


Annex A – Covering Template for Responses

Contact details for respondent	
Name	
Job title	Development Manager
Do you represent an organisation? (if so, name of organisation and type: e.g. voluntary, public body, private company).	Better Choices Ltd – delivers the Connexions Service in Manchester ; Salford and Trafford - and an associate member of : 
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	Which area of the review are you responding to? (please mark X)
Prevention strand	x
Review of disabled children	x
Strategy for youth services	x
Review of high cost, high harm families	

1. Introduction

This response is submitted on behalf of Better Choices Ltd and complements the response from NACP, the National Association of Connexions Partners with whose comments we broadly agree.

This response is written in the context of the developing models of youth support following from *Youth Matters* and the 'Change for Children' programme – i.e. we are considering the questions in relation to **integrated youth support** rather than assuming that the traditional separation of the 'youth service' and Connexions will continue.

We see many benefits in integrated youth support, including:

- ⇒ a clear focus on the progression of young people into adult life, which includes work and learning
- ⇒ increased coherence from the young person's perspective, reducing inter-agency competition and duplication and leading to better outcomes
- ⇒ better value for money in common areas of delivery, which include a focus on NEET; structures and systems for young people's involvement; structures for commissioning work from the voluntary and community sector; external funding opportunities
- ⇒ the potential to rationalise physical resources, including: premises; advice lines; websites; mobile service in rural areas; data management
- ⇒ a single assessment framework
- ⇒ improved referral systems
- ⇒ a common database – i.e. shared knowledge about young people with their consent
- ⇒ a workforce with a wide range of skills and expertise, working to the same vision and aims
- ⇒ partners working together to build on strengths and identify areas for shared development
- ⇒ greater involvement of all services and sectors
- ⇒ increased opportunity to achieve the balance between universal and targeted work

Some of the challenges we experience in implementation are:

- ⇒ preserving the best of what is already in place and building on current good practice so that the new arrangements are genuinely better than what we have now
- ⇒ the need for resources to be grown and protected. Post-16 support will be particularly challenging if young people's needs are only seen in the context of the area in which they live
- ⇒ potential waste of the investment in the Connexions brand
- ⇒ potential loss of individual services' premises and support systems
- ⇒ managing the change of bringing together multi-disciplinary staff groups to develop positive working relationships
- ⇒ the time that organisational culture change takes
- ⇒ the need for effective leaders and managers to take the agenda forward

The focus of this evidence:

Connexions services across the country are delivering integrated and impartial information, advice, guidance (IAG) and support to 13 – 19 year-olds, as part of the local 0 – 19 delivery in each Local Authority area. As such our response is largely focused on the Youth support strand of the Review (Section 2, pages 4 - 15 below) and in addition we have included some comments on the Prevention strand, which is also pertinent to our work, in Section 3 (pages 15 – 16).

2. The Strategy for Youth Support Services

2.1. What is the current distribution of youth services and youth engagement activities available across the country? How is that likely to evolve following the Youth Green Paper?

The introduction of Connexions between 2001 and 2003, with ring-fenced funding and a specific remit to offer a targeted service within a universal offer, changed the face of direct work with young people. Connexions Partnerships were able to develop young-people-friendly premises, designed and staffed with input from young people; their independence from Local Authorities freed them to respond quickly to the needs and ideas of young people.

Connexions has also invested heavily in the involvement of young people in the planning, design, evaluation and governance of the services that they use. This engagement - implemented in partnership with Local Authority youth services - has resulted in local services that are trusted by, and popular with, young people. Connexions services offer a wide variety of ways in which young people can become involved – examples include peer research; mystery shopping; inspecting services; sitting on the management Board; making decisions about the allocation of funding to voluntary sector partners; interviewing potential staff, and so on (see also 2.8.5 below).

Local flexibilities and freedoms present a risk to young people's services which in many Local Authorities have not been considered a priority; Local Authority youth services across the country are inconsistent in terms of both their focus and their level of funding. DfES funding for youth work has not always found its way to the front line, leaving many youth workers delivering poorly resourced activities in dilapidated buildings, with a consequent effect on the self-esteem of the young people using these services.

Youth Matters proposes that youth support should be more integrated, and that funding for Connexions should be channelled through Local Authorities, to enable commissioning of IAG for young people by the local Children's Trust by April 2008. This is leading some Local Authorities to implement major structural changes in the delivery of Connexions, resulting in a degree of disruption, particularly in areas where the Local Authority has made a decision to move the service 'in-house' with attendant changes in management structure and employment status for both front-line delivery staff and core infrastructure support staff. Commissioning of the Connexions service post-2008 is likely to necessitate comprehensive tendering processes which will unavoidably divert resources away from front-line services.

In some Local Authority areas the Children's Trust is looking to merge the Local Authority youth service with Connexions, so that there is one organisation leading the delivery of a comprehensive range of support to young people. In our view integration does not necessarily require all services to be delivered by a single provider organisation; what it does require is that services are commissioned as an integrated package, with a strong commissioning team overseeing the delivery through a diverse range of agencies from statutory, voluntary and community sectors, as described in the Government's Joint Planning and Commissioning Framework for Children, Young People and Maternity Services (DfES, March 2006).

In addition the service should be integrated at the point of delivery, using a common assessment framework and client database, so that appropriate information, advice, guidance, access to developmental opportunities and support can be easily obtained by each young person in a convenient and non-stigmatising location as well as on-line.

2.2. Building on the Youth Green Paper, is there more that could be done to improve and sustain the effectiveness in the delivery of existing services and activities?

The Connexions experience is that having clear and explicit objectives, and involving young people in decisions about the best ways to achieve them, is the best way to make services effective.

The Government needs to be clearer about what 'effectiveness' means for an integrated youth support service – i.e. what are the outcomes that would define a service as effective, and are these specifically outcomes for young people or do they also include outcomes for society, parents and communities? (For example, is it sufficient for young people to be occupied in activities that divert them from anti-social behaviour, or should all activities have a specific learning / development outcome for young people?)

We agree with *Youth Matters* in its intent to build on existing good practice and investment – for example, the retention of the successful 'Connexions' brand which is known to young people, families and other professionals.

In addition, it would be helpful to create sustainable funding for youth support services rather than a series of short-term funding initiatives. Whilst recognising that 'pilots' have their place, they also create expectations amongst young people which then lead to disappointment if the funding runs out just as the service is becoming valued and effective. It is also difficult to maintain a motivated and committed workforce on short-term contracts.

2.3. What are the particular barriers faced by different groups of young people, including disabled young people, in accessing services, and what are the policy issues that arise?

In the consultation on *Youth Matters*, we found that young people

- made wide-ranging suggestions for the sort of activities that should be on offer, indicating the need for choice and individual preference
- want safe indoor places to meet in the evenings and at weekends
- identified the costs of activities and of transport as key barriers
- would like current facilities – sports and leisure – to be improved.

In addition we would add two other issues related to transport: inadequate public transport in rural areas (eg last buses in the early evening) and access to suitable transport for those with restricted mobility.

The issues that young people tell us they are concerned about are:

- future prospects in relation to employment opportunities – many young people have their status defined by their economic wellbeing
- meeting the very high demands placed on them to achieve
- lack of respect for young people from other members of the community and providers of services
- the perception of young people as ‘a problem’ by policy and legislation makers and particularly the media
- relationships with peers and with family members – including bullying and becoming victims of crime
- mixed messages about rights and responsibilities, and a confusing range of ages when young people are able / expected to act responsibly (eg at 14 have to pay ‘adult’ price for some services; can marry at 16; can’t vote till 18 etc)
- the tensions between needing to experiment and take risks as an essential part of growing up, and the context of our increasingly risk-averse society
- the wellbeing of the environment.

The majority of young people successfully find their way through these challenges with some needing additional support. Young people wish to achieve their full potential and it is essential that Government takes account of their views.

Mainstream provision must also be more sensitive and inclusive to young people with additional needs, addressing accessibility issues as they are identified. This includes incorporating the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act into websites delivering electronic information. The Common Assessment Framework enables workers to identify any barriers and needs, and the Connexions management information system (CCIS) enables progress to be tracked. There are gaps in provision for young people with LDD, and such provision needs to be developed, in partnership with the LSC, to enable young people to have real choice and services focused on their needs.

2.4. What is the national and international evidence on the effectiveness of different types of services and activities in terms of better life outcomes?

The 'risk and protective' factors mentioned in the Prevention Strand of this Review are common across all strands, and better integration of services is part of the solution for young people and their families.

The Government's evidence for the effectiveness of Connexions is outlined in the Service Specification recently issued by DfES. This lists the key successes of Connexions as follows:

'Key successes

A3. Nationally, Connexions achieved its key target to reduce the proportion of 16-18 year olds NEET by 10 per cent between November 2002 and November 2004.

A4. The service has high levels of customer and stakeholder satisfaction and a strong Ofsted inspection record. The National Audit Office (NAO) report published on 31 March 2004 concluded that Connexions had made good progress in improving the way that young people receive advice and guidance. It also reported that the Service was providing good quality advice to young people who were seen by PAs and was working well to build strong partnerships with other agencies.

A5. The NAO review of Connexions also recognised that it had significantly improved the quality of information about the education, employment and training activity of 13-19 year olds, and that CCIS provided the most complete national picture to date. This system has, and will continue to have, a key role to play in the effective delivery of services, monitoring of the NEET group and provision of information that all children's services can utilise in the planning of provision for young people.

A6. The multi-agency approach to both the composition of partnerships and in their operational delivery has been a key strength of the Connexions service. Partnerships have forged strong links with local partners such as local authorities, schools and colleges, employers, local Learning and Skills Councils (LSCs), the Youth Service, Youth Offending Teams, the Education Welfare service, the Police, Health and Social Services, Jobcentre Plus and a wide range of voluntary and community sector organisations. In this sense, the service pioneered the drive towards greater integration of young people's services which is one of the underpinning principles of the reforms set out in Youth Matters. The development of multi-agency one-stop shop facilities for young people has been an important plank in the success of this approach.

A7. Another important feature of Connexions has been the commitment to involving young people in meaningful ways in the design, planning, delivery, evaluation and governance of the service. This has been recognised as a strength - with young people and stakeholder surveys reporting that young people were involved in a wide range of activities across the service, most

commonly relating to influencing the scope, mechanics and evaluation of the service.

A8. Connexions services and activities underpin key elements of DfES strategies. They are at the heart of the reform agenda set out in *Youth Matters* and through their work with schools, colleges, the LSC and employers - they also contribute to the aims outlined in the recently published white papers, *Skills: Getting on in business, getting on at work* and *14-19 Education and Skills*.'

DfES Action Note CX211, dated 27 July 2006

2.5. How can we best combine demand led provision for young people with provision that is planned and structured to have the best impact on outcomes for children and young people?

At the moment youth support services, in common with all services for children and young people aged 0 -19, are working to the 'five outcomes' outlined in *Every Child Matters* and the Children Act 2004. These were devised after extensive consultation with children and young people:

- staying safe
- being healthy
- enjoying and achieving
- making a contribution
- economic wellbeing.

Assuming that this Review is working to the same outcomes for young people, further clarity is needed regarding the underlying principles of the Review so that service providers are clear what Government wants for young people, and that policies impacting on young people - for example, social exclusion, community cohesion, crime reduction, skills, health promotion – are enabled to mesh together in a coherent framework.

Our experience tells us that services to children, young people and families cannot be totally demand-led; they are necessarily rationed by finite resources. However, Connexions has demonstrated that it is entirely possible to involve young people in decision-making so long as the limiting parameters such as finite resources and external targets are explicit and clear. Young people have demonstrated a mature understanding of the tensions between demand and resources in day-to-day service provision.

Our current services – primary health care, Sure Start, Connexions – are based on the premise that if universal services work well, there will be a resultant reduction in the need for 'intensive' services in the medium term. Hard evidence for this requires long-term research (eg follow-up onto adulthood of children who have been involved in a SureStart programme), and in the short-term there is a time delay during which both the preventive services and high-cost intensive services, for those who did not benefit from the high quality prevention programmes, are necessary.

2.6. What more can we do to support and enable young people to exert a strong demand side influence on provision? What would we expect in return from young people – their rights and responsibilities?

There are various frameworks – e.g. ‘Hear By Right’, devised by The National Youth Agency - that provide a basis for involving young people in the design, evaluation and management of the services they use. Enabling young people to have a genuine say in how services are developed requires continued investment of resources, and organisational structures and processes that take young people seriously and respond to their feedback.

It is worth remembering that youth has always been a time for irresponsibility and the opportunity to challenge prevailing attitudes. Despite this, it is our experience that the vast majority of young people do take responsibilities seriously. We must treat them with respect and invest in provision that fits with young people's aspirations and is delivered in a way that inspires. We also need to take time to understand their behaviour: behaviour that seems irresponsible can often be an understandable response to the circumstances in which young people find themselves – eg truancy may be an escape from poor teaching or bullying behaviour.

The Connexions experience has been that if young people are asked to think about solutions to specific problems within given parameters, they are creative and constructive, realistic and responsible. For example, many young people have been helpful in designing services that will help to reduce the proportion of young people who are NEET, once they understood that this was one of the specific targets of the Connexions service.

The new Youth Opportunity Fund arrangements will demonstrate how young people can decide priorities and allocate resources; for proper effectiveness their priorities should derive from a needs analysis of the local community in which all partners have been able to have a say, and a collective agreement on desired outcomes. Voluntary sector partners, especially those operating at a very local level, are concerned about their capability to run provision if it has to be approved and ‘purchased’ by young people: issues relating to cash flow, forward planning and viability have already been identified.

2.6. What principles and priorities should guide the allocation of current and future resources? And who do we need to target?

This Review should take account of the views of young people – what do the present generation of young people want for their own children? – perhaps using the ‘scenario planning’ technique to consider what our society might look like in 2016 and what services are likely to be needed.

At present some of the principles appear to be in conflict – e.g

- local decision-making vs national entitlement;
- local priorities vs national targets;
- social care agenda vs skills agenda;
- young offenders dealt with as criminals vs as vulnerable young people

We would suggest a small number of explicit principles which set simple and clear parameters for the planning and structuring of services, within which there is flexibility for young people's demands to be met as far as possible. The following principles are suggested:

- ⇒ recognition that teenagers' needs differ from those of infants and children
- ⇒ safeguarding of the resources to meet the specific needs of 13 – 19 year olds within the whole 0 – 19 'children's trust' agenda
- ⇒ strong management and targeting of the resources for 13 – 19 year olds, with a positive focus on moving young people into work and learning, recognising that there will be a small minority who require the most intensive support and may still not make that progression
- ⇒ continued development of the voice and influence of young people in what the service looks like and how / where it is delivered and managed
- ⇒ integration of services at the point of delivery
- ⇒ delivery and targets that reflect local need, utilising regional / sub-regional information, resources and opportunities for learning and work
- ⇒ a mixed economy of providers to retain choice and diversity
- ⇒ preservation of the friendly, approachable and informative approach that young people currently value
- ⇒ access to impartial and independent advocacy that supports individual young people to remove barriers and blocks, and to negotiate services from a range of agencies

There is an inherent tension between the provision of a universal service and targeting those most in need: targeted services should be provided within the framework of a universal service, to ensure

- no stigma for those seeking help
- that all young people know where and how to get support, and that the level of support can vary according to their needs at the time
- flexibility and continuity for young people whose periods of vulnerability come and go
- efficiency through economies of scale and targeted resources

Separating universal IAG from 'targeted support' will lead to the development of a 'two-tier' service which will be stigmatising and ineffective, re-creating the 'gaps' that the Connexions strategy sought to bridge. Young people with additional needs are not a separate group, and must be able to access the universal service.

2.7. What measures and milestones need to be in place to ensure that performance can be assessed and delivery monitored at a local level?

Measures need to focus on *outcomes* rather than on inputs or outputs.

If local children and young people's trusts (and Local Area Agreements) are focused on a small number of national outcome targets with appropriate timescales, it should not be necessary to impose national milestones.

The measure known as 'NEET' (not in employment education or training) has served as a useful proxy for the various vulnerable groups of young people such as care

leavers, young offenders, BME young people, young carers, young asylum seekers and so on. The danger with this particular measure is that it has focused attention on those young people on the 'cusp' between EET and NEET, who are easier to move in to EET. This can divert resources from the most vulnerable (approximately 2%) who actually need the most help but will be the most difficult to move into EET.

In addition to outcome measures it is necessary to monitor which young people are using which services if we are to gain greater understanding of 'what works' and why. We also need to know when young people cease to have contact with services, so that their wellbeing / safety can be followed up. In urban areas this is an argument for an information system which is wider than a single Local Authority.

2.8. Supplementary questions posed as part of the 'call for evidence'

2.8.1. What are the barriers and enablers of effective Third Sector provision, including statutory commissioning capability?

Connexions has been required to invest 5% of its budget into services commissioned from the voluntary sector. This has led to a diversity of provision, better choice for young people and an increased capacity to work with 'hard to reach' groups of young people; it has also been welcomed by the voluntary and community sector as a means to increasing stability and developing services that respond to local need. The allocation of funding and monitoring of contracts has a cost in time and resources, which needs to be taken in to account.

There are increasing issues of accountability as commissioning focuses on **outcomes** for young people rather than output measures. Monitoring outcomes may require a more complex and costly infrastructure for the organizations concerned – eg IT capability.

2.8.2. What can be done to improve the ability of universal provision to identify and provide a service to those with greater needs?

The National Audit Office report (2004) identified that Connexions was not sufficiently resourced to provide **both** a high-quality universal offer **and** intensive input to the small number of young people who need it.

'There is still a risk that not all young people who would benefit from advice are receiving it. This gap is due to Connexions operating with fewer resources than was originally anticipated, together with a lack of clarity regarding the respective role of schools and the Connexions Service in providing careers advice to young people'.

Connexions Service: Advice and Guidance for all young people National Audit Office: HC484, March 2004

With the benefit of young people's feedback, Connexions services have worked with local partners to make the best of local resources to resolve this 'either / or' tension. In a relatively short space of time, many Connexions services have significantly improved the range and quality of intensive support available to young people, and have also developed very effective methods of providing information, advice and guidance to young people both within and outside of school settings. This includes some high quality INSET provision for careers teachers and personal tutors. In addition, many Partnerships manage successful programmes of positive activities for young people, and signpost young people to volunteering opportunities.

2.8.3. Which projects and programmes in the last five years have had a proven and sustained impact and brought innovation to delivery of services for young people?

Connexions has been a major success in terms of achieving its targets, involving young people at all levels, demonstrating value for money, giving customer satisfaction and consolidating a strong track record of partnership with schools, colleges, Local Authorities and other agencies across all sectors. The success of Connexions is described in the quotation from DfES in section 2.4 above.

We suggest that the factors that have made Connexions different from other provision are the combination of:

- ⇒ accessible, welcoming, non-stigmatising services
- ⇒ significant investment in the involvement of young people in planning, decision-making, governance and evaluation, and an ability to respond quickly to young people's views
- ⇒ high quality staff in multi-disciplinary teams
- ⇒ the unique role of the Personal Adviser (PA)
- ⇒ evidence-based
- ⇒ excellent management information giving the capacity to 'track' young people's progress.

PAYP (Positive Activities for Young People) is judged in the recent evaluation (available at <http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/search/EP00202/>) to have been a success. This was a three-year programme (April 2003 – March 2006) aimed at young people at risk of social exclusion and community crime, with seven key objectives including crime reduction, breaking down prejudice and misunderstanding between different communities, and supporting young people back into education or training. It delivered a targeted programme of activities to a hard-to-engage client group, and achieved a range of positive outcomes for participating young people.

One of the identified key success factors in the PAYP programme was the 'key worker' role: each young person was allocated a Key Worker who provided pastoral support, encouraging and assisting the young person to join in activities, and linked the young person into local agencies

2.8.4. What encourages young people to try new and different kinds of activities from those they already do?

The PAYP programme described above identifies the importance of key workers to support and encourage young people who do not normally engage with organized activities. Other factors which we know are important include:

- peer influence
- rewards and recognition
- choice
- links to an existing interest.

2.8.5. What evidence is there of the benefits that arise from young people's involvement in design and provision of their activities? What evidence is there of how outcomes have improved as a result?

Connexions services have been very successful in empowering young people to shape the services on offer, even in the relatively short time since Connexions began. This has been done by ensuring that young people's views are not only sought, but listened to and acted upon, and by working with young people to enable them to contribute. In some Connexions services, young people are employed as 'peer co-ordinators', encouraging and supporting other young people to get involved with their local Connexions.

Connexions services have an enormous range of evidence of how the influence of young people has impacted positively on services. Examples of young people's involvement include:

- ⇒ governance through specific Young People's Boards and young people as members of Partnership Boards;
- ⇒ evaluation and self-assessment of services (eg South Yorkshire Connexions' creation of Standards for Connexions Centres followed by 'mystery shopping') ;
- ⇒ setting of quality standards (eg Tees Valley's Youth Charter Award)
- ⇒ inspection (eg Connexions Nottinghamshire's training of a cohort of young Inspectors)
- ⇒ recruitment and selection of staff (eg Connexions West Yorkshire's involvement in the selection of senior staff for the Children's Workforce Development Council)
- ⇒ peer education and counselling (eg Cumbria Alcohol and Drugs Advisory Service)
- ⇒ business planning
- ⇒ planning and managing events,
- ⇒ making decisions on funding (eg voluntary and community sector grants)
- ⇒ design of Connexions Centres – see quote below from Central London Connexions website, referring to their new Westminster Connexions centre

The new One Stop Shop offers improved facilities with a fresh modern look and a bright and airy feel. Young people were instrumental in helping to support its design and worked through a number of youth consultation workshops with award winning designers Bisset Adams to help create an environment that in the words of young people is -

“A place not cluttered with too much information and childish images but is grown up, a place where we can be ourselves and have our own personal space”

The positive impact of young people's involvement is also evidenced by Ofsted, as demonstrated in the following extracts from Ofsted Inspection reports:

The Young Leaders and Urban Devotion projects are good examples of young people's involvement in the development of provision, supported by a well-planned training programme to accredit their work and engage them on a longer-term basis with possible employment routes built in. (Black Country Connexions - 2003)

The partnership has made good progress in involving young people in planning and delivery. Young people have contributed to the style and contents of the entitlement charter, the selection of PAs and to the design and layout of facilities. A young person's reference group was established at an early stage in the development of the partnership. Young people from this group have been consulted at several stages about the development of services and strategies for increasing the involvement of young people (Connexions Cheshire and Warrington – 2002)

Feedback from young people is sought and very often acted upon. Following comments from young people in the Truro area, the opening hours of the local Connexions centre were changed and elsewhere frosted glass was installed in interview rooms to improve privacy. Staff encourage and welcome young people's views on improving the quality of the services they provide. (Connexions Cornwall and Devon – 2003)

As part of the partnership's quality assurance process, young people's views are surveyed on different services, such as work-based learning. Young people are employed as researchers to review the effectiveness of the youth involvement and marketing. They observe PAs, design customer care standards for use in a mystery-shoppers exercise, review the youth charter and have produced a response to the Green Paper, 'Every Child Matters'. (Connexions Greater Merseyside – 2003)

Good use has been made of the creative skills of young people in the layout and design of the youth charter and publicity materials. Young people receive training and Open College Network (OCN) accreditation for their involvement in the recruitment and selection of staff. Young

people who participate in decision-making feel that their contributions have made a difference to Connexions in Hertfordshire.
(Connexions Hertfordshire – 2004)

2.8.6. What attracts people to the youth work workforce? What is less attractive about membership of this workforce?

People are often motivated to work with children and young people because there is an opportunity to make a difference to the lives of individual young people. Work with young people is always interesting, can be invigorating and energising, and is often fun.

On the down side, it is rarely well-paid and can sometimes be exhausting and apparently unrewarding. A small breakthrough with a specific young person can make up for weeks of struggle, but the impact that we seek is not necessarily seen during the time that the worker is involved with the young person. Like the TV advert to recruit teachers, where celebrities talked about the teacher who had made a lasting impact, those of us who work with young people always live in hope that one small input may be remembered years later, and make a difference to that individual.

3. The Prevention strand of the Review

- 3.1. Common across all Strands of this Review are the issues of risk to all children and young people and safeguarding their wellbeing in the short- and long-term. Integrated services will make a great contribution to improved safeguarding, as fewer children and young people 'slip through the net'.
- 3.2. Some of the points raised above in our response to the Youth Service questions are also pertinent to the questions raised in the Prevention Strand. For example, we comment on the balance on the rights and responsibilities of young people in para 2.6, and on investment in preventive services in para 2.5.
- 3.3. There has already been some discussion in this paper about the balance between universal preventive services and more intensive specialist services. We believe that for young people, intensive support needs to be firmly embedded within an universal service that can offer information, advice, guidance, support and developmental opportunities providing for the holistic needs of every young person. The service should be seamless and non-stigmatizing. An effective prevention agenda for children and young people must involve schools.
- 3.4. Early intervention is not just relevant for young children, it is a relevant model whatever the age of the young person.
"The criteria for services such as social services, mental health etc need to be widened so they can do proper preventive work before people get into crisis. An example - a young man whose Asperger's was not picked up - teachers

said he was odd, but because he was not disruptive he did not get referred for psychological assessments or appropriate support. In year 10 he was under such pressure re GCSEs, and due to bullying that he had a severe breakdown, had to be admitted to psychiatric hospital and at that stage got all the assessments he needed. His condition was so severe by then, he could not go to ordinary college and had to be funded to attend a specialist residential college -£50,000 per year"

- 3.5.** Essential tools in bringing together preventive and specialist services so that the boundaries between them are not prohibitive and stigmatizing, are:
- the 'lead professional' role
 - the Common Assessment framework
 - information sharing

Connexions services across the country are at different stages of implementation of these with their various Local Authority partners.

- 3.6.** We believe that the Connexions experience of young people's involvement can and should inform capacity-building for parental and family involvement in designing and planning services; there is also a wealth of knowledge and expertise in this area within the profession of community development. We would caution Government that in order to do this effectively it needs to be well-resourced and sustainable: it is extremely irritating to young people and adults alike to put a lot of effort into developing a service that collapses when short-term funding runs out; similarly, no-one should be out of pocket from participating in events and activities, which need to be comfortable and welcoming if they are to attract people and enable them to contribute well.

- 3.7.** Through this Review the Government has the chance to build on '*Every Child Matters*' and '*Youth Matters*', by developing an overall strategy that brings together support to children, young people and parents into a coherent whole.

This would take account of factors such as

- many young people are also parents
- parents are the key influencers in the choices young people make about work and learning
- many adults also need information advice and guidance

and would incorporate the Government's 'Respect' Action Plan which recognizes the links between parental behaviour and that of children and young people.

It would take the '*Every Child Matters*' agenda one step further, necessitating a shift in mind-set of those who work in adult-focused services to ensure that they take into account the family context.

Review of Disabled Children

- ❖ The changing profile question is a huge issue - numbers in special schools are growing massively and the complexity of needs means that inclusion for some young people is impossible without enormous extra resources/training. We must ensure that these young people get their entitlement to high quality education as well as access to all other services - leisure activities, holidays, appropriate housing etc and most importantly to support into post school options - there has been a decrease in college courses in recent years and supported work options can be few and far between.
- ❖ Progress.. education is reasonably good for children with SLD, good progress in inclusion in mainstream for physical and sensory impaired. We have many beacon special schools eg Piper Hill & Melland. - Multi agency working improving.
- ❖ Barriers /co-ordination of services....the biggest problem is those with EBD statements and many MLD yps are falling through gaps - not having needs identified , not entitled to social services support - end up in crisis at 19+ (eg mental health/offending/homeless) this could be prevented
- ❖ Accessible transport is still an issue – and transport funds for people who can't travel independently - eg we have many young people aged 20 + who have places at college, but no-one will pay for them to travel in a taxi - LEA pay up to 19, colleges can choose to use learner support funds but not obliged to, the yp may be receiving mobility allowance - but this may be just £17 per week. Keeping someone in college is a cheaper and more viable option long term than having them stay at home (which means parents will be economically inactive) or worse, meaning that family can no longer cope and ask for them to go into full time care.
- ❖ The benefits trap also needs attention - families come to rely on the benefits they receive for a disabled child, meaning they stay at home when the young person is under 16 - by which time they lose all their employability skills. When the young person leaves education and wants to work, the family will lose the young person's benefits, so parents often prevent the young person working. It may be better to provide services, such as respite care, that allow a parent of a disabled child to stay in work throughout and then the assumption that the young person will go into work is much more likely.
- ❖ Other countries...Denmark has a different approach. Adults with severe learning disability are much more likely to be in work and living away from parents - supported in independent accommodation by social services. However, less good is that a lot of the work is in segregated day centres; however the adults are pushed to fulfill their potential. We may need a mix - centres where learning disabled people can acquire work skills before being assisted to apply them in open employment; plus we would need the budget Denmark spends on this area of work

