidance services provided by Connexions should now ‘go local’ so that they can be more fully included and integrated with the whole range of services for young people and their parents and carers. The ‘localisation’ of Connexions services will be achieved through the development of an Integrated Youth Support strategy at the local level; this will enable a greater coherence of service to young people and their parents/carers and provide greater efficiency in the way services are procured and delivered locally.
- 3.5 The Education and Skills Bill, which will be introduced into Parliament in the autumn, is expected to transfer the following statutory duties from the Secretary of State to Local Authorities; these duties have been enacted via the Government’s Grant to Connexions Partnerships hitherto:
- The obligations under Section 8 of the Employment and Training Act 1973 (amended by the Trade Union Reform, Employment Rights Act 1993), to ensure that careers services are provided for school and college students;

- The obligations under Section 114 of the Learning and Skills Act 2000 to ensure young people aged 13-19 are offered support to enable their effective participation in learning;
- The obligations under Section 140 of the Learning Skills Act 2000 for the assessment of young people with learning difficulties and disabilities

3.6 Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership Limited is currently an admitted body within the Merseyside Pension Fund and as a condition of its membership it is required to supply the Fund with a bond or other suitable indemnity to cover potential unfunded pension liabilities that could arise in the event of the premature termination of its membership of the Fund. Any deficit on their part of the Fund is currently guaranteed by the DCFS but under the new arrangements this guarantee will cease. A suitable solution is that the participating authorities act as financial guarantor of a share, based on population, of the potential unfunded liability. For Halton this would amount to £518,000. The likelihood of these costs becoming a reality will depend on what decisions are made about transferring staff in a closure situation to a successor authority.

### 3.7 Transition Steering Group

3.7.1 A Transition Steering Group was established with the agreement of the City Region Leaders group to review existing arrangements and develop future arrangements for the delivery and commissioning of the Connexions Service across Merseyside.

3.7.2 The group consists of:

Chief Executives – Halton, Liverpool, St Helens  
 Directors of Children’s Services – Knowsley, Sefton, Wirral  
 Chief Executive – Connexions  
 Chair – Connexions

And is chaired by the Chief Executive – Halton.

3.7.3 The Transition Group is developing proposals to meet the Youth Matters agenda and specifically the delivery and commissioning of the Connexions Service across Merseyside. It is seeking to secure consistent practice across the 6 Local Authorities in order to maximise smooth transfer to new arrangements from the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 .

**3.8 The Transition Steering Group has agreed the following actions and intended outcomes subject to the agreement of Cabinet members from the partnership of Local Authorities:**

- 3.8.1 There is a future role for Connexions as a separate legal entity adding value as a City Region partnership body. LAs will include Greater Merseyside Connexions in their commissioning of services for young people as part of a local integrated youth support strategy, which is in the process of being developed in each area.
- 3.8.2 Commissioning Connexions services will be undertaken at a City Region and a local Children and Young People Partnership level, but having regard for the need to maintain a City Region capacity to be able to provide continuous support and tracking of young people as they move between learning provision, employment and other support services and between Local Authority areas across the City Region. More than 20% of young people move between LA areas for learning and work opportunities at any one time between the ages of 16 and 19.
- 3.8.3 It is also recognised that investing in Greater Merseyside Connexions provides important economies of scale in the provision of services, e.g: provision of comprehensive national, regional careers and labour market information to support career and progression decisions; provision of a comprehensive dynamic database of all young people in the City Region; a coherent approach to engaging employers and training providers in improving the employment and training offer to young people; consistent standards of service to support frontline delivery, etc.
- 3.8.4 The partnership of the six Local Authorities build on the strengths and achievements of Connexions in supporting all young people aged 13-19 to make decisions about future learning and employment and assisting them to participate and progress in learning and obtain employment or higher education.
- 3.8.5 The partnership of the six Local Authorities maintain the capacity to track all young people and reduce the numbers of young people aged 16-19 who are NEET.
- 3.8.6 The partnership of the six Local Authorities maintain and build upon Connexions Management Information System (Connexions Customer Information System, CCIS) which enables the tracking of all 140,000 young people aged 13-19 and which provides a dynamic report on their needs and their status as part of local performance management and monitoring of outcomes.
- 3.8.7 The partnership of the six Local Authorities maintain the continuity and quality of service to young people during the period of Connexions transition.

3.8.8 Greater Merseyside Connexions also provides adult information, advice and guidance services for adults across the Liverpool City Region under contract to the Learning and Skills Council and separately through European Funding. These contracts provide adults with access to information, advice and guidance on learning and careers. They support and are an integral part of the evolving City Region Employment Strategy. Connexions' adult IAG services provide synergy, and efficiencies through further economy of scale, with services to young people in transition across the City Region. The Transition Steering Group supports the continuation of these services and wishes to develop their contribution to the achievement of economic and social well being for young people and families as part of the Every Child Matters agenda and the City Region Employment Strategy.

3.8.9 The partnership of the six Local Authorities identify and manage all risks associated with the transfer of funding and responsibilities in respect of: The interests of Local Authorities in receiving additional responsibilities and achieving those outcomes for young people that are identified in Local Area Agreements and other local plans; the interests of Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership in remaining a going concern capable of providing quality services and outcomes; the interests of the staff of Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership as the process of local contracting takes place.

### **3.9 Agreed Actions by Liverpool City Region Leaders subject to local approval by Executive Board**

3.9.1 Endorsement of the Transition Steering Group's recommendation for all City Region Local Authorities to commission Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership to deliver services to young people according to local needs as identified in Children and Young People's Plans and 14-19 implementation plans and identified in the Outcomes Framework agreed by the Transition Steering Group as appropriate to the organisation's capacity and capability to delivery.

3.9.2 All Local Authorities to enter into an agreement with Greater Merseyside Connexions Partnership for the period from 2008-09 to 2010-11 initially to allow for the evolution of integrated youth support strategies and appropriate commissioning strategies, which will apply to all Children and Young People's services once these have been established and fully implemented.

## **4 POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

From the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2008 funding for Connexions will be direct to Local Authorities through the LAA 'single pot'. Agreement needs to be

secured from Executive Board and the Local Strategic Partnership to passport the indicative allocation, and when confirmed the actual allocation, to enable the commissioning of the service against an agreed service specification. All of the six Merseyside Local Authorities are seeking to secure this consistent approach.

## **5 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

### **5.1 Children and Young People in Halton**

The success of the Connexions service is crucial to the delivery of the Every Child Matters outcomes. One of the key Connexions outcomes is to reduce the number of 16-18 year olds in Halton who are not in employment, education or training. This target is currently within the suite of LAA targets and has recently been announced as part of PSA Delivery Agreement 14-19 - to increase the number of children and young people on the pathway to success.

### **5.2 Employment, Learning and Skills in Halton**

The work Connexions Personal Advisers undertake is crucial to the future prosperity of young people in Halton. Impartial information and advice coupled with raising aspirations to improve enterprise are important skills young people in Halton will need to access future employment and learning opportunities.

### **5.3 A Healthy Halton**

High quality information, advice and guidance will inform young people on the benefits and options in adopting healthy lifestyles.

### **5.4 A Safer Halton**

Connexions working within the Integrated Youth Service agenda in Halton works closely with young people to both equip them to be safe but also to challenge young people's actions and behaviours in order for Halton to be a safer place to live.

### **5.5 Halton's Urban Renewal**

Connexions work with a range of partners and are committed to the urban renewal agenda currently taking place in Halton.

## **6 RISK ANALYSIS**

A strategic risk assessment has been undertaken, as **Appendix 1**.

## **7.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

Equality and Diversity issues will be at the forefront of developments and will be addressed as part of the service specification developments.

## 7.1 REASON(S) FOR DECISION

Arrangements for the future delivery of services to young people will affect all young people aged 13 to 19 in the Borough. It will also include the targeting of specialist services to vulnerable young people to enable them to access their universal entitlement.

## 7.2 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

None.

## 7.3 IMPLEMENTATION DATE

1<sup>st</sup> April 2008

## 7.4 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

Document	Place of Inspection	Contact Officer
Education and Inspections Act 2006	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Youth Matters	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Aiming High for Young People: A Ten Year Strategy for Positive Activities (DCSF – 2007)	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher
Education and Skills Bill	Grosvenor House	Lorraine Butcher