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INTRODUCTION

Mentoring is a natural part of child development; most young people will identify one or more adults that provide them with support and guidance outside the family context. Young women are more likely to identify mentoring as significant in their lives than young men [ref. 1].

Mentoring projects within the youth justice system need clear aims and objectives related to an identified need, governed by a set of protocols and procedures covering all aspects of the programme which paid project staff understand and subscribe/sign up to (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

THE LEGAL CONTEXT

The Crime and Disorder Act 1998 establishes that 'preventing offending by children and young persons' will be the overarching aim of the youth justice system. Mentoring within the youth justice system therefore must work within this remit. The revised disposal and sentencing options introduced by the Act incorporate a number in which mentoring may play a part. However, participation on a mentoring scheme is voluntary and not part of a young person's order. These include the Final Warning, the Action Plan Order, the Supervision Order, and the Detention and Training Order (DTO).

The overall responsibility for the provision of mentoring programmes for young offenders, though they may be run by agencies outside of the formal youth justice system, lie with the local youth offending team (Yot). As part of a DTO, mentoring of a youth offender may begin within a custodial setting and, in principle, be continued after release during the period of supervision in the community.

PRINCIPLES OF MENTORING

The following are the principles of mentoring.

- ❖ Mentoring is a natural part of child development; most young people will identify one or more adults that provide them with support and guidance outside the family context [ref. 1].
- ❖ The main purpose of mentoring is to benefit the young person. This can only happen if their agenda is at the heart of the relationship.
- ❖ The relationship between the mentor and the young person should be supportive, yet challenging.
- ❖ Mentoring practices should be anti-discriminatory and should recognise diversity and treat all young people fairly.
- ❖ All that occurs within the mentoring relationship is confidential within the project - though subject to child protection guidelines.
- ❖ There should be scope for a mentor to report issues to a project co-ordinator within supervision.
- ❖ The involvement of parents/carers is an important component of effective practice.
- ❖ The mentoring relationship in a youth justice context should be structured, supervised and monitored.

GUIDANCE FOR PRACTITIONERS

Successful mentoring relationships are associated with:

- ❖ active listening;
- ❖ on-going training for mentors;
- ❖ establishment and maintenance of a ‘youth driven’ agenda;
- ❖ time to develop trusting relationships and reciprocity;
- ❖ constructive attempts by the mentor to affect the behaviour of the young person [refs. 2, 4, 5, 8, 9, 12].

A mentor’s role is to provide support, guidance and coaching to a young person [refs. 2, 4, 5, 8]. Where interaction is ‘youth driven’, it is more likely to be successful [ref. 10]. However, there is some evidence that mentoring may be most effective where there is some attempt not simply to establish a positive relationship between the mentor and the young person, but where the mentor seeks to reinforce positive patterns of behaviour by the young person through praise and/or reward [refs. 3, 12].

Retention of young people in mentoring programmes is maximised where there is a goal-focused relationship [refs. 2, 4]. The framework and structure of this will depend on the young person’s age, maturity, risk or level of offending behaviour and developmental and cultural needs and issues particular to the locale. These should be established early on in the relationship and reviewed and adapted regularly.

LEARNING STYLES AND NEEDS

Young people’s learning needs can be addressed in both group and one-to-one settings. In determining the speed of learning, young people should be central. All such activities should be evaluated by the young people to ensure that their needs are and continue to be met.

Traditional ‘classroom’ environments and approaches will not always be successful with this client group and alternatives should be explored and offered. Programmes can consider small group, one-to-one and practical hands-on learning.

Programme structure and content need to be flexible and staff need to be able to adapt to the learning priorities of young people whilst at the same time maintaining the overall consistency of the programme. Programme materials should be accessible to participants and reflect their background and experiences. Literature aimed at the client group should take into account culture, age, literacy level and gender.

Action planning and goal setting with young people involved in mentoring (forms used, approach employed and the review process and paperwork) should also take into account the culture, age, literacy level and gender of the target group. Parental or guardian consent forms should be devised to take account of any language and literacy level issues (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

Projects should provide a range of activities both group and one-to-one, formal and informal, flexible and youth-led, but sensitive to the age, culture, literacy level and gender of the target group. Wherever possible, these activities should be youth driven (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

Projects should have resources on appropriate educational opportunities sensitive to age, culture, literacy level and gender of the target group. To develop and maintain an achievement culture, projects should provide certificates of attendance for young people on the project. Projects can provide access to national non-traditional qualifications, either provided in-house or through other agencies, i.e. Youth Achievement Awards (see www.londonyouth.org.uk).

ASSESSMENT AND REFERRAL

Clear criteria of who and how a young person is referred must be established before referrals commence. The project and referral agencies should be involved in devising, agreeing and signing up to this. Acceptable and unacceptable offences and behaviour for referral must be understood and agreed by the project and the referral agencies (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

The criteria for acceptance onto the project must be clearly stated in written form and presented verbally to all referral agencies in order to ensure appropriate referrals. This must relate directly to the aims and objectives of the project and therefore be agreed by all partner agencies involved in the setting up of the project.

The interviewing and induction process for young people must be flexible to respond to the age, gender, culture, literacy levels and likelihood and severity of Attention-Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder, but standardised enough to ensure equality of opportunity/monitoring of up-take within these groups.

To determine acceptance and measure progress, the assessment procedure adopted by the project must be clear, simple and appropriate to its target group. It should also be understood and accepted by all referral agencies. The assessment procedure must be flexible enough to cover the wide range of needs a young person may present at initial meetings. The purpose of assessment should be clear and the means of assessment appropriate to that purpose, e.g. face to face meetings with the young person, their parents/carers, the referral agency, schools.

Standardised baseline assessment tools for each young person referred must be in place to measure any change in relation to those objectives/targets/benchmarks that projects aim to tackle/deliver on. Ideally, assessment should be viewed as an on-going process. It can be linked to initial goal setting/action planning and the project's review process.

A personal information exchange/confidentiality protocol should be agreed with all referral agencies. The nature of the protocol will be guided by project information needs [ref. 13] (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

There should be parental involvement at the initial stages either through a home visit or appointment at the project to ensure they are clear and happy about the aims, objectives and limitations of the project. Written parent/carer consent using a proforma must be

obtained before a young person can start a one-to-one mentoring relationship (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

MATCHING

In matching mentors and young people, procedures should be developed that take into account young people's preferences, that of their families, and the volunteer mentors. However, any stated preferences must be probed by the project to ensure that the reasons given are valid [refs, 13,14].

Matching along cultural or gender lines is sometimes not possible, nor in every case is it necessarily desirable. However, it is essential that the cultural and other needs of the young person are recognized, respected and that an attempt should be made to meet them. The mentor must understand the young person's cultural and community background [refs.6, 7].

The process of matching mentors and mentees must be clearly managed. The criteria for matching should be explicit and should be applied consistently [refs. 6, 7]. There are a number of techniques for matching. Which is used will be dependant on the financial and staffing situation of a project, as well as the overarching organisational preferences and capacity of project staff.

RECRUITMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF VOLUNTEERS

A realistic recruitment strategy must be designed drawing on the local knowledge, expertise and resources available through the strategic partnership, Yot workers and their parent agencies, and framed within the aims and objectives of the project. The strategy needs to include:

- ❖ who the project is targeting;
- ❖ how it aims to attract volunteers;
- ❖ contingency plans if this does not work;
- ❖ realistic timescales for advertising;
- ❖ publicity - where to advertise;
- ❖ clear deliniation of tasks;
- ❖ setting maximum response times;
- ❖ follow-up procedures (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

An adequate budget to cover the appropriate publicity and advertising is essential. Local resources and knowledge can be central in informing the projects recruitment strategies. The steering committee and project staff networks should ensure the recruitment strategy is appropriate to the community.

Pro-active participation by the steering committee in the recruitment process, i.e. raising the profile of the project within their parent organisations and communities can lead to an increase in the sense of ownership and the number of local volunteers. A positive relationship between the project and the Yot can help in recruiting volunteers due to its multi-agency set up [ref. 13].

There should be clear recruitment procedures supported by a policy document outlining appropriate timescales and transparent mechanisms for monitoring the strategy. There

must be a clear assessment, screening and selection process with a complaints and appeals procedure in place (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com). When recruiting mentors projects should look for a range of skills and characteristics, i.e. reliability, empathy and an ability to understand a young persons perspective, open-mindedness, communication and motivation skills and the ability to build relationships [refs. 12, 14].

Projects should aim to recruit mentors with a wide range of backgrounds unless there are specific project-based reasons, e.g. peer mentoring project. There should be standard documentation for applications which will include:

- ❖ closing dates for applications;
- ❖ introduction meeting and training dates;
- ❖ an application form;
- ❖ information on the project;
- ❖ monitoring form.

Screening of volunteers must involve at least two references, preferably in writing using a standard letter or reference form asking the referee to assess the applicant's suitability against a set criteria (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com). Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks must be carried out for all mentors and the results received before mentors can have any one-to-one, unsupervised contact with young people on the project. Sexual offences and offences against children bar individuals from becoming mentors. Decisions in relation to other offences and time elapsed must be made by individual projects in consultation with partner agencies. Additional screening mechanisms, including written references, interviews and induction training, reduce the risk of inappropriate people becoming mentors.

Effective management of volunteers depends on there being a clear role description and expectations for mentors combined with what they can expect of the project. This can take the form of a guidelines document or agreement (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com). On-going support for mentors, both structured and informal in nature, is essential to ensure that the quality of the programme is maintained. Systematic monitoring and supervision of mentors can aid retention and increase their sense of ownership in the project. Models of support vary and the intensity and type of support offered will depend on staffing and budgetary constraints. Weekly/fortnightly phone calls, bi-monthly/quarterly one-to-one meetings, monthly group meetings, mentor-buddy schemes are all examples of common practice in mentoring projects [ref. 13].

CONTACT

High levels of contact between a mentor and young person are associated with success [ref. 12]. Regular meetings are important with a target of up to three to four meetings per month being ideal. The number of meetings for mentoring relationships established within the secure estate will vary depending on the mentors' availability and the location of the secure unit. Though, in general, empirical evidence is in short supply, the most carefully conducted experiment has shown that after spending approximately 12 hours monthly with volunteer mentors, onset of drug use was significantly lower than in a non-mentored control group [ref. 12]. The mentored group also had:

- ❖ 27% less onset of alcohol use;

- ❖ 32% less frequency of hitting someone;
- ❖ slightly improved educational attainment;
- ❖ significantly reduced rates of truancy;
- ❖ measurable reported improvement in family relationships;
- ❖ slightly improved friendships with peers.

Where a mentoring relationship has been established in a custodial setting, there must be liaison between secure estate and Yot staff and other external agencies in order to plan the mentoring relationship post release.

GUIDANCE FOR MANAGERS

This section refers to the managing organisation that is directly responsible for the mentoring project, i.e. the Yot or a voluntary organisation responsible for the recruitment of all paid staff in the project.

STAFF SELECTION, TRAINING AND SUPERVISION

The managing organisation is responsible for:

- ❖ ensuring that clear protocols and procedures are devised, implemented and understood by all staff;
- ❖ ensuring adequate funding for recruitment of appropriate paid staff and volunteer mentors - additional resources will be needed if the project is aiming to target specific groups, i.e. BME groups, travellers;
- ❖ putting in place a written recruitment strategy that is realistic and reflects equality of opportunity recruitment
- ❖ ensuring a funding strategy is in place;
- ❖ ensuring that there is an adequate budget for the expenses of mentors and young people in order to aid the retention of young people and mentors on the project and allow for appropriate one-to-one and group diversionary activities;
- ❖ ensuring sufficient money is allocated for extra structured group activities such as numeracy and literacy;
- ❖ ensuring paid project staff receive regular, structured line management and case management in order to ensure accountability;
- ❖ ensuring that appropriate monitoring and evaluation procedures are in place and are implemented.

Yot managers are responsible for:

- ❖ ensuring all Yot staff understand the referral criteria and actively refer appropriate young people;
- ❖ raising the profile of the project at the highest level within its parent agencies.

Mentoring project staff seconded to work within a Yot must have clear roles and responsibilities agreed by both sides. This will help ensure that project staff are not diverted from the core task of running the mentoring programme. Additionally, if there is more than one member of staff employed on the project, there must be clear role definition and management structures within the project.

Staffing levels within projects will vary. Wherever possible, they should reflect the numbers of young people and mentors the project intends to work with and the level of support the project is intending to offer to both mentors and young people, formally and informally, i.e. group work. All projects will need a project manager/co-ordinator as a minimum. The qualities and skills needed within individual projects will vary, however, a baseline of the skills, qualities and experience needed should be established (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

All paid staff require management and case work supervision on a regular (i.e. monthly) basis. This should ideally be done by someone who has the experience and knowledge to do both competently. However, if this is not possible, then the task can be split with management supervision being done by the line manager of the project, either within the responsible organisation or the Yot and casework supervision being sought from an appropriately qualified person.

The project should have an adequate training budget easily accessible to all project staff. All project staff should receive specific training covering:

- ❖ the make-up of Yots;
- ❖ court orders and commonly associated offences with specific orders;
- ❖ make-up/profile of young offenders in the Yot/project catchment area;
- ❖ 'typical' young offender offences in the Yot/project catchment areas.

TRAINING FOR MENTORS

Initial and on-going structured, participatory training is essential to impart the skills, knowledge and values needed to work with this client group. On-going training topics need to be a partnership of mentors and project staff suggestions led by the issues presented by young people (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com) [ref. 15].

Accredited training programmes are not an essential, however, the provision of one may encourage people to become volunteers with the project (see www.nmn.org.uk). If the project does not run an accredited training programme for mentors, then it must ensure the course it delivers has clear objectives and learning outcomes related to the skills and competencies needed to be a mentor. Training should focus on a mentors role, communication skills, motivation skills, ideas about relationship building, interaction with young people, boundaries, child protection issues, goal setting, values and diversity awareness.

MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Monitoring is essential to the successful running of any mentoring programme. It encourages:

- ❖ reflection on the nature of the service being delivered;
- ❖ improvements to the delivery of services;
- ❖ the provision of data for participants and, especially in the case of evaluation, support for future funding bids;
- ❖ the setting up of effective monitoring systems at the beginning of the project, incorporating all baseline data and any other data required (for example by funders), which is essential in ensuring an open and transparent project - clear communication between the project and its funders about this is imperative.

Monitoring, in every case, and evaluation, wherever possible, are important elements of a good scheme. They are major processes or tools which may be used to assess progress, performance and impact. For them to be effective, however, the programme must have clear targets which contribute to the delivery of its overall aims. These should be set within timescales and, wherever possible, linked to resources.

Administrative information should be collected and placed on record throughout the programme. This includes the:

- ❖ name, age, address and ethnicity of the young person;
- ❖ referral agency;
- ❖ date and reason for referral;
- ❖ mentor's name and address;
- ❖ access route into project;
- ❖ references/CRB check.

Baseline information against which progress can be assessed (programme data) will include the:

- ❖ numbers of young people recruited;
- ❖ numbers of mentors trained;
- ❖ numbers of young people/mentors matched;
- ❖ frequency and length of meetings;
- ❖ names of young people/mentors matched;
- ❖ numbers of young people/mentors awaiting a place.

Personal data to be collected include the:

- ❖ young person's involvement in offending prior to joining the programme;
- ❖ young person's current educational status and information about educational achievements, e.g. Level 3 SATs – GCSEs;
- ❖ young person's current employment/training status;
- ❖ mentor's previous experience and qualifications.

Monitoring of the impact of the programmes activities (output measures) will include the:

- ❖ numbers of young people/mentors attending sessions;
- ❖ numbers of mentors trained;
- ❖ numbers of sessions attended;
- ❖ numbers of young people becoming involved in other positive activities, e.g. training and employment;
- ❖ numbers of mentors accessing accredited training while involved in the programme.

Monitoring of the impact of the programme activities (outcome measures) will include the:

- ❖ reduction in offending by young people involved in the programme;
- ❖ qualifications gained or improvements made, e.g. movement from Level 4-5 in SATs results or GCSEs attained;
- ❖ qualifications gained by mentors – NVQs Levels 3 or 4;
- ❖ young people or mentors accessing full-time training;
- ❖ young people or mentors gaining employment.

Mentors should be required to keep a brief log or diary of their meetings with the young people. Minimum information should include dates, times and location of meetings as well as a general description of what was discussed, staff notes, attendance and contact sheets.

In addition to completing project monitoring forms (proformas), a record should be kept of day to day contact with young people and mentors. A contact sheet may be drawn up. Staff should be encouraged to complete these forms on an 'as you go' basis – daily, if possible. Project monitoring forms will record information about progress and achievements in relation to offending behaviour, educational and training achievements. They will also be used to provide a measure of qualitative evidence about client satisfaction, quality of relationships and other feeling/perception-based information.

Evaluation of mentoring programmes will tend to focus on some or all of the following:

- ❖ processes – how is the programme operating in practice;
- ❖ outputs – how many clients does the programme have, how often are they seen etc.;
- ❖ outcomes – does the programme have any impact on attitudes and behaviour;
- ❖ costs – what does the service cost and how do these costs relate to outcomes (cost-benefit).

Evaluation is often expensive, is usually reliant on a trained researcher/evaluator external to the programme and needs to be conducted over an extended time period. It is, therefore, not always appropriate. Careful thought should be given before embarking on evaluation. Nonetheless, each programme should make the best possible effort to evaluate the impact of its processes and interventions. Mentoring schemes will use both qualitative and quantitative methods to assess both processes and impact and should involve an external evaluator. If independent evaluation is anticipated, adequate resources in relationship to staff time must be budgeted for in order to provide effective support to such an evaluation. Understanding and ownership of the evaluation from the beginning is vital for project staff, in order for them to work with the process.

GUIDANCE FOR STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP

There should be a wide range of representation on the strategic partnership reflecting both the statutory and voluntary input into the project. Suggested members of this group are:

- ❖ Yot manager;
- ❖ Yot practitioner;
- ❖ mentoring project co-ordinator/manager;
- ❖ mentor;
- ❖ young person;
- ❖ funders;
- ❖ police;
- ❖ court official;
- ❖ education welfare service;
- ❖ youth service;
- ❖ social services
- ❖ community safety team;
- ❖ Connexions
- ❖ other mentoring projects;
- ❖ anti-social behaviour units
- ❖ race equality unit;
- ❖ housing providers;
- ❖ health service;
- ❖ local business organisations;
- ❖ tenant/resident association;
- ❖ volunteer bureau;
- ❖ community leaders, especially from any target groups the project is seeking to engage;
- ❖ a local, private sector representative (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

Strategic partnership members should actively explore what mentoring is, to gain an understanding of the project. They should understand the aims and objectives of the whole project and be clear and explicit about how much and what type of impact is anticipated from mentoring, and what the mechanisms are that are likely to bring these about. The group must establish a written agreement of terms of reference and roles and responsibilities which all members understand and actively sign up to (see www.mentoringknowledgebase.com).

The group should meet on a regular basis with dates and venues of meetings being agreed in advance and action points/minutes distributed. Members should be pro-active in their involvement with the project in order to ensure its continued development and they have a responsibility to help raise the profile within their agencies, where appropriate, and the community.

Additional benchmarks and indicators of effectiveness that a strategic partnership wish to develop must be developed in conjunction with project staff and within the framework of

the projects aims, objectives and targets. Strategic partnerships should review the take-up and recruitment of the programme to ensure equality of access is maintained.

Strategic partnerships should take an active part in ensuring the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are communicated and information from evaluation is used continuously to improve the programme.

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