

# MAKING CONNEXIONS



We are not alone in providing services for young people. **Mel Palmer** looks at how Explorer Scouting can work with other organisations in the community to give young people access to the resources they need

Some of you may have heard of Connexions. You may have seen advertisements on the television, at school or college, or even in a bus shelter. That will still leave some of you with no idea what I am writing about. Even if you have heard of Connexions, you may be wondering what it has to do with Explorer Scouts. If you are in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland, please bear with me and read on. I know you don't currently have Connexions, but I'll get into a little more detail about

how you can get connected with 'Government-steered youth strategies and networks' in your area later.

## WHAT IS CONNEXIONS?

Connexions is a universal service (in England) for young people aged 13–19. The service is organised into 47 Partnerships throughout the country.

Each Connexions Partnership is set up slightly differently and has its own business plan based on local needs.

Connexions has replaced and added to the former Careers Service, offering information, advice and guidance to all young people, but with particular targets to address the needs of young people not in education, employment or training. The Youth Service is a main provider for Connexions, and the Millennium Volunteers Scheme will be absorbed into the Connexions service in 2004.

Connexions has been phased in since April 2001, becoming fully national in England in April 2003. This means that some Connexions Partnerships may already have strong links in the community, whilst others are still developing those links.

The Connexions service is available to all 13–19 year-olds (and up to age 25 for young people with learning difficulties and disabilities, or care leavers). It provides integrated advice, guidance and access to personal development opportunities to help remove barriers to learning and progression, and ensure young people make a smooth transition to adulthood and working life. Connexions Personal Advisers provide advice on careers and lifestyle issues, as well as helping young people to tackle barriers such as homelessness and drugs. They refer young people to specialist support where needed.

Some of the funding provided for Connexions from central government is reserved to provide grants to voluntary and community organisations.

## WHY GET INVOLVED?

Clearly, if there is an organisation providing a one-stop advice shop for young people, we want them to know about us. If a young person walks in off the street and wants to know how they can get involved with outdoor activities, awards or community service, we want them to be given the contact details of someone from their local Explorer Scout District. Equally, we want to be involved with other organisations providing services for young people in order to share resources and expertise.

Of course, there's the fact that Connexions has funding to offer too – up to five per cent of their funding can go to the voluntary/community sector, with grants of up to £30,000 per organisation each year. If you can show that what you are providing fits in with their primary aims, you may be able to apply for funding for certain projects.

Connexions need to get something out of this relationship too. Scouting can share knowledge, experience and good practice. Connexions staff are proficient at giving advice, counselling and training – skills that can be complemented by our range of expertise.

## HOW DO WE GET INVOLVED?

This is slightly more difficult. Connexions doesn't have a central point of contact. Connexions boundaries don't always match up with our Counties – a Scout County might have to work with more than one Connexions Partnership, or two Counties might work together with one Partnership.

The best way forward is for one person in the County to be designated as the main contact with Connexions. Your contact may be someone already involved with youth agencies. It might be the Assistant County Commissioner for Explorer Scouts, or it might be someone on the County Executive. This is sensible because working with Connexions involves funding. Your Field Development Officer may have more details or may be able to act as a contact.

Your contact person will need to:

- Get in touch with the relevant person at the Connexions Partnership. There may be somebody there with a specific responsibility to link with voluntary and community organisations.

## THINGS TO DO IN NOVEMBER



### White water canoeing

The rivers will be up as soon as the rain comes down. Grab your wetsuits and water authorisations and get on a river. Don't forget some paddles!

### Bonfire night

A bonfire and barbecue night is an excellent fundraising event for the Explorer Scout Section. Be aware of safety at all times and set up your venue accordingly.

### Remembrance Day

It's not just about poppies. Visit your local war memorial. What is it all about? Reflect on the fact that many of those who died in the First World War were the same age as some Explorer Scouts. In some communities, huge numbers of young men never returned. Make links to conflicts happening around the world.

### Get a visitor

Ask somebody who has been abroad, completed their Queen's Scout Award or achieved their Explorer Belt to come and talk to you. It might inspire you.

### Get planning

The nights are drawing in. It's a good time to plan expeditions for next summer and to build up the range of skills the Unit will need.

### Plant a tree

Get involved in a local tree-planting scheme, or plant some trees around the place where you meet.

### Plan a pantomime

There have been a couple of articles in *Scouting Magazine* over the last few months about pantomimes and plays. Why not start planning your Christmas production now?

- Ask for the Connexions Partnership business plan. This will outline the areas of priority for that Partnership and will help you to find out whether you can work with them.
- Explain what Explorers is about. Connexions may already have this information, as a mailing is planned.
- Explain how working with Explorer Scouts might benefit Connexions.
- Find out what they can do for you. (Don't forget that any grant application will need to fit into the Connexions areas of priority.)

## HOW IT WORKS

The Scout Association already has links with 21 out of the 47 Connexions Partnerships, largely through the local council for Voluntary Youth Services.

- In Lincolnshire and Rutland Scouting is in receipt of matched funding from Connexions for a community action project.
- In Lancashire several grants have been provided for Scouts by Connexions, including a grant to provide Explorer Scouts and Network members with email accounts.
- In Cheshire and Warrington a grant from Connexions helped to train the Cheshire Scouts attending the 2003 World Scout Jamboree in Thailand.

## OUTSIDE ENGLAND

### Wales

In Wales, a new system is just being set up following consultation by the Welsh Assembly Government. The aim is to provide a cohesive service, providing 'learning pathways' for young people aged 14–19. This service would be structured into 14–19 Local Networks, based on local authorities and building upon existing partnerships providing services for young people.

Each Local Network must have three representatives from the voluntary sector. It is worth finding out which organisations are represented on yours and whether Scouting can get involved. As yet, as far as I know, the 14–19 Local Networks are not in a position to give any funding, as they are still in the process of consultation and building up relationships, but that is likely to change in the near future. Most Areas are already involved with the Council for





Wales of Voluntary Youth Services (CWVYS), who may be able to give further advice about this.

#### Scotland

In Scotland, there is no equivalent to the Connexions service. Youth provision falls under the remit of the education authorities in Scotland. You may be able to find information on how you can get involved with other youth provision from your education authority or from Youthlink Scotland, the Council for Voluntary Youth Services in Scotland.

#### Northern Ireland

In Northern Ireland there is also a Council for Voluntary Youth Services called Youth Net Northern Ireland. You can find more information about connecting with their services on their website. ■

## FURTHER INFORMATION

#### England

Three Factsheets have been produced about Scouts and Connexions.

- *The Development of Connexions*
- *The Connexions Service*
- *Best Practice Examples*

These will be available from [www.scoutbase.org.uk](http://www.scoutbase.org.uk) and the Scout Information Centre from the end of November. The Connexions website, ([www.connexions.gov.uk](http://www.connexions.gov.uk)) also provides information about the service.

#### Wales

CWVYS: 029 2085 5700

#### Scotland

[www.youthlink.co.uk](http://www.youthlink.co.uk)

#### Northern Ireland

[www.youthnetni.org.uk](http://www.youthnetni.org.uk)

## DEAR DIARY

Ed Fish, the District Explorer Scout Commissioner in Greater Haddock District, writes about his month.

### 5 November

Just got back from the District bonfire party. It was great to see so many of the Explorer Scouts there to help – any excuse to play with fire! Quite a few Scouts from around the District were there too, and I overheard a few of the older ones talking excitedly about all the activities the Explorer Scouts do. One was enthusing because she had recently got a birthday card telling her about the options in the District. A passing Explorer Scout overheard and told her that Explorer Scouting was great and she should join the Columbus Unit!

Evenings like this get me all 'fired' up about the Section (terrible pun I know!). The links between Sections are being built up and the Explorer Scouts are clearly enjoying coming into existence.

Now I only have to remind the Leaders that I need their spring Programmes soon (last week actually!), so that I can add in activities to plug any Programme Zone gaps and get them all out to the Explorer Scouts before Christmas. I'll send an email tomorrow.

### 17 November

Just re-read my last entry. This email business is going to get me into trouble. It's so easy and convenient that I keep forgetting to copy things onto snail-mail for those who haven't got the technology. Two of my Leaders rang me to find out when the next Leaders' meeting would be. I hadn't sent out a paper copy of my email setting it up for tomorrow. Luckily they forgave me, but I think I'll need to do some grovelling!

I mentioned it to the District Explorer Scout Administrator and he said that in future I should just send it to him and he'd make sure everyone had the information. He deserves sainthood – perhaps I'll get him a halo for Christmas...

The main item on the agenda for the Leaders' meeting is deciding on next year's summer camp. I think I may have an argument on my hands between two Units. Both Leaders feel that the place they have 'traditionally' been to camp with their Venture Scouts for the last umpteen years is the best place in the UK.

I might need to do some diplomatic suggesting that perhaps they should make a break from what they used to do with Venture Scouts and instead look to the exciting things we are doing with the new Section. I'll ask some of our newer Leaders if they have any suggestions.

I must remember to thank all the Leaders though – they've all got their Programmes to me and I only needed to send one reminder!

### 26 November

The end is nigh and I need a cup of coffee. Actually, scratch the coffee – I need a gin and tonic! I've just come home from the District Executive meeting. How have I been going along thinking how wonderful Explorer Scouts is when the Executive just doesn't get it at all?

Our Assistant County Commissioner (he's really quite helpful) went through two new Factsheets at our last County meeting of District Explorer Scout Commissioners – one on Explorer Scout finances and one on the role of the District Executive in supporting the Explorer Scout Section. He also sent a copy to every District Commissioner and District Chairman in the County.

I'm sorry to say I don't think my Executive read them. They have no idea what Explorer Scouts is about and are just after a quiet life. They don't want to be bothered with a Section. One member of the Executive was even asleep in the corner while I was trying to explain it all!

The District Commissioner, thank goodness, was positive as always, and suggested the idea of a sub-committee to deal with the detailed aspects of supporting the Section. The Treasurer, who I've already discussed the Section with several times, was also very positive. The sub-committee idea seemed to fit in with the quiet life principle, so it was agreed quickly as the Executive wanted to go home for a nap. I'm so jealous, the District next door seems to have a lovely supportive District Executive. Perhaps we can swap?

Still, I get cheered up tomorrow, the Explorer Scouts in the Enterprise Unit are practising for the pantomime they are putting on, and over the weekend I'm being the authorised person for some Explorers from Britannia Unit who are doing some expedition training. The more time I spend with the young people the better, they love Explorer Scouting! Now, where's that gin?



# PROGRAMMES ON A PLATE

THIS MONTH'S THEME IS COMMUNITY SERVICE, WRITTEN BY MELANIE PALMER

TIME	ACTIVITY	ZONE	METHOD	INSTRUCTIONS
Several evenings	Christmas decorations	Community service	Visits, Crafts, Cooking, Working with others	Get in touch with your local home help service and find out whether you can help local elderly people to enjoy Christmas by popping round with a few mince pies, putting up some Christmas decorations, having a chat and, of course, returning to take down the decorations afterwards.
Weekend afternoon	Prison teas	Community service	Visits, Working with others	The Explorer Scouts could get in touch with the local prison and offer to serve tea and coffee to visitors at visiting times.
Project	Primary development	Community service	Projects, Working with others	Many primary schools are trying to develop their grounds at the moment to provide a more stimulating environment for the children. Contact local schools to find out what they are doing and whether they need any help. Perhaps they need manpower for fence painting, creating a nature trail or garden, or some extra hands to help the children paint murals.
One evening	Fire! Fire!	Community service	Visits	Get in touch with your local fire service and ask if you can visit for an evening, learn about what they do and wash the fire engine for them. They might even let you use their hoses! This could be a good publicity opportunity.
Project	Cycle safer	Community service	Projects, Working with other Sections, Outdoor activities	Find out about the Cycling Proficiency Scheme and offer to help run a Cycling Proficiency Course for a local Cub Pack or Scout Troop.
Evening or day visit	Rescue services	Community service	Visits, Projects, Outdoor activities	Get in touch with a local rescue organisation such as the RNLI or Mountain Rescue for you could get in touch while you are visiting the coast or mountains on camp! Find out what they do and how water or mountain users can help themselves and prevent accidents.
One evening	Remembrance	Community service	Visitors, Visits, Working with external organisations	Topical for November: get in touch with your local Royal British Legion Branch. Find out more about Remembrance Day and discover how you can help raise funds by supporting the Poppy Appeal.
Day or project	Animal rescue	Community service	Projects, Working with others, Visits	Help at a local animal rescue centre.
Afternoon	Tree planting	Community service	Environment, Outdoors, Outdoor activities, Working together, Visits	Get in touch with your local woodland trust and get involved in a tree-planting scheme.
Project	Local help	Community service	Working with others, Helping others	Find out what events happen locally: festivals, fetes, ceilidhs, sports events, marathons, historical re-enactments, carnivals, cultural events and so on. Contact the organisers and offer to help. They may want water bearers, marshals, car parkers, litter pickers, or celebrities or dignitaries to be looked after or shown around.