

UK Connexions

**Report on study visit to the United Kingdom – October 2003
by Elaine Gill**



**on behalf of Taranaki Connections
Taranaki Employment Support Foundation**

**with the support of the Community Employment Group (Social
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1. INTRODUCTION

Although UK and New Zealand are 12,000 miles apart there are startling similarities in the problems facing young people. Both countries have:

- a large number of young people who are not in education, training or employment
- A high rate of youth unemployment;
- Traditional jobs that are available that are unappealing to young people;
- Skill gaps
- Young people who are not achieving their full potential in the educational system
- Young people facing problems with drug abuse, pregnancy and lack of protection

Although both countries have identified that fragmentation of services, insufficient preparation for post school choices and a lack of a comprehensive support service were contributing to these problems, the solutions proposed have been different. That is until support was obtained for the Taranaki Youth Initiative. This pilot aims to end fragmentation of services and provide an integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for young people in the target group to help them make a smooth transition to working life. The success of the project depends upon the involvement of young people, listening and taking account of their views in the design and delivery of the service. The initiative will ensure that school leavers are supported for as long as necessary to move them into training and employment. It will be flexible

and able to change the direction of support given to directly reflect the specific needs of each individual school leaver over a number of years.

In order to assist with the establishment of the pilot Taranaki Youth Initiative, I received a Community Employment Group Social Entrepreneur Grant to undertake a fact-finding visit the United Kingdom to investigate the Connexions service. The youth initiative pilot has borrowed heavily from Connexions although it has been adapted to better suit the Taranaki community. My visit took place September 13th to 27th 2003.

The Connexions workers that I met were very generous with their time and with resources and I returned with 10 kilos of information, all of which will be of value to the Taranaki Youth Initiative. The tour also gave me valuable insight into the establishment, organisational structure, operational structures and future of Connexions. This report outlines my findings.

2. AIMS

The aims of my fact-finding tour were to:

- To visit at least 5 areas where the Connexions is successfully operating in order to improve the delivery within Taranaki
- To review Connexions establishment, training and delivery processes
- To build my capacity for operating the project in Taranaki
- To report on the Connexions programme to the Local Employment Co-ordinating Committee and the Mayor's Taskforce for Jobs

3. BRIEF OUTLINE OF CONNEXIONS

Connexions commenced in 2000 in response to Bridging the Gap, a 1999 social exclusion unit report, which said that 9% (173,000) of 16- to 18-year-olds were not in education, training or work, a figure that had not changed in recent years. The report identified that 16 was a critical age when compulsory education ends. Here young people's clear paths and goals often fall away. The result is that a teenager may be overwhelmed by relationship, family and health problems, including homelessness, persistent offending or problem drug use. The government hoped that by integrating work across education, health, social welfare and youth justice, under-16s will be kept on course by Connexions, thereby reducing exclusion and truancy.

Connexions is a support service for all young people aged 13 to 19 in England, it does not operate in Northern Ireland, Scotland or Wales. The service aims to provide integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities for this group and to help them make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. The programme joins up the work of six government Departments and their agencies and organisations on the ground, together with private and voluntary sector groups and youth and careers services. It brings together all the services and support young people need during their teenage years. It offers practical help with choosing the right courses and

careers, including access to broader personal development through activities like sport, performing arts and volunteering activities. It also provides help and advice on issues like drug abuse, sexual health and homelessness.

Connexions is being delivered through local Partnerships working to national planning guidance. The Partnerships cover the same geographical areas as the Learning and Skills Councils. They have flexibility to meet local needs using the design that works best. Delivery of the service is managed and monitored by local management committees (see below). Connexions offers differentiated and integrated support to young people. Key features of the service are:

- **A network of 'Personal Advisers' (PAs)**, some newly-recruited but many drawn from (and remaining in) a range of existing public, private, voluntary and community organisations. PAs help young people to tackle barriers that could otherwise prevent them from remaining in learning and achieving their full potential. PAs have a range of skills, but will refer young people to more specialist provision where they need it; for example if a young person needs drugs treatment services. The difference, with Connexions, is that one lead professional – the PA – is responsible for making sure that the young person gets the help s/he needs and is not passed from one agency to another;
- **Multi-agency teams**, which include PAs from different backgrounds and specialists with different areas of expertise, who can support each other and ensure that young people can get the range of help they need quickly and effectively;
- **Modernising services and improving access**, for example through “one-stop-shops” which bring together a range of services that young people want to use, in places and at times that are convenient to them; and
- **Involving and consulting young people** in the design and delivery of the Connexions Service, and using their views to influence the provision of other services such as education and health.

4. ORGANISATIONAL STRUCTURE

Connexions Service National Unit

This is the head office of the service and is based in Sheffield. A section of the Department of Education and Skills, the Unit has approximately X staff. The role of the unit is:

- Strategic planning
- Policy development
- Establishment, support and contracting of Connexions Partnerships
- Development of training packages and training standards

- Promotion of best practice
- Monitoring of the service
- Establishment and maintenance of the Government Office network
- Reporting to Government on progress and achievements of the service

Government Offices

There are 9 Government Offices, all of which have Connexions dedicated staff. All work with a number of partnerships. The role of these offices is to:

- Contract with Partnerships in their area
- Supporting Partnerships on the establishment and implementation of the service
- Oversee procurement of services
- Measurement and impact assessment of involving young people in the service
- Monitoring of Partnership performance
- Implementing training of PAs
- Reporting to CSNU
- Liaison with OFSTED, the monitoring and evaluation body and follow up remedial action should Partnerships be found unsatisfactory

Partnerships

Connexions Partnerships deliver Connexions at the local level. There are a total of 47 Partnerships, which will be co-terminus with local Learning and Skills Councils. The partnerships have been rolled out over a 2 year period, the last one being established in April 2003 in Northumberland. The launch of each new Partnership is the end of a long process - the product of rigorous business planning, detailed assessment of progress and early achievements, close liaison with other Government departments and establishing effective relationships with key partners locally. A map of Connexions Partnerships can be found in Appendix 2 and a list of members of the Tyne Wear Partnership is attached Appendix 3.

Each Partnership is responsible for developing and maintaining a structure that meets the needs of its area. Three main structural models are evident. These are:

- Direct delivery companies directly employing the majority of Connexions staff
- Sub contracting that deliver through sub contracted services and delivery staff;
- Lead or Host bodies, where the Partnership is not a legal entity and uses a third party to perform major functions including accountability for CSNU grant.

The form of the Partnership seems to be dependent on how careers services were delivered in the past. Where careers services had been contracted out to the private sector the sub-contracting model of delivery is in evidence. In my visit I had interaction with both of the first two models. There appeared to be consensus at both CSNU and GO level that the direct delivery model was the best.

Each of the Partnerships has a Board which oversees the strategic development of the Connexions Service, included on the Board are representatives of: all local authorities in the area (usually the Chief Executive or local councillors with responsibility for youth support services), the Chief Executive or Director of the health authority, Youth Service, voluntary and community sectors, regional and local teenage pregnancy coordinators, the Executive Director or Chair of the Learning and Skills Council, Jobcentre Plus, Police, Probation and Youth Justice Services, schools, careers companies and training providers. The Board has an independent chair.

The roles of the Board is to:

- Establish a corporate identity for Connexions and secure involvement from the public private voluntary and community sectors;
- Set the Partnerships strategic direction, priorities, and resource allocation and co-ordination of an area wide plan;
- Ensure that young people remain in the forefront of service delivery;
- Drive cultural change and develop stronger partnerships between public private and community sectors;
- Ensure suitable structures are in place for delivery of services;
- Ensure the provision of key functions including financial management, marketing, information procurement, and HR management;
- Issuing contracts and confirming service level agreements.

Partnerships contribute to the delivery of a set of primary and crosscutting targets. The primary targets focused on increasing the number of 16 and 17 year olds in education and training, reducing truancy and raising achievement at ages 16 and 19. Connexions Partnerships also contributed to several cross-cutting targets set by other Government departments covering care leavers, drug abuse, youth offending, teenage conceptions minority ethnic groups and young people at risk. The aim was to work closely in partnership with social services departments, teenage pregnancy coordinators, drug action teams and youth offending teams.

Local Management Committees

In each Partnership area there are a number of Local Management Committees, these have been established to represent local communities. LMCs operate in one local authority area, whereas Partnerships may cover a number of local authorities. The Local Management Committees have a broad membership that encompasses representatives of Voluntary and community organisations, careers and guidance companies, youth services, Job Centres, local authority councillors, employers and training providers, statutory service providers such as Youth Justice, schools and colleges, health services, religious bodies, drug action teams and young people. A copy of the Sunderland Local Management Committee membership is attached Appendix 4

The role of the local management committee is to:

- Work closely with local agencies to produce a map of need, gaps in provision and resources

- Produce a Local Management Committee plan
- Negotiate with the Partnership Board for resources
- Recommend the Board details of contracts covering their area
- Advise the Board on the ability of organisations to deliver services
- Ensure Personal Advisers work to uniform services
- Assist in bringing about cultural change
- Ensure that delivery and quality are tightly monitored and remedial action is identified to maintain standards.

5. OPERATIONAL STRUCTURES

Personal advisers

The cornerstone of the Connexions Service are personal advisers, in New Zealand terms a cross between a guidance counsellor, careers adviser, social worker and WINZ case manager. This is a new role that has been established purely by the service and it operates across a range of agencies e.g. Education, Health, Youth Work, Social welfare and Criminal justice. The personal advisers form a critical link in bringing together effective support for young people. The support provided may range from basic information, advice and guidance, to vulnerable young people requiring more substantial one to one support. In essence, personal advisers make sure that the needs of young people are met so that they are able and motivated to take education, training and work opportunities and achieve to their full potential. Personal advisers carry out the following duties:

- working with young people to establish their needs and offer information, advice, support and guidance where necessary;
- helping young people face challenges that may affect their capacity to take part in learning and work opportunities;
- working with and supporting schools, colleges, training institutions and employers in designing a range of local courses that will meet the needs of young people;
- working with voluntary, statutory and community agencies and commercial bodies to ensure a cohort approach to overcoming the barriers to learning and employment faced by young people;
- working with parents, carers and families to support young people;
- managing information effectively to facilitate the process of meeting the needs of young people; and
- renewing and reflecting upon professional practice to achieve continuous improvement in performance.

I met personal advisers working in a range of settings, including schools, colleges, one-stop shops community centres and on an out-reach basis. Most of those that I met with had a career background in social work, youth work, education, health services, youth justice, or careers advice. However despite professional backgrounds and experience additional training is required to become a personal adviser. This requirement has not been universally popular, and there has been some resistance to this additional training

from those who have professionally worked with young people over a number of years. However there was a clear message at the Conference that all personal advisers must be trained.

To become a fully qualified personal adviser there is a need to hold a relevant qualification at S/NVQ Level 4, or equivalent, that is a degree. In addition, all personal advisers are required to attend either the Diploma for Connexions Personal Advisers or the Understanding Connexions Training programme. The latter is the first module of the Diploma course.

The Diploma for Connexions personal advisers is for those who do not have a level 4 qualification. It is an eight month course of 5 modules which encompasses 71 hours of distance learning, 24 hours of live training, and 6 hours work in action learning. The modules included in the Diploma course are:

- Understanding Connexions
- Engagement and Effective Practice
- Working for change with young people
- Working with other agencies and the Community
- Evidence based practice, record keeping and communication.

In future a degree specific to the skills needed for personal advisers is to be offered by 4 Universities in the next academic year.

Most Partnerships have also developed their own training and development programmes to supplement the existing training programmes and these encompass such topics as: drug awareness, health and safety, counselling, child protection and special needs.

Pay scales for the position are 14,000 pounds (\$40,000) for trainees without qualifications to 25,000 pounds (\$70,000) for those with level 4 qualifications and extensive experience. Some Partnerships also offer pension schemes and car loans.

One Stop Shops

I visited a number of these and the majority are storefront locations in the CBD. All are easily recognisable as they are branded in the Connexions colours of orange and purple. All are multi information agencies that provide information, advice and support for young people. They are used by a number of different agencies and supported by personal advisers. In New Zealand terms the ones I visited were a cross between a Link Centre, Work and Income Office and drop in centre. All had computers available for young people to use, easily accessible information on careers and jobs, health issues, and youth activities. All had comfortable seating and all were busy.

Connexions Card

The Connexions Card is a secure smartcard, designed specially for young people, which allows them to collect reward points for learning, work-based training and voluntary activities. These can be exchanged for discounted and free goods and services and other rewards, including some exclusive 'money can't buy' experiences. The Card can also be used for on-the-spot discounts and special offers from outlets and business displaying the Connexions Card window sticker. The Connexions Card is available free to all 16-19 year olds in England. The Card is a smartcard with a chip that stores basic information such as date of birth. It has a colour photograph and can be used for proof of age if needed. The Card is secure so can not be used fraudulently. The Card can also be used to electronically record attendance at school, college or work-based training and it remains valid until August 31st of the academic year in which the holder becomes 19.

The Connexions Card team is visiting every school, college and large work-based training provider in England so that all 16-19 year olds can apply for their Card. During the visit the team will collect personal information and takes a photo of the holder. The Card and welcome pack is then sent back to the school, college or work-based trainer a few days later. If a young person misses this they can either pick up an application form at their local learning centre or phone a free helpline to request one.

Connexions in Schools

As Connexions is available to all young people 13 to 19, schools have an important role to play in the service. I visited two schools, Oaklands School in York and Lady Lumley School, Pickering. At the former I was shown a new annex to the Library that will be used for Careers Advice and Information and met the school's Careers Adviser. I also met the school personal adviser who appeared to have a role akin to a guidance counsellor in New Zealand Schools. At Lady Lumley I was introduced to the peer support team a group of bright 17 and 18 year olds who were renovating a cottage on the school grounds to act as a drop in Centre for students with problems. See Appendix 5 for details.

In addition to the school visits I was given a toolkit to support the integration of Connexions into schools. In brief the kit suggests the appointment of a Connexions Manager, that is a member of staff specifically with the responsibility for the development of Connexions in the school, outlines the roles that teachers, parents and young people can play in the development of the service, and lists procedures that need to be established for the successful integration of the service.

While the schools I visited may not be examples of best practice, on the whole I thought that the schools part in the delivery of Connexions was one of the weaker aspects of the service. Although it should be noted that the service has been only in this instance in operation for a year and schools are traditionally slow to embrace initiatives, especially ones that require an increased workload from staff.

Involvement of Young People

Central to the provision of Connexions is the involvement of young people in the delivery of the service. It was stressed again and again at the conference I attended that young people should be at the forefront of service delivery and this means consulting more than just the articulate few, it means involving young people systematically in all aspects of service delivery and using their feedback to reshape provision. Young people also need to see clearly how their views have led to changes. I did not however see a great deal of evidence of this. When asked how this was implemented in the Partnerships most mentioned the inclusion of young people on Boards and Committees and the use of young people in the staff selection process. In addition a number of Partnerships have involved young people in the design of Connexions materials used for information and advertising but to date this seems to be the limit of their involvement.

The Youth Service

Supporting young people at risk, seeking youth development opportunities, administering personal and social education programmes are just a few of the roles of the Youth Service identified in the document 'Transforming Youth Work' which was subject to consultation in 2001. By joining with Connexions, the aim is to achieve this and much more. The Youth Service brings with it a wide-ranging network of resources along with a mass of expertise, as well as the valuable contribution that youth workers can make as PAs.

At local level youth services and Connexions are developing partnership arrangements leading to linked plans and joint working arrangements. The youth services will contribute to Connexions in a number of ways including youth workers taking on the role of PAs, support for young people's personal and social development, volunteering, community activities, cultural activities, sport, international youth work and out of school and summer activities.

The Transforming Youth Work Development Fund (TYWDF) is worth £22 million in 2002-03. This combined with a budget of £7 million for Special Educational Needs and Disability Act measures provides a package of new investment in the Youth Service of £29 million from April 2002. This aims to modernise the Youth Service. £20 million has already been allocated direct to local authorities. They will work with Government Offices (GOs), Connexions Partnerships and the voluntary sector to plan the use of this money and encourage the young to engage fully in the services available to them and to adapt their premises or services for disabled people.

From 2002-03 there will be a planned £2 million increase in the budget for 'National Voluntary Youth Organisation' (NVYO) projects. These projects are focused on two objectives: tackling social exclusion through targeting priority groups and raising the standard and quality of youth work. The NVYOs will be encouraged and supported to become highly involved with Connexions. The NVYOs have a £2 million share of the TYWDF in 2002-03. This will finance a range of activities including:

- Developing links with Connexions;
- Implementing OFSTED's self assessment procedure;
- Developing management information systems; and

- Running projects to reduce youth crime and celebrate diversity.

Linkages with the Voluntary and Community Sector

The Connexions Service is maximising its impact by building on services for young people that already exists. Building a strong relationship between Connexions and the voluntary and community sector has been a priority from the outset. The service notes that voluntary and community organisations offer advice and guidance to large numbers of young people and a wide range of educational, training, volunteering and employment opportunities. They often reach out to and engage in imaginative and innovative ways with those young people who have turned away from formal systems.

Engagement with voluntary and community organisations is therefore happening at national, regional and local level. Nationally, the Connexions Voluntary Sector Forum has been established comprising a range of organisations, which meet quarterly to develop national Connexions policies and contribute towards a longer-term strategy for engaging the sector. Regionally, Connexions teams based in Government Offices are bringing in people from the sector to work with them.

Locally, representatives can be found on Partnership Boards and Local Management Committees and many Partnerships are providing grant funding to small, informal, community groups to support the delivery of projects involving young people, which contribute to the aims of Connexions. The grants support specific provision for young people such as youth clubs, information, advice and counselling, community and study support centres, outdoor activities and detached or outreach work. This enables young people to receive specialist services and take up education and training opportunities. They are also getting involved in a number of other ways, for example as providers of specialist referral services; as subcontractors to Partnerships and as a source of personal advisers. In addition, training for personal advisers and other Connexions training has been opened up to Voluntary and Community Sectors, and in recognition of the difficulties which some small community sector organisations face in releasing staff to train, Connexions offers help with the cost of training and with "backfill costs" (such as the employment of staff to cover those absent on training) as well as transport costs to training venues.

The experience and skills which exist within the voluntary and community sector are invaluable in ensuring that Connexions delivers, and to build on this, over 200 experienced workers from voluntary and community organisations are currently training to become Connexions Personal Advisers.

I visited a number of "joint ventures" between Connexions partnerships and the community sector. These were most youth centres where Connexions personal advisers are working either on a part time or full time basis. They provide an outreach for the service. In addition the Partnerships work with other community organisations to provide referrals for volunteering opportunities for young people. Such schemes as

Dreamscheme, a project that provides opportunities for young people to engage in recycling, gardening, tree planting and litter clearing for points that can be saved for trips.

Millennium Volunteers

Also Millennium Volunteers, a nation-wide volunteering service has strengthened its links with Connexions. MVs is one of the most significant ways for Connexions advisers to encourage young people to boost their personal development. Launched in 1999, the programme aims to encourage 16- to 24-year-olds to take up volunteering. While an important benefit is the boost to their local communities, the programme places equal emphasis on the skills that young people can acquire through voluntary work. Participants are given awards after 100 and then 200 hours of volunteering and they are given relevant training if necessary.

At March 2003 over 58,000 young people had become involved with Millennium Volunteers, their efforts are formally acknowledged with those young people completing 200 hours of voluntary activity receive an Award of Excellence signed by the Secretary of State for Education and Skills, a valuable contribution to their CV. Over 13,000 have achieved this recognition so far.

There are currently around 180 projects across England, with separate delivery systems in place in Wales, Ireland and Scotland. A rigorous assessment process is in place, supported by National and Regional Contract Managers, to ensure that projects deliver the required outcomes, adhere to MV principles, meet quality standards and offer real value for money.

Links with Industry and Employers

The area that I consider least well developed in the Connexions portfolio is the linkages with industry and employers. All Partnerships have produced labour market information brochures and all one-stop shops had lots of information about careers and jobs available in the industries in the area but I saw little evidence that Partnerships had built a solid relationship with local industry or employers. An exception was Somerset where a comprehensive education business network, LINK, has been established. Connexions however is only one of the players in this network, others include, Young Enterprise, the UK equivalent of ITOs, Business in the Community etc. The connection with Connexions is strong though as the network staff work from the Connexions one stop shop. The network is involved in providing work experience placements for school students, running Enterprise and Business Awareness programmes in schools, recruitment and support for business mentors for 15 to 18 year old students, professional development of teachers in careers and vocational education, recruitment of businesses to work with schools, and the promotion of business awareness programmes. The business mentor programme seems particularly successful in gaining employment for students who participate.

Websites and telephone contact

Connexions Direct is a telephone helpline and Internet service for 13 to 19 year old. The Internet site provides information, webchat, and email. Alternatively young people can call a freephone number or send a text. The telephone service is available 7 days per week from 8 am to 2 pm. Both services provide access to trained advisers who can offer direct assistance or, where appropriate with the young person's permission make referrals to local agencies. Currently Connexions Direct is handling 2,000 calls per week with webchat being the most popular form of access, this represents 42% of contacts in comparison to telephone calls at 31%. E mail draws 16% and texting 11%. The reasons why young people use the service vary but the most popular issue is Career planning 40%, 27% want to cover topics relating to relationships, family and wellbeing and 16% contact the service for health reasons. Initial feedback from young people suggests that some of the main attractions of Connexions Direct are aspects of anonymity and confidentiality.

Performance and Evaluation

The Performance Management and Contracting Framework has been developed to provide Partnerships with a systematic approach to performance management that covers both qualitative and quantitative measures; and to provide a basis for accountability. The framework coordinates all the performance management and assessment activities of Partnerships, Government Offices and CSNU, to provide a comprehensive picture of Partnerships' performance and to facilitate continuous improvement. Partnerships' annual self-Assessment is a key element of the Framework

The Self-Assessment Schedule and Guidance, published in August 2002, aims to help Partnerships to carry out self-assessment in order to analyse and assess their strengths and areas for improvement and prioritise improvement actions to be incorporated into business plans. Gathering the feedback and perceptions of young people, staff and other stakeholders will be central to this process.

OFSTED (similar to Education Review Office in NZ) developed their Connexions inspection framework during 2001-2 and during the year conducted short monitoring visits to each of the live Partnerships in order to assist their early work and enable OFSTED to provide a thematic report of the progress of Connexions. A joint CSNU/OFSTED conference was held in September 2002 to help disseminate good practice and learn the lessons from experience so far. OFSTED are currently carrying out a rolling programme of inspections of all Partnerships. To date 12 Partnerships have been inspected, 1 has been classed very good, 7 good, 1 satisfactory and 3 ineffective/unsatisfactory.

With regard to evaluation, one of the key principles of Connexions is that new interventions are subject to rigorous research and evaluation into 'what works.' The evaluation strategy now being put in place has been developed following extensive consultation across Government and with Connexions Partnership and Government Office representatives. Young people will be given the opportunity to consider and

contribute to the strategy's ongoing development. The strategy consists of four key elements:

- Survey work capturing changes in attitude and views of young people and stakeholders towards Connexions.
- A study that will track a group of young people over time to determine how effective the Service is in helping young people.
- Specific studies that will focus on key aspects of the Service and draw out emerging practice in areas such as multi agency working.
- Arrangements that will encourage Partnerships to compare and exchange information and evaluation findings.

Funding

The Connexions Service is complex, ambitious and resource intensive. For example, the national Careers Service budget in 2001-02 - the period immediately before the launch of the first Connexions Partnerships - was around £240 million. In 2001-02, the first year of Connexions, the combined Connexions Service and Careers Service budget grew to £320 million, while in 2002-03, the figure currently stands at some £430 million.

The Connexions funding formula is intended to share out the national Connexions budget between the 47 Partnerships in a way that is simple, objective and transparent. In order to canvass views on precisely how best to do that, the National Unit undertook a comprehensive consultation exercise in early 2001 to gather the views of a wide range of organisations and individuals affected by the introduction of the Service. Despite the inevitable spectrum of opinions expressed, a broad consensus emerged from the exercise. As a result, the formula targets funding specifically towards areas that have the most young people with additional needs, in view of the extra help that they need from the Service. In simple terms, 50% of each Partnership's allocation is based on the number of 13-19 year olds in its area while the other 50% is allocated on the basis of need.

During 2001-02 around 33% of grant expenditure went to support 13-15 year olds in school and around 20% on 16-19 year olds in school, college and with training providers. The remaining grant supported a range of activity across the age groups including outreach work, improving access, grants to the voluntary sector, services to employers as well as funding Partnerships' own administration.

6. DIFFERENCES BETWEEN CONNEXIONS AND TARANAKI YOUTH INITIATIVE

There are a number of differences between Connexions and TYI, some of these are due to the differences between statutory services in New Zealand and the United Kingdom, others are due to the adaptations made to the TYI to suit the Taranaki community. The main differences are:

- Local authorities in the UK have far greater areas of responsibility than in New Zealand. UK local authorities have responsibilities for education, housing, youth services, and care and protection;
- Social problems in the UK are far greater than New Zealand, for example a major problem that Connexions is grappling with is homelessness amongst youth;
- Connexions is provided for the 13 to 19 age range whereas TYI age range is post school that is 15 to 25;
- Connexions main focus is on the well being of young people, while this is a component of the TYI the main focus of the initiative is employment;
- Resources available for Connexions are huge, the project is funded to the tune of approximately NZ\$1.5 billion
- Personal Advisers are paid in the UK, although it should be noted that the expectations of coaches involved in the TYI are not as demanding as those placed on personal advisers;
- New Zealand has a far better system, for providing assistance to students with problems in schools, that is the employment of guidance counsellors
- There seems to be gaps in the delivery of Connexions with the Education and Skills Council (the equivalent of the Tertiary Education Commission) and Job Centres Plus (the equivalent of Work and Income) not been bundled into the service other than being represented on Boards and Committees.

7. CONCLUSION AND LESSONS LEARNT

My time in the UK has been invaluable. As noted previously the Connexions personnel that I met with were very generous of their time and provision of resources, I returned with a huge amount of hard copies of information that is of value. In fact we have already used some of the information provided in the provision of a brochure to Waitara High School students that encourages them to become involved in the initiative and the scoping of a training course for “coaches”.

A number of lessons were learnt from the trip, these were:

- Clear leadership and direction needs to be given by the governance body;
- Government agencies need to strongly support the programme if effective partnerships are to be forged
- Professional input is needed to ensure that those young people who are in danger of becoming disconnected or are disconnected are to be meaningfully assisted, it is insufficient for assistance for these young people to be left to the voluntary sector;
- Training and professional development need to be given high priority;
- A commitment to the meaningful involvement of young people needs to be given by the delivery team
- Consistency of systems needs to be established to monitor, evaluate, record and track young peoples progress
- New Zealand has the opportunity to improve on the service with the inclusion of the Tertiary Education Commission and Work and Income in the “bundle” of agencies in support

- The Taranaki Youth Initiative is under resourced.

My overall impression is that we can learn a huge amount from Connexions and that consideration should be given to the establishment of a similar programme in New Zealand. The TYI is a useful first step and my trip to the United Kingdom will ensure that it has the best possible chance to succeed. I therefore wish to express my sincere appreciation for the assistance given for this trip by the Community Employment Group.

Elaine Gill
October 16th 2003