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## CUSTOMER SATISFACTION SURVEY: 'Improve your Connexions'

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### Introduction

This report summarises the key findings from the first stage of the Connexions Service customer satisfaction survey, carried out by BMRB International on behalf of the Department for Education and Skills. The survey was carried out in fifteen 'Phase One' Connexions Partnerships (CXPs) that began delivering the Service between April and September 2001. Over 16,000 young people, who, according to Connexions Partnership databases, had been in contact with Connexions, were interviewed between January and March 2003, using a range of different methods - face-to-face interviews, telephone interviews, postal self-completion and web self-completion questionnaires. The questionnaire covered awareness of, and contact with, the Connexions Service, the role of Connexions in helping respondents take decisions about their lives, and satisfaction with the service provided by Connexions.

### Summary of Key Findings

- Awareness of the Connexions Service was very high: 92 per cent were aware of Connexions before the interview.
- In general, young people rated the Connexions Service highly: the vast majority of respondents were satisfied with the services provided (91 per cent were very or fairly satisfied with the service)
- Respondents were also satisfied with Connexions staff. They were perceived to be friendly (98 per cent felt they were very or fairly friendly), knowledgeable (92 per cent) and easy to contact (80 per cent).
- Young people thought that Connexions had had a positive impact on them: most stated that it had helped them make decisions regarding their future (68 per cent), and many felt their contact with the service had made them more confident (47 per cent).
- Overall, perceptions of Connexions were positive: the great majority believed that it had a lot to offer (90 per cent) and that it helped young people to see what options were available (86 per cent).
- Awareness of other aspects of the Connexions Service (the Connexions Card and Connexions Youth Charter) was significantly lower than awareness of Connexions overall: 19 per cent were aware of the Card, and 5 per cent of the Charter.
- The majority of respondents used Connexions to discuss education- or work-related issues: 86 per cent discussed jobs and careers, 76 per cent discussed education and 58 per cent discussed training or work-based learning.
- There is also evidence that some young people were in contact with Connexions about other issues, such as money and benefits (21 per cent), feeling stressed (11 per cent) and alcohol and drugs (10 per cent).
- The advice given by Connexions in all these areas was generally rated as very or fairly useful.

## Background

The Connexions Service is a relatively new government service targeted at young people aged 13 to 19 years in England. There are 47 local Connexions partnerships (CXPs) across the country. While the Connexions Service has replaced most of the functions of the old Careers Service, covering issues such as education, training and employment for young people, it also incorporates a number of other functions that used to be provided by youth, health and social services, as well as some voluntary sector bodies. In this way, the Connexions Service aims to provide a single initial point of contact for young people about many of the issues facing them in their lives.

CXPs are organised according to three basic models: direct delivery, generally built around the pre-existing Careers Service; sub-contracted, where there is a small core of Connexions staff arranging contracts with other local organisations to provide services to young people in the area; and lead body, where one organisation (e.g. a local authority) acts as the lead agency in delivering services to young people. Most of the 15 partnership areas surveyed for this report were either direct delivery (seven) or sub-contracted (six) - only two were organised as lead-body delivery.

All partnerships assess the needs of individual young people when they start working with them. Those classified as Priority (or Category) 1 are those assessed as needing the most intensive support from the Connexions Service. Those who need less intensive support, or who are deemed to be "at risk" are generally classified as Priority 2, and those requiring only minimal support from the Service are classified as Priority 3. The precise classifications vary slightly from partnership to partnership, and the classification is not fixed (if a young person's situation changes, then so can his/her support Priority), but the categories do give a good indication of the relative levels of need for support for young people.

## Methodology

For this first stage of the Connexions Satisfaction Survey, information was sought from the first 15 Connexions partnerships to go 'live'.<sup>1</sup> The sample was

drawn from records of young people who had had contact with each partnership between July and September 2002. This contact could be individual or group contact (including contact in schools) and may include contact by telephone or e-mail, as well as face-to face contact. These records were provided by the Connexions partnerships involved in the research.

In total, 16,120 responses were obtained. Interviewing took place between January 2003 and March 2003 using four different data collection methods (see Table 1). The overall response rate was 64 per cent, after excluding those with incorrect contact details and those who had moved.

|                                      |        |
|--------------------------------------|--------|
| Telephone interviewing (CATI)        | 10,358 |
| Face-to-face interviewing (CAPI)     | 1,568  |
| Postal self-completion questionnaire | 3,971  |
| Web self-completion questionnaire    | 223    |
| TOTAL                                | 16,120 |

### Notes on reading the report:

- Except where stated otherwise (specifically in the section on the profile of respondents), the data provided have been weighted to reflect the original population of each partnership and the relative sizes of partnerships<sup>2</sup>.
- All subgroup differences noted in this report are statistically significant at the 95 per cent level or above. This is based on an effective sample size of 9,850 after weighting.
- The percentages in the report do not always add up to 100 per cent, due to a small proportion of respondents replying 'don't know/'not applicable', not responding to the question, or to computer rounding.

### Profile of respondents (unweighted)

Figure 1 shows a profile of respondents to the survey. Analysis of the unweighted responses indicated that the majority of respondents were 16 or 17 years old (61 per cent) and were white (88 per cent). Of the respondents from other ethnic groups, 41 per cent

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Lincolnshire and Rutland, Greater Merseyside, Milton Keynes/ Oxfordshire/ Buckinghamshire, North London, South London, Shropshire, Telford and Wrekin, South Yorkshire, Suffolk and West of England

<sup>2</sup> The weighting by size of partnership was based on numbers of contacts with young people in each partnership in a given sampling period.

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<sup>1</sup> Black Country, Cheshire and Warrington, Cornwall and Devon, Coventry and Warwickshire, Cumbria, Humber,

were Asian and 38 per cent black. Forty-five per cent were Priority 3 respondents. There were slightly more male respondents than female (55 per cent and 45 per cent respectively).

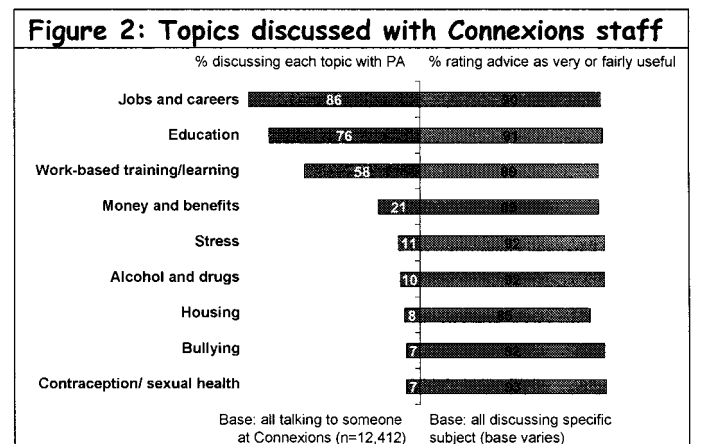
likely to remember speaking to someone from Connexions (73 per cent) than those in 'direct delivery' or 'lead body' partnerships (89 per cent and 87 per cent respectively).

As might be expected, among those who had heard of Connexions, young people identified as requiring a high level of support ('Priority 1') were more likely to remember talking to someone than those receiving a lower level of support: 88 per cent of young people in Priority 1 said they had spoken to someone, compared with 85 per cent in Priority 2 and 80 per cent in Priority 3. Similarly, among those who had had contact with Connexions, Priority 1 young people were also the most likely to have had multiple contacts with Connexions: 50 per cent of respondents in Priority 1 reported having five or more contacts, compared with 34 per cent in Priority 2 and 24 per cent in Priority 3.

### Usage of Connexions

As shown in Figure 2 below, respondents of all categories used Connexions predominantly for education- or work-related purposes. Nevertheless, young people reported speaking to Connexions about a wide range of subjects, including personal issues such as stress and bullying.

Again, discussions about these more personal subjects unsurprisingly increased with the level of support the young person was receiving. For instance, 20 per cent of young people in Priority 1 had spoken about stress compared with 12 per cent of those in Priority 2 and 7 per cent in Priority 3.



Irrespective of the topic discussed, respondents stated that the advice received was useful, with overall 'usefulness' ratings (those saying the advice or support received was either fairly useful or very useful) ranging from 85 per cent for housing advice

**Figure 1: Profile of respondents (unweighted)**  
Base: All respondents (n=16,120)



Just over half of respondents (53 per cent) were in full-time education (either at school, at college or at university) at the time of the interview. This percentage was higher among non-white respondents (67 per cent in full-time education). Twenty per cent were employed, either full-time (15 per cent) or part-time (5 per cent), while 12 per cent were looking for a job.

### Awareness of Connexions

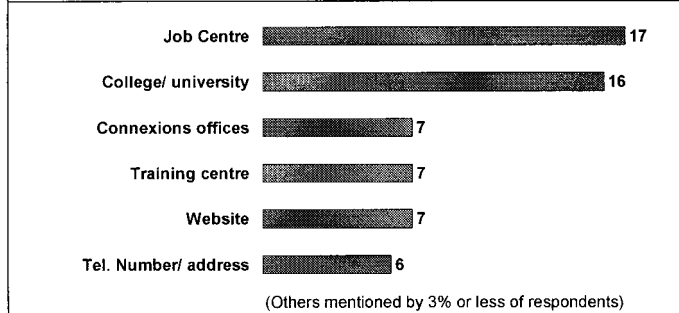
Overall, 92 per cent of respondents contacted were aware of Connexions before the interview. Awareness was lower in areas where the Connexions service was provided through a subcontracted model (86 per cent) than in partnerships that delivered the service directly (97 per cent) or through a 'lead body' model (95 per cent). This is not particularly surprising, given the fact that delivery in sub-contracted areas is typically through other organisations and is not necessarily clearly branded as Connexions. Some of the sub-contracted delivery partnerships are also those with the highest proportions of non-white populations. This largely explains the lower awareness of the Connexions Service among young people from black and minority ethnic communities - 93 per cent of white respondents said that they had heard of Connexions, compared to 88 per cent of those from other ethnic groups.

Eighty-three per cent of young people who were aware of Connexions also remembered having talked to a PA or someone else from Connexions. Again, young people in subcontracted partnerships were less

to 93 per cent for advice on matters relating to sexual health.

A key characteristic of Connexions is multi-agency working. Thirty-seven per cent of respondents were referred on to somewhere else by Connexions staff. The two most frequently cited referral destinations were a job centre or college/ university (see Figure 3).

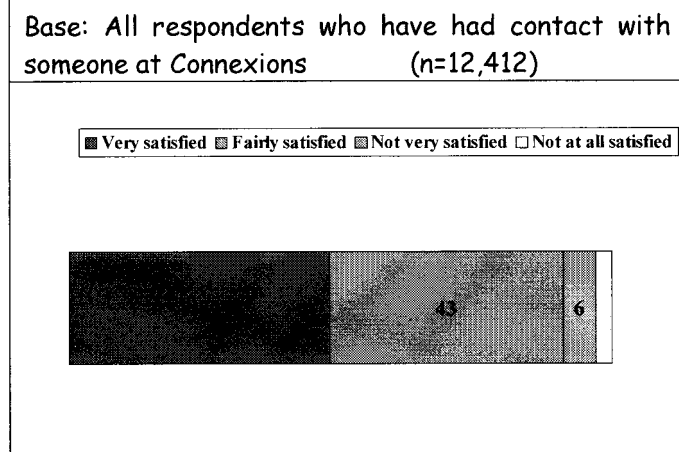
**Figure 3: Referrals by Connexions staff**  
Base: All who have been referred (n=4,588)



### Satisfaction with the Connexions Service

Overall satisfaction with Connexions was very high amongst all respondents, with 91 per cent saying they were either very or fairly satisfied (see Figure 4).

**Figure 4: Respondents' overall satisfaction with Connexions**  
Base: All respondents who have had contact with someone at Connexions (n=12,412)



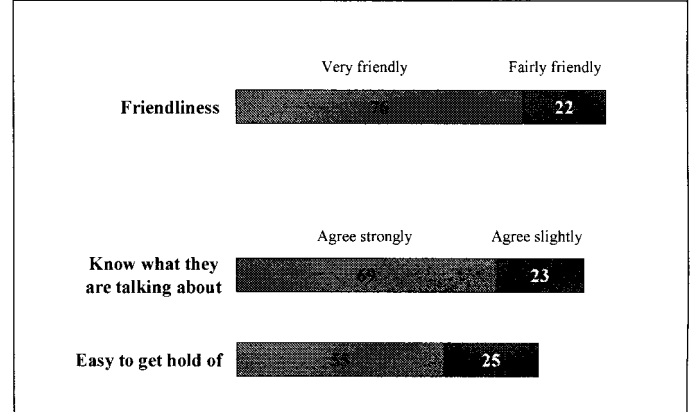
Perceptions of other aspects of the service were also positive. In all age groups and categories, a high proportion of respondents agreed that the service had a lot to offer young people (90 per cent of all respondents agreed slightly or strongly) and helped young people to see the options available to them (86 per cent in agreement).

Respondents also viewed Connexions staff very positively (see Figure 5). There was a general

agreement that staff were friendly, knowledgeable and easy to contact.

**Figure 5: Respondents' perceptions of Connexions service staff**

Base: All respondents who have had contact with someone at Connexions (n=12,412)



### Impact of using Connexions

Overall, just under half (47 per cent) of respondents stated that Connexions had made them more confident. Fifty per cent of young people said Connexions had made no difference to their overall confidence and one per cent said it had made them less confident overall. Young people receiving a higher level of support were more likely to report an increase in confidence: 53 per cent of young people in Priority 1 reported that their contact with Connexions had made them more confident, compared with 47 per cent in Priority 2 and 44 per cent in Priority 3.

Looking further at the impact of Connexions, 68 per cent of respondents stated that Connexions helped them to make decisions about their future. In particular, younger respondents (those aged 13-15) were more likely to state that Connexions helped them to make decisions about their future: 78 per cent, compared to 66 per cent of those aged 16 and over. The decisions made as a result of using Connexions were mostly going to college or university or doing a training course (see Table 2).

The activity young people most mentioned being involved in was sports or other organised spare time activities. However, this was also the activity Connexions was least instrumental in leading young people to: only five per cent of those taking part in these spare time activities did so because of Connexions.

On the other hand, although involvement was less strong (with 11 per cent of respondents who reported being in contact with Connexions), 22 per cent of young people involved in a youth centre or youth project became involved because of Connexions.

Similarly, involvement in voluntary activities was not strong (8 per cent of young people in contact with Connexions), but 15 per cent of those involved said that this was due to Connexions.

### Awareness and usage of other elements of Connexions

Respondents were asked whether they had heard of detailed aspects of the Connexions service: the Connexions Card and the Connexions Youth Charter. Only a minority were aware of these.

Nineteen per cent of young people (n = 2351, after weighting) were aware of the Connexions Card. Of those who were aware, 51 per cent reported having found out about the card from someone at Connexions and 39 per cent had a card. (The Connexions Card is still being rolled out, so awareness should be expected to rise).

Even fewer were aware of the Connexions Youth Charter: five per cent of young people who had spoken to someone at Connexions had heard of it. Younger respondents (8 per cent of 13-15 year olds) were slightly more likely to be aware than those in the older age groups (4 per cent of those aged 16 or over).

Another aspect of young people's involvement in Connexions that was in the questionnaire related to respondents' agreement with the statement 'It is important that people of my age are involved in the planning and running of Connexions'. Overall, 84 per cent agreed with this, and 50 per cent of young people agreed strongly. There were no differences in terms of demographic subgroups. The only difference we noted related to young people's overall views of the service: those who were satisfied with the service were more likely to agree that young

**Table 2: What Connexions has helped respondent decide to do**  
 Base: All respondents who have had contact with someone at Connexions (n=12,412)

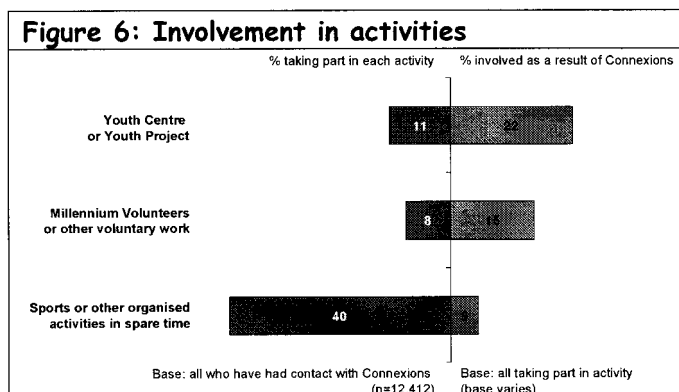
|   | per cent |
|---|----------|
| Go to college or university                               | 56       |
| Get a job/ work-based learning                            | 53       |
| Do a training course                                      | 36       |
| Stay in school  | 22       |
| Do a voluntary activity                                   | 8        |
| Join armed forces   | 1        |
| (Others mentioned by less than 1 per cent of respondents) |          |

Furthermore, 27 per cent of respondents stated that, as a result of speaking with someone at Connexions, they had done something they had not thought of doing before. This mainly involved applying for college, getting a job or getting on work-based training (see Table 3).

**Table 3: What respondent did that they hadn't thought of doing before**  
 Base: All respondents who have done something they hadn't thought of before as a result of Connexions (n=3,363)

|   | per cent |
|---|----------|
| Get a job / look for a job                              | 20       |
| Go to / apply for college                               | 20       |
| Apprenticeship / work-based training                    | 17       |
| Go on a course  | 7        |
| Apply for/ go to university                             | 4        |
| Voluntary work  | 3        |
| (others mentioned by 2 per cent or less of respondents) |          |

Young people were also asked whether they were involved in certain types of activity and, if so, whether this was as a result of their interaction with Connexions. Details are shown in Figure 6.



people should be involved in its development (86 per cent), than those who were not satisfied (61 per cent). This indicates that positive experiences of Connexions are likely to increase young people's participation in the service.

### **Education Maintenance Allowance**

We asked respondents from partnerships where Education Maintenance Allowance (EMA) was available whether they had heard of it. Fifty-five per cent (n = 4423, after weighting) were aware of EMA in these areas. Thirty-three per cent of those who were aware of EMA had heard of it through Connexions. (It should be noted that, within a CXP, not all local education authorities would necessarily offer EMA, so these figures may under-represent the awareness of EMA in those areas where it is available).

Young people who had heard of the EMA through Connexions were asked whether they had applied for it. Of these, 29 per cent said they had applied - 26 per cent successfully and 4 per cent unsuccessfully.

### **Conclusions**

Young people who responded to the survey showed very high awareness of the Connexions service and very high levels of satisfaction with the support and advice they received from the staff of Connexions partnerships. While Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs) provided advice on a wide range of topics, this was mostly focused on education, employment and training. Other topics were covered more often amongst those assessed as needing the most support (Priority 1), suggesting that CXPs are targeting their most intensive work where it can have the most impact.

This will be investigated further in the full report on the survey of young people in Phase 1 partnership areas, and in the subsequent survey of young people in contact with Phase 2 and Phase 3 Connexions partnerships.

### **Next stages**

A more detailed report on this survey of young people in Phase 1 Connexions partnership areas will be published in summer 2003. Beginning in summer 2003 and extending through to early 2004, the survey will be carried out in the remaining 32 partnerships. The questionnaire used will be largely identical to the one used in this survey of young people in Phase 1

partnerships, meaning that results will be comparable across all 47 partnerships.

### **Additional Information**

*Copies of this Research Brief (RBX09-03) are available free of charge from DfES Publications, PO BOX 5050, Sherwood Park, Annesley, Nottingham NG15 0DJ (tel: 0845 60 222 60). Research Briefs and Research Reports can also be accessed at [www.dfes.gov.uk/research/](http://www.dfes.gov.uk/research/)*

*Further information about this research can be obtained from Beverley Bishop, Room W611, DfES, Moorfoot, Sheffield S1 4PQ.*

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