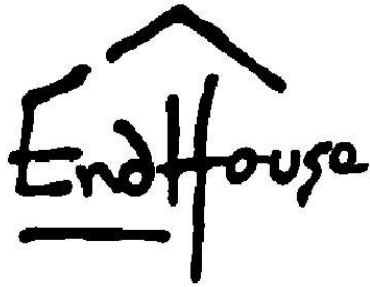




investing in children



The Investing In Children & End House

CONNEXIONS RESEARCH REPORT

by

Kimberley Abbott

Helen Cottle

Simon Lucas

Angie McCormick

Lianne Oliver

Anne Pearson

Martyn Richardson
Amber Wilson
Katherine Yates

BACKGROUND

In November 2000 we attended a meeting to discuss the new Connexions Service. We were asked if we would like to take part in a piece of research surrounding this new service and the role of personal advisors for young people.

We decided that it would be a good idea that our two groups - Investing in Children and End House should join together and produce a joint piece of research to ensure that all areas of County Durham were covered.

Our idea was to look at where young people go for advice and to find out why young people make the choices that they do over who they talk to. Our aim was to build a picture of the sort of person/persons young people turned to for help and advice and compare this to proposals made by Connexions for personal advisors.

We decided that we would not actually talk to young people about Connexions as very few young people had heard of it, so instead we concentrated on who young people presently go to.

We thought that the research would take approximately 3 months and that after that we would report our findings back to the Connexions group.

THE AREAS WE COVERED

The group (End House and Investing in Children) decided that we would all take different areas to carry out our research so that all areas of the County were covered.

End House Youth Forum agreed to cover Durham City and the surrounding areas i.e. Framwellgate Moor, Gilesgate. We would do this by talking to young people who visited End House - the Drop-In, the Sexual Health Clinic and the

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Gay Young Men's Group. We would also talk to young people from Durham
New College and Durham 6th Form College. Also because we realised that not

young people in Durham market place. We also went out with detached youth workers from Durham City Centre Youth Project and talked to young people who they work with.

Investing In Children Group covered Pelton, Stanley, Ouston, Beamish and Chester-le-Street (work was carried out by young people from the 3Ps Project in Pelton), Willington, Crook, Newton Aycliffe, Tow Law Children's Home (work carried out by young people from Crook) The Crook group also had discussions with young people from the Youth Offending Service.

WHAT WE DID

- Questionnaires
- Interviews with young people
- Group Discussions

Most of the young people we talked to were 14-18 years old

We designed a basic questionnaire asking young people who they went to for help and advice and why. We also thought that the research could ask young people what services they thought they would like to see. We hoped that the questionnaire would lead to discussion with the young people we were interviewing. As well as asking questions about age and area the questions that we asked were:

- Who or where do you go for help, advice and information?
- Why do you go to this person or place?
- What qualities do you look for in a person that you would go to for help and advice?
- What other places would you go to for help and advice?
- Do you feel that improvements could be made to services to make you more likely to use them?

- Do you feel that a new service could be developed where you would go for help and advice?

THE FINDINGS

The End House Group interviewed a total of 68 young people, 48 of which were female, 20 male with ages ranging from 13 to 24 years of age (predominately 16 - 18 years). We carried out our research in the places and projects mentioned above; however the young people we interviewed came from a wide range of areas including Durham, Sunderland and Darlington. The majority however were from Durham City and the Sherburn Village & Keble areas.

When we asked young people who/where they go for help and advice the majority of young people said friends, family or End House. The main reasons given for this being that they know and trust these people/places. Trust was also important when we asked young people what qualities they looked for in these people/places with most saying that these people/places were friendly, respectful and that they trusted them.

We then asked young people what other places they thought they could go to, again friends and End House scored high but young people also said that they could go to their GP or family planning clinic. However in discussion many young people said that they do not feel comfortable going to Doctors because of attitude and fear that they may tell their parents. Many young people discussed the importance in knowing that confidentiality will be kept if they talk to them.

Our next question asked young people if improvements could be made to services to make them more likely to use them. The majority of young people said no. Of those who said yes, some weren't sure how improvements could be made and others made general comments referring to being treated with more respect and that services should have better publicity, some young people commented that they aren't always aware of what services are available and what they offer. Some young people made specific comments relating to certain services for example more publicity for End House and more privacy in Doctors.

Finally we asked young people if they thought a new service could be developed where they could go to for help and advice. Many young people said yes although again they weren't sure of what it would be. Other ideas included more centres like End House and somewhere run by teens.

Investing In Children Group worked in the areas already mentioned and also held discussion groups in Willington, Crook and Newton Aycliffe Youth Clubs. We used the same questionnaire (120) plus interviews with young people. Most of the young people we spoke to were aged 14-18.

With some young people we had to explain what we mean by the word advice. One young person said *'advice is something you get whether you want it or not.'* So, we were clear we wanted to find out where people went by **choice** instead of where they were told to go so we often used the word 'information'

Almost everyone we talked to said they would turn to someone they trusted and friends and family scored highly. Confidentiality was the second most important reason for the choices people made.

Many talked about other services as well but all seemed to value talking to friends and family first. The most popular reasons young people gave for seeking information were – health, stress, relationships, contraception, financial advice, alcohol problems, drug problems. The most popular sources of information (after family & friends) were Health Clinics and GP's followed by magazines, books and the Internet. Very few young people would consider asking their teacher for advice other than things to do with school. The young people we talked to in Children's homes mentioned Social Workers as a good source of information as well as Care In Durham.

We also asked if there was a need to improve these services or to develop a new service. A lot of young people said they wanted services to be more local so they don't have to travel, but it has to be private so no one knows you are going there. Young people also talked about being treated with respect and having their privacy respected. The lack of privacy and respect were the reasons some young people preferred the Internet and magazines. A lot of people who filled in the questionnaire thought there was a need for new services but didn't say what they should be.

Because of this we talked a lot in groups to find out more. The main point was that young people wanted to have a say in and they did not like being told where to go and who to talk to. The Willington Group talked about the new Youth Call Centre as an example of a service set-up **by** young people **for** young people.

CONCLUSIONS

After completing the questionnaire and discussions with young people we found that the two pieces of research were very similar. They showed that most young people do want to have someone or somewhere to go to for help and advice. At the moment most young people from our research seem to talk to friends and family. Many also go to End House but this is also probably because some of our research was conducted there. The qualities which seem to be most important to young people in who they choose to talk to were definitely trust, understanding and someone who is friendly and approachable, young people did not want to be patronised or told where they could and couldn't go.

Many young people talked about having other young people to talk to about their problems, however they still wanted this to be confidential

Overall, we feel that choice is the most important issue. Young people make choices about the reasons they seek advice and the people they go to. Young people are not all the same and what is right for one young person may not be right for another.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- ◆ Connexions should develop a network of centres where young people can Drop In for advice, help etc.
- ◆ The services which Connexions will provide should be available from a network of people who young people already trust. The Connexions advisors should be prepared to work through other people and agencies – this will protect young people's right to make their own choices.
- ◆ The End House and Investing In Children Research Team should be used to evaluate the effectiveness of the Connexions service as it develops.

