

A guide for parents and carers of students in Year 11

Autumn 2009




The next step


Your teenager is now in their final year of compulsory education and has important decisions to make about their future. You have a key role in this, so what can you do to guide and support them and also update yourself on the pathways available?

- Attend parents' evenings, school and college open days/evenings, careers conventions and other events.
- Encourage them to use the Connexions library at school or the local Connexions Centre to find out more about jobs, training, further and higher education and other lifestyle issues that may affect their choices.

- Make sure they read **Let's talk about...It's your choice**, a local booklet which covers post-16 options in Oxfordshire. Copies are available via school or can be read/downloaded at


 www.connexionsoxfordshire.com/publications

They should also look at the national **It's your choice** booklet, again available from school or

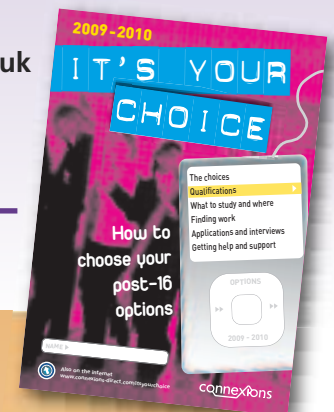
 www.connexions-direct.com/itsyourchoice

These publications will help you get a clearer picture of your teenager's options too.

Also see

 www.parentscentre.gov.uk

- Use Connexions to help you support them.



What is Connexions?

Connexions is a free advice and guidance service for all young people aged 13 to 19, or up to 25 if they have learning difficulties or disabilities. The service is available through trained Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs) who can help young people in a variety of ways including:

- giving impartial information, advice and guidance on career and learning routes
- identifying suitable college or university courses
- finding employment and training opportunities
- arranging job and training interviews
- helping with CVs, application forms and interview techniques
- advising on a wide range of personal issues from health and housing to money and relationships
- providing information on benefits and student finance
- liaising with other professionals on their behalf
- suggesting ways to make the most of their free time including volunteering

...and much more.

Contacting Connexions

If you would like to talk to your teenager's Connexions PA you can arrange to see them at the school, parents' evenings or the local Connexions Centre – see back page for details.

If you or your teenager are unable to visit the local Connexions Centre or need help straightaway, then contact **Connexions Direct**, the national helpline for young people.

Its advisers are available from 8.00am to 2.00am, seven days a week, to answer phone calls, texts or emails.

If you move away from Oxfordshire, details of other Connexions services can be found on the Connexions Direct website.

 **080 800 13 2 19**

 **07766 4 13 2 19**




 www.connexions-direct.com








The year ahead




September/October

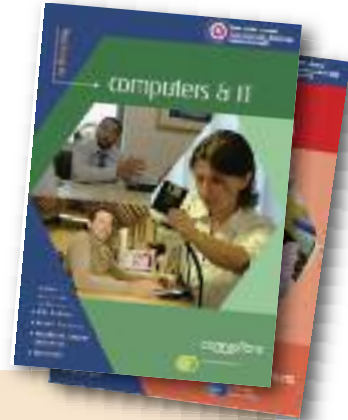
- During the year the Connexions PA will see your teenager in group sessions or individually to help them decide on the next step to take and also support and advise them on any personal issues that may be affecting their choices.
- For details of local post-16 courses, jobs and training opportunities encourage them to visit  www.oxfordshireprospectus.com and  www.connexionsoxfordshire.com
- Check they have the sixth form/college prospectuses and application forms they need. Some courses have early closing dates, so they must apply in good time. In some areas of Oxfordshire your teenager will have to apply for courses through a Common Application Process (CAP). Check this with their teachers or Connexions PA.
- Positive Activities are available for all 13-19 year olds, or up to 24 if they have special needs. These range from homework and special interest clubs to art, music, sport and volunteering. To get your teenager involved see  www.activitiesoxfordshire.info

November/December



- Mock GCSEs. If the results are different from what was expected or hoped for, then make sure your teenager has a back-up plan for beyond Year 11. The Connexions PA can help them think through the options and where these could lead.
- If your teenager is uncertain about what career might suit them, suggest they try using computer programs such as Kudos or Pathfinder which are available in school or at Connexions Centres. These match their ideas and interests to produce lists of job suggestions for them to investigate.
- Also encourage them to use the internet. Particularly useful sites are:
 -  www.connexionsoxfordshire.com click on eCLIPS and type in the school or home postcode (careers and lifestyle information)
 -  www.connexions-direct.com/jobs4u (careers information)
 -  www.oxfordshireprospectus.com (local courses)
 -  www.ucas.com (higher education)
 -  www.after16.org.uk (special needs)

 www.careercompanion.co.uk
Type in username **careers** and password **online** (links to the best career, learning and support websites).



- Useful books/booklets are:
 - Working in ...** (VT Lifeskills) a series covering a wide range of careers.
 - Decisions at 15/16+** and **Which A Levels?** (Lifetime Publishing)
 - Choosing Your A-Levels and Post-16 Options** (Trotman).All these are available at Connexions Centres and may be available in schools.



January/February

- Funding is available to help young people continue their education and/or training beyond 16. For more information go to  www.direct.gov.uk/moneytolearn or  **0800 121 8989** (Learner Support helpline) or contact the Connexions PA for advice.
- If there are still concerns about your teenager's plans, a visit to the local Connexions Centre may help. Our Centres are open throughout the year and have comprehensive libraries with up-to-date information, computer programs, free internet access and trained and friendly staff.

March/April

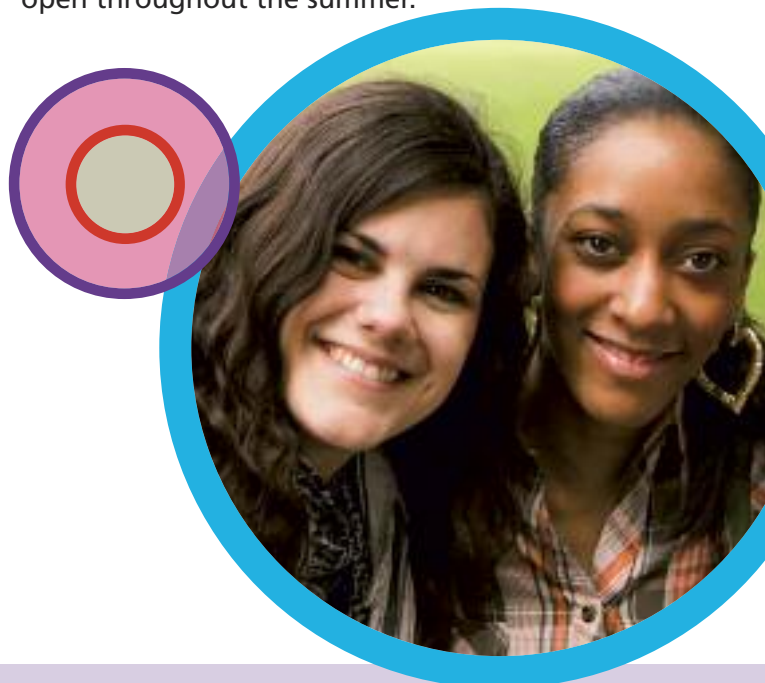
- Around this time employers and training providers begin notifying Connexions about job, training and Apprenticeship vacancies and recruitment begins in earnest. If your teenager is interested, they should look out for vacancies advertised on  www.connexionsoxfordshire.com, in newspapers and elsewhere, talk to their Connexions PA, and apply through the Connexions Centre or direct to employers or training providers as soon as possible.
- If your teenager goes into employment at 16 or 17 and doesn't already have five GCSEs at grades A* to C (or the equivalent level 2 qualifications) then they have the right to paid time off work for study or training, known as Time Off for Study or Training (TfST). See  www.direct.gov.uk/skillsforworkunder19

May/June

- Exams! Most schools provide advice and study tips and help their students put together a revision plan. Encourage your teenager to stick to it! Make sure they take regular breaks and have a quiet place to study.
- If your teenager is staying in full-time education or going to do unwaged, approved training, you can continue to receive Child Benefit until they finish the course/training which can be up to the age of 20. You should receive a letter about this from the Child Benefit Office prior to your teenager's 16th birthday. Make sure you complete and return the letter.
- If your teenager is looking for jobs, training or Apprenticeships, state this when you return the letter.
- **Friday 25 June 2010.** After this date your teenager can legally leave school and start work full time. Check they have received their National Insurance Number. If not, phone ☎ **0845 915 7006**.
- As soon as they've left school, make sure they go straightaway to the Connexions Centre to register for work and training. You can then apply to claim 'Child Benefit Extension' for up to 20 weeks but you must tell the Child Benefit Office if they get a job, start training or return to education.

July/August

- If your teenager is looking for work or training encourage them to visit the local Connexions Centre regularly. Here job, training and Apprenticeship vacancies are on display and our staff will arrange interviews with employers and training providers for them.
- GCSE results are due out **during the week beginning 23 August 2010**. If these mean your teenager needs to rethink their plans they should contact their Connexions PA at the local Connexions Centre for advice. Our Centres are open throughout the summer.



14-19 Diplomas

These are new programmes for 14-19 year olds that combine classroom learning and hands-on experience. Skills, knowledge and understanding are learnt in a work-like context to prepare your teenager for further study or employment. Diplomas are offered at Foundation, Higher and Advanced levels. GCSEs or A levels can be taken as part of the Diploma or alongside it.

For more information

☎ www.direct.gov.uk/diplomas

For details of Diplomas on offer locally

☎ www.oxfordshireprospectus.com

September Guarantee

Everyone coming to the end of Year 11 or 12 is promised the offer of a suitable place at school, college or with an employer or training provider by 30 September – this is the September Guarantee. Your teenager can find out what's available by going to

☎ www.oxfordshireprospectus.com and

☎ www.connexionsoxfordshire.com and should apply as soon as they find something that interests them.

EMA (Education Maintenance Allowance)

This is £10, £20 or £30 a week paid for up to three years during term time to young people continuing their education or doing unwaged training beyond 16. They can also earn bonuses of up to £200 a year for good attendance and progress. EMAs don't affect other income or benefits they or their families receive.

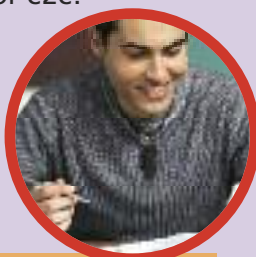
To qualify, they must

- live in a household where the income is £30,810 or less
- be doing at least 12 hours a week guided learning at school, college or on a Pre or Programme Led Apprenticeship or e2e.

For more information

☎ 0800 121 8989 or

📄 www.direct.gov.uk/ema



Your local Connexions Centres

Abingdon, 62 Stert Street

Open: M–F 9am – 5pm

☎ 0845 6029279 or ☎ 01865 328400

Banbury, 2 Broughton Road

Open: M–F 9am – 5pm

☎ 0845 6029288 or ☎ 01865 328440

Bicester, Minton Place, Victoria Road

Open: M, W, F 10am – 1pm; Tu, Th 1pm – 4pm

☎ 0845 6029298 or ☎ 01865 328470

Didcot, 197 The Broadway

Open: M–Th 9am – 5pm

☎ 0845 6029299 or ☎ 01865 328480

Oxford, 104 Gloucester Green

Open: M–F 9am – 5pm

☎ 0845 6029315 or ☎ 01865 328490

Witney, 6 Church Green

Open: M, W, Th 1pm – 4pm; F 9am – 12.30pm

Other times by appointment

☎ 0845 6029284 or ☎ 01865 328730

See 📄 www.connexionsoxfordshire.com for full details about how to contact us. If you cannot get to one of our Centres, get in touch and we'll arrange to see you and your teenager somewhere more convenient.

Apprenticeships

- **Pre-Apprenticeships and e2e (Entry to Employment)** are for young people who need extra support before starting an Apprenticeship or further education course.
- **Programme Led Apprenticeships** are a route into an Apprenticeship/Advanced Apprenticeship for those not yet employed. They attend a college, training centre or work placement and do the technical certificate and key skills parts of an Apprenticeship. This should help them find an employer and transfer to a full Apprenticeship. Those on Pre and Programme Led Apprenticeships and e2e can apply for EMA and their parents/carers may be eligible for Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit.
- **Employer Led Apprenticeships** lead to NVQs at level 2, key skills and technical certificates. Entry requirements vary from none to some GCSEs at grade C or above.
- **Employer Led Advanced Apprenticeships** lead to NVQs at level 3, key skills and technical certificates. Minimum entry requirements are normally four GCSEs at grade C or above, an NVQ 2 or equivalent. Those on Employer Led Apprenticeships and Advanced Apprenticeships are employed and paid a wage of at least £95 a week.

To find out more

☎ 0800 015 0600 or

📄 www.apprenticeships.org.uk. This links to the Online Apprenticeship Vacancies where your teenager can see what's available and apply for any Apprenticeships that interests them.

For local Apprenticeships also see

📄 www.connexionsoxfordshire.com

Our commitment to you

Connexions Oxfordshire wants to make sure that Connexions meets your teenager's needs.

If you would like to make a comment, compliment or complaint, please write to Richard Savage, Service Manager – Supporting Choices, Integrated Youth Support Service, Oxfordshire County Council, County Hall, New Road, Oxford OX1 1ND

☎ 01865 815144 Fax 01865 810656

📄 richard.savage@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Connexions recognises diversity and is committed to equal opportunities. August 2009.