

Press release – 30 July 2008

Fancy a cuppa? In need of nappies? Or, without a pair of pyjamas? Connexions staff give generously to local charities

An eclectic mix of mugs, nappies and pyjamas has been donated to local disadvantaged young people and adults by staff from Connexions Derbyshire Limited – the information, advice and guidance organisation. The charity donation forms a key part of its annual 'Company Day' when over 300 staff from across Derbyshire – including staff from Glossop Connexions Centre, High Street West – get together to share best practices and achievements.

Over two hundred mugs were donated to Derby-based charity the Padley Group, who work with homeless and socially excluded young people and adults through their day centre and hostel on Becket Street.

Gill from Padley said, "Many people might take something like a mug for granted, but to our residents who don't have a lot of possessions, being able to make a warm drink or have a hot nutritious meal is the start of encouraging them to have a sense of independence. Without the help from organisations like Connexions, we would not be able to support and help the homeless and disadvantaged as successfully as we do."

Nappies, baby toiletries, clothes and toys were donated to teenage parent groups across Derbyshire. The items were handed out by Connexions Personal Advisers, who work closely with partner organisations to support young parents with their future career plans, and offer practical advice on any personal problems they may be facing.

And over £205 was raised to buy pyjamas and night wear for Glossop Women's Aid – who provide free confidential advice and support to women and children who are experiencing the effects of domestic abuse.

Ishbel Cooke, service manager at Glossop Women’s Aid explains, “Often families arrive at our refuge in the middle of the night without any belongings, as they have had to leave their home quickly in-order to keep safe. The donations from Connexions will allow us to offer them new nightwear on arrival and make an enormous difference in helping to build their self-esteem.”

Hugh Hastie, chief executive of Connexions Derbyshire Limited said, “As an organisation, we’re all about making a difference to people’s lives – whether it be advising young people with their career choices or personal problems through Connexions, to helping adults get into work, training or learning through our nextstep service. We hope the generous donations made by our staff really will help make a difference!”

Ends.

Notes to editors

- Connexions is the information, advice and guidance service for all 13- to 19-year-olds and older for those with learning difficulties or disabilities. It’s known locally as Connexions Derbyshire. Its overall aim is to help all young people take part in some form of learning and fulfil their potential, whatever they choose to do and regardless of their abilities and background.
- The service is confidential and any information gathered about young people is protected by the Data Protection Act 1998.
- Connexions Personal Advisers (PAs) are a key feature of Connexions. They help young people with a range of issues that affect them. While they specialise in careers guidance, education and training plans, they also work closely with other youth support organisations to help with more personal issues that may be preventing a young person from moving forward – bullying, health, relationship, housing, money or drugs and alcohol problems for example. This might involve a PA giving a young person information only, or perhaps more in-depth support over a period of time.
- Connexions Personal Advisers also help parents and carers in supporting their teenagers – from providing up-to-date information to help with decisions about their future, to linking them with other organisations that can help with more personal matters.
- All the county’s schools and colleges have at least one personal adviser that works closely with students and staff.
- Connexions services are delivered from 9 Connexions centres throughout Derbyshire. These centres offer a wide range of information resources, local job vacancy, course and training opportunity details and free access to the internet. In addition, some Connexions services are available from a number of other community outlets.
- Not only are young people helped by Connexions, they are also heavily involved in how it is run and the help it offers. Young people are asked for their feedback through focus groups, questionnaires etc and they sit on selection panels for new staff. Views from all young people are always welcome.
- Connexions Derbyshire also has strong links with local employers. It provides employers with a range of **free** services that have the ultimate aim of connecting them to their future workforce. This might be through work experience and other education-business opportunities co-ordinated by the Derbyshire Education Business Partnership (DEBP), through to helping unravel some of the ‘red tape,’ clarifying any new legislation involved in employing young people.

Connexions Derbyshire's free vacancy listing service, Purple Pages, is unique in its listing jobs **exclusively** for 16- to 19-year-olds, and the Connexions Derbyshire website's daily-updated Purple Pages regularly receives over 10,000 hits per week.

The advantage of linking local employers to local young people is two-fold – Firstly, for young people it helps towards the 'achieving economic well-being' outcome of the forthcoming 'Every Child Matters' Children's Trust arrangements, (see www.everychildmatters.gov.uk/aims/) and secondly, for employers it helps address the well-publicised sector skills shortages.

- Connexions Derbyshire has a free information helpline - **0800 269 468**, which provides information on careers, courses, training and so on and details of Connexions centres and services. It's open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm.
- Also available as part of the national Connexions service, is Connexions Direct – an information and advice helpline operated by Connexions Personal Advisers – open from 8am to 2am every day. Young people can phone 080 800 13 2 19, webchat www.connexions-direct.com e-mail through www.connexions-direct.com or text 07766 4 13 2 19.

Websites:

www.connexions-derbyshire.org (the local service, Connexions Derbyshire)
www.connexions-gov.uk (the national service and links to Connexions Direct)
www.debp.co.uk