

What is Connexions?

Connexions, part of Essex County Council's Integrated Youth Service (IYS), offers free and impartial information, advice, guidance and support to all 13 to 19 year olds, and older for some young people with additional needs. IYS brings together a wide range of youth provision through One Stop Shops, youth centres, clubs and mobile units, providing young people with information, advice and guidance, personal development opportunities and challenging experiences.

Connexions ensures that all young people receive the information and support they need and encourages more young people to make the best choices for them personally.

All young people have access to Connexions whether they are ...

- at school
- in further or higher education
- in training or employment
- unemployed
- doing voluntary work.

Connexions also works in partnership with other agencies to support the achievement of the Every Child Matters (ECM) agenda. ECM is a new approach to the well-being of children and young people from birth to age 19. The Government's aim is for every child, whatever their background or circumstances, to have the support they need to:

- Be healthy
- Stay safe
- Enjoy and achieve
- Make a positive contribution
- Achieve economic well-being.

Connexions Centres and One Stop Shops are open to young people and their families. Contact your local centre (listed at the end of this document) or check on our website www.essexconnexions.co.uk for more information and opening hours.

How can Connexions help my teenager?

Connexions don't just help young people to choose a course or find a job – it's about much more than that! Making decisions about which GCSE subjects to choose, whether to go to university or which careers to pursue are very important and Connexions can help with all of these issues. But did you know that Connexions could also help your teenager with information and advice about:

Health: drugs, fitness, stress, eating disorders, smoking and drinking

Money: student loans/debt, tax, benefits, minimum wage, consumer rights

Relationships: family, boyfriend/girlfriend problems, bullying, abuse, personal safety, sexuality

Citizenship: equal opportunities, stereotypes, rights and responsibilities, the law, crime

Free time: volunteering, sport, leisure activities, entertainment

Housing: leaving home, leaving care, homelessness, renting or buying property

Transport: learning to drive, cycling, scooters and motorbikes, travel to school or work

Connexions Personal Advisers

Connexions Personal Advisers give information, advice, guidance and practical support to young people on all these topics.

A Personal Adviser is often the first point of contact your teenager will have with Connexions. All teenagers in school will see a Connexions Personal Adviser on a number of occasions to discuss their learning and career options between years 9 and 11; working with the school their Connexions Personal Adviser will also help your teenager decide what is the best route for them to follow during their school career and beyond.

Connexions Personal Advisers also recognise that you have a vital role to play in supporting your son or daughter in their teenage years and are happy to help with your queries too. You can contact your teenager's Personal Adviser at their school or college, or through your local Connexions Centre or One Stop Shop. For reasons of confidentiality their Personal Adviser may not be able to discuss with you the outcome of contacts they have with your son or daughter.

Connexions Personal Advisers come from a variety of backgrounds – they're not just experts in careers and education. They work with all young people, including those who have particular problems or additional needs. Sometimes young people find it difficult to set goals for themselves and some Personal Advisers specialise in working with teenagers who are not progressing in school or college, or who have personal problems.

Connexions also has excellent links with schools, colleges, universities, statutory agencies, employers, job agencies and the voluntary and community organisations that work with young people. If your son or daughter requires help from another agency, their Connexions Personal Adviser will put them in touch and maintain contact to ensure they are receiving all the support they need.

Connexions Direct

Your teenager could also access the services of Connexions Direct. This offers quick access to information and advice on a wide range of topics through a website and Connexions Direct advisers. They could speak to a Connexions Direct adviser online, or by phone, email or text message. Connexions Direct advisers are available to take calls from 8am to 2am, seven days a week. Your son or daughter can call them on **080 800 13 2 19**, text on **07766 4 13 2 19**, talk to an adviser online or by email from the website at www.connexions-direct.com

Helping young people in learning

Connexions Personal Advisers can support your teenager at various stages of their education, by:

- Providing information to help them identify what's available.
- Helping them focus on what they want to do and plan how to get there.

- Using software packages and other resources to research courses and career ideas.
- Discussing their GCSE options with them in year 9.
- Looking at what work experience opportunities are available in year 10 or 11.
- Exploring their post-16 and post-18 options.

Helping young job seekers

Connexions can help young people, aged 16 and over, to find work and training. Connexions Personal Advisers will help with choosing a job area which suits your son or daughter, with job hunting skills such as filling in application forms and practice interviews, and finding a suitable job or training programme.

Your son or daughter could also search for job vacancies on the Connexions website. The database of vacancies is frequently updated, so it's worth paying regular visits to the site. All vacancies listed are for young people aged 16–19.

Your teenager can also register with a new personalised area of the website called MyConnexions, where they can build and save their own CV, create a covering letter, search the database of full-time vacancies, and match vacancies to their interests.

To check out these services, just log on to **www.essexconnexions.co.uk** and choose 'Job Search' or 'MyConnexions' from the menu.

If you are an employer with opportunities for young people, you may wish to use the recruitment and selection service offered by Connexions. Contact our Vacancy Services Unit on 0800 652 6350 for more information. There is also a dedicated area for employers on **www.essexconnexions.co.uk**, where you can register to receive regular e-newsletters about the services we provide.

Does your son or daughter have a part-time job or are they thinking of getting one?

Do they belong to an amateur or professional theatre, dance group, or work in film or modelling?

If so, did you know that they must hold a valid **work permit** to be employed
And they may have to be licensed to take part in any entertainment work.

For further information and advice please contact the Child Employment Team on: tel **01245 436743/5** or email: **childemployment@essex.gov.uk**

Remember! Their Connexions Personal Adviser can help your son or daughter with all of the issues discussed in this booklet. Even if they do not know the answer to a particular question themselves, their network of contacts will enable them to put your teenager in touch with the right person at the right time.