

To Secondary and Special School Head Teachers, College Principals.

Connexions Update 7th January 2011

As you will be aware, discussions have been taking place concerning the future funding of Connexions and IAG support to schools and colleges. The Secretary of State for Education wrote on 16 June to all Directors of Children's Services and Chief Executives about reductions in government spending on education. The letter set out that it will be for local authorities to manage the reduction in the Area-Based Grant across their funding sources and details the measures taken to protect formula grant and remove ring-fences in order to give local authorities increased flexibility to do so. Funding for Connexions Services falls under the Area-Based Grant and the amount of money available for this service and the priority for the resource will change. As a result of this, in August the Connexions Intensive Personal Advisers entered into a formal period of consultation. Subsequent to this, after unsuccessful contract negotiations, the Information Advice and Guidance (IAG) contract with Prospects Services Ltd was decommissioned and the Prospects PAs transferred to Brighton and Hove City Council on 1st November under TUPE legislation.

The inclusion of the former Prospects staff in the consultation means a change to the original consultation proposals. Reductions in spending on the scale proposed cannot be achieved without looking to a combination of redundancies, contract decommissioning, or partial decommissioning, and reduction in office space. The required savings also need to be made to match the reduction in government grants in order to protect the council's overall financial position. It is within this expected context that we are proposing a redesign of the Connexions Service in Brighton & Hove. This redesigned model incorporates proposals which will allow us to focus on employability outcomes for young people in the city and to meet the saving requirements for 2011/12.

On January 6th a consultation paper was issued to all Connexions PAs and other affected staff outlining proposals to adopt a post-16 employability model of support to young people. This proposed redesigned provision for Brighton & Hove comprises the following:

- A team of 5 IAG qualified Personal Advisers (Employability) with special responsibility to support 16-18 year old NEETs.
- Support to young people with LLDD/special needs will be provided by 2 specialist LLDD PAs.
- The maintenance of one Connexions Plus access point. This will be staffed by the Personal Advisers (Employability).

The proposal is that IAG support to young people in education will be the responsibility of schools and colleges and there will be no Personal Adviser support provided directly to schools or colleges by the local authority.

In a speech on November 4th, Skills Minister John Hayes set out a vision for an all-age careers guidance service to be in place by September 2011 and fully operational in April 2012. Indications are that the broad duty on councils to encourage, enable and assist participation will remain but the guidance relating to this duty will change to make clear that it relates to "targeted support for vulnerable young people" and not to careers guidance for all young people. What targeted support is, and who these vulnerable young people are will not be prescribed.

Duties on schools are likely to change to require them to provide "impartial and independent" careers advice rather than careers education (schools may still wish to provide some sort of careers education but they will not be required to do so). There will be no requirement about how advice is provided; schools will not be required to procure the all-age service – whatever this looks like.

Duties on colleges relate to access to guidance materials and reference materials. There are no plans to change this. It is accepted that colleges are key players in raising participation and supporting adults and young people into employment and higher education, but ministers are not looking to increase or change the duties on colleges.

Consequently, until a final decision has been reached on these proposals, all Personal Advisers, IAG and Intensives, are being asked to work normally as far as possible within schools and colleges up to the end of March. However, we recognise that these are unsettling times and PAs and institutions alike have concerns about the longer term support for young people and how this will affect young people in terms of taking them onto caseloads. We also recognise that some PAs will choose to take redeployment options or find alternative employment. This may mean that staff resources are stretched and we may not be able to cover the range of work in schools and colleges that we have done previously.

Next Steps in Brighton & Hove

The Connexions consultation document issued on January 6th marks the formal beginning of a 30 day consultation period for staff affected. A final decision on what the service will look like will be agreed by members after responses to the consultation have been received and taken into account. Because of the sensitivities involving potential staff reductions, and the challenges in reaching a decision that could be communicated to all stakeholders, we have been unable to share any concrete details with schools and colleges up to this point. However, the broad principles of the proposals have been communicated via the Heads Steering Group and 14-19 Partnership Board. In this regard, agreement has been reached with the 14-19 IAG Subgroup to set up a working group involving senior managers from schools and colleges, with officers to look at how schools and colleges adapt to potential changes in Connexions / IAG support. The next meeting is scheduled for 26th January and this will form the main agenda item for

the meeting. This will cover the full range of options as far as we know them. If head teachers / college principals have any thoughts or ideas they would like to be considered for this group, please discuss with your representative who attends the meeting. For ease of reference, the following senior managers are members of the 14-19 IAG Subgroup:

Adrian Carver	Downsview
Alan Duffy	Longhill
Alison Browning	Varndean School
Anne Fielding Smith	BHASVIC
Dave Gunputh	Dorothy Stringer
Gill Hibbert	Hove Park
Jackie Brooks	Downs Park
James Kilmartin	Cardinal Newman
Jill Sawyer	Varndean College
Jim Browning	Blatchington Mill (Chair)
Johnnie Davies	Portslade Community College
Keith McCormick	Blatchington Mill
Louise Cook	Patcham House
Pete Korman	Patcham High
Rebecca Foreman	City College Brighton & Hove
Stacey McCabe	BACA
Tony Hammick	Cedar Centre

Philip Ward
7th January 2011

