



Mentoring



Edition 1

Key
elements
effective
of
practice

**YOUTH
JUSTICE
BOARD**



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Mentoring



Introduction

The aim of the youth justice system is to prevent offending and re-offending by children and young people. The Youth Justice Board was established to provide leadership for this objective and to help you, the people making a difference to young people's lives, to develop a new way of working with young people to ensure a better future for them and their families.

The Youth Justice Board has identified effective practice as a key element in developing and improving youth justice services. We are committed to identifying and promoting effective practice across the whole of the youth justice system to ensure that work with young people is as effective as possible and based on best practice and research evidence.

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* describe the features of effective services and support the identification of staff learning and development needs. They will be mapped to the Youth Justice National Occupational Standards to support the development of accredited learning programmes based on them. They are also the foundations of a simple quality assurance system that the Youth Justice Board wishes to see implemented in all youth justice services. The detail of this quality assurance system will be described in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Quality Assurance Toolkit*.

Finally, it is important for everyone working in the youth justice system to recognise that these documents describe effective practice as we can define it now - informed by the latest research, national standards and existing legislation. As new research becomes available or as legislation or national standards change, the Youth Justice Board will revise and re-issue these documents to reflect what has been learnt or what has changed in the youth justice system. They are a living, learning tool that will be updated every two to three years.

■ Key Elements of Effective Practice

The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are simple manuals that can be used by anyone working with young people in both the community and the secure estate. They do not provide teachers, health professionals or police officers in mainstream services with descriptions of how to work, nor do they detail the processes needed to deliver a service. They describe the features of effective youth justice services, allowing delivery to be shaped by need and local context. They are intended to support consistency of delivery across youth justice services.

The approach they suggest has been guided by experience and evaluations of programmes that have been running in the newly reformed youth justice system since April 2000 and by research gathered over time by professionals, including academics. The *Key Elements of Effective Practice* are a series of documents covering the following subjects.

- **Assessment, Planning Interventions and Supervision**
- **Final Warning Interventions**
- **Offending Behaviour Programmes**
- **Young People who Sexually Abuse**
- **Restorative Justice**
- **Parenting**
- **Education, Training and Employment**
- **Remand Management**
- **Mentoring**
- **Swift Administration of Justice**

The titles listed above are the first in the series and further titles will be published in the future. Each has a common format. They are all structured to have specific sections for their three main users:

- **practitioners – those of you working directly with young people in a professional or voluntary capacity;**
- **managers in the community and the secure estate – first line managers, Yot Managers, Governors;**
- **strategic partnerships who guide the work of the youth justice system and allocate resources – Yot Steering Groups, Area Managers, Young People's Partnerships (YPP) in Wales.**

There are also two issues that are common to the series: learning styles and consultation with users. It has been recognised that people have different preferred learning styles and effective learning is achieved by encouraging the use of a person's preferred learning style. At present, the Youth Justice Board has little current evidence of the most effective learning styles for young people who offend, but we have commissioned research to identify this. We will update our guidance with the outcomes of this research as soon as it is available.

We will do the same with research we have commissioned on consultation with users. Involving young people who offend and their parents/carers has positive outcomes for young people and youth justice services. Research, to identify the most effective strategies for engaging young people and their parents/carers in this process, is underway and we will provide guidance on this area of work as soon as the information is available.

Finally, each title in the series is underpinned by a source document that contains the references, bibliography and examples of good practice that inform the published document. They will be available on the Youth Justice Board website and on CD ROM.

Quality assurance

The Youth Justice Board intends to publish the *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Quality Assurance Toolkit* to support the implementation of these documents. It will contain the detail of the quality assurance process that the Youth Justice Board wishes services to put in place. It is to be used by managers to monitor the performance of their services against the requirements of each of the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*. This evidence should then be used to identify strengths and develop an action plan to address any weaknesses. The information gathered as part of this process will also help the Youth Justice Board refine and share evidence of effective practice.

The quality assurance process is structured around eight core areas which reflect all aspects of the service.

- **Assessment**
- **Individual needs**
- **Communication**
- **Service delivery**
- **Training**
- **Management**
- **Service development**
- **Monitoring and evaluation**

This structure will enable thematic reviews to take place, in the future, in a systematic and uniform manner across youth justice services. The sequence in which these core areas are presented does not indicate an order of importance, as we recognise that this will vary from one theme to another.

Under these eight core areas, ‘Key Indicators of Quality’ have been identified for each of the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*. These are drawn directly from the relevant document. These indicators are not a comprehensive list of quality issues and they are not an end in themselves. They are designed for use within a wider framework of evaluation of service practice and performance. They will, however, enable a wider and continuous process of evaluation to take place from individual to corporate, and even to national level. The ‘Key Indicators of Quality’ for *Mentoring* are shown opposite.

■ Key Indicators of Quality

■ ASSESSMENT

There are clear guidelines for identifying the young people the programme aims to recruit.

Potential mentors should be screened to identify those that have the greatest understanding of the role, and the interpersonal skills and commitment to put it into practice.

■ INDIVIDUAL NEEDS

The framework and structure of programmes should depend on the young person's age, maturity, and developmental and cultural needs and any local issues.

The specific factors that determine the structure of a young person's programme should be established early on in the mentoring relationship and should be reviewed and adapted regularly.

■ COMMUNICATION

There should be regular meeting between the mentor and the young person.

Simple, clear, age-specific, culturally sensitive literature should be developed to explain mentoring programmes to young people. This literature should take into account the language and literacy levels of the young people the programme is trying to engage.

■ SERVICE DELIVERY

Goals for the programme should relate specifically to the young person, be owned by them and be SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound).

Structured, regular group activities, monthly/bi-monthly group trips and activities with a residential element should be provided.

■ TRAINING

Mentors need to be trained to work to the aims and objectives identified for the young person within the programme.

Training for mentors should focus on communication skills, motivation skills, ideas about relationship building, interaction with young people, setting boundaries, child protection issues, goal setting, and values and diversity awareness.

■ MANAGEMENT

Matching mentors to young people should be clearly managed and criteria for this should be developed and consistently applied.

The relationship between the mentor and the young person should be supported, as intensively as possible, by a case manager who is in contact with the parents/carers of the young person, the young person and the mentor.

■ SERVICE DEVELOPMENT

A local protocol for working with young people that covers staff selection, staff skills, staff training, on-going support and, for those working in the secure estate, security should be developed.

Clear referral procedures should be developed and should be consistently followed.

■ MONITORING AND EVALUATION

Effective and efficient case recording systems should be established and maintained. In principle, they should monitor meetings between staff, mentors and the young person they are working with.

Mentoring should be fully monitored and reviewed. Where appropriate, it should be independently evaluated. All monitoring and evaluation should be against a series of established benchmarks and indicators of effectiveness.

Mentoring

Mentoring is a voluntary one-to-one relationship between a young person and a supportive adult. It is more than befriending and aims to make constructive changes in the life and behaviour of the young person. It is important that the mentoring relationship is not imposed upon the young person. Effective mentors:

- have active listening skills;
- can establish and maintain a shared agenda;
- have time to develop trusting relationships;
- can sustain a high level of contact with the young person and encourage positive interactions;
- receive adequate initial training and on-going support.

The most rigorous research suggests that success in mentoring is related to high levels of contact between the mentor and the young person they are mentoring, the commitment of the young person to the process and positive training in relationships and interaction. Elements that have been identified as ineffective are mentoring by authority figures, a purely supportive relationship between the mentor and the young person with no clear aim or goal and prescriptive or critical behaviour by the mentor.

Guidance

for Practitioners

■ Assessment

Appropriate referrals and better retention of young people on mentoring programmes is achieved through:

- **clear guidelines for identifying the young people the programme aims to recruit;**
- **openness and clarity with young people, at the induction stage, about the aims and objectives of the project and their commitment to it should be handled in a way that is appropriate to their age and culture;**
- **a well-matched, persistent, reliable and committed mentor.**

■ Individual needs

If the relationship between the mentor and the young person has clear and specific goals, this increases the likelihood of a young person remaining on a programme. The framework and structure of the relationship and these goals should depend on the young person's age, maturity, developmental and cultural needs and any local issues. These factors should be established early on in the relationship and reviewed and adapted regularly.

■ Communication

High levels of contact between the mentor and the young person are associated with success. Consequently, regular meetings are important. Ideally, there should be three to four meetings per month. In the secure estate, the number of meetings will vary depending on the mentor's availability and the location of the secure unit.

Parents/carers of young people on mentoring programmes should understand the aims and objectives of the programme and what it will involve. It is essential that a parent/carer signs a consent form before a young person is accepted onto a project.

When a mentoring relationship has been established in a custodial setting, secure estate and youth offending team (Yot) staff as well as any external agencies should liaise in order to plan for the young person's release.

■ Service delivery

Protocols and procedures should be in place to govern mentoring work in the youth justice context. All mentoring programmes should have clear aims and objectives and practitioners should be working to achieve them. Practitioners should use the available case recording systems to assist in case review.

A mentor should provide support and guidance to a young person. Their work will be more successful if it is jointly agreed with the young person. Furthermore, evidence suggests that a positive relationship between the mentor and the young person is not enough on its own, the mentor needs to reinforce positive patterns of behaviour by the young person through the use of praise and/or reward.

A young person's interest and enthusiasm for a mentoring programme will only be maintained if the goals of the programme relate specifically to the young person, are owned by them and are SMART (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound). Structured, regular group activities, monthly/bi-monthly group trips and activities with a residential element can also help in retaining the interest and commitment of young people.

■ Training

Mentors need to be trained to work to the aims and objects identified for the young person within the mentoring programme.

■ Monitoring and evaluation

Practitioners should support the collection and recording of evidence that contributes to the quality assurance process set out in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Quality Assurance Toolkit*.

Guidance

for Managers

■ Assessment

Potential mentors should be screened. Apart from the statutory criminal records screening that must take place, programmes should develop means of screening volunteers in order to identify those that have the greatest understanding of the role, and the interpersonal skills and commitment to put it into practice. The ability to work with young people in their social environment and community is also an important skill for a mentor to possess.

■ Communication

Simple, clear, age-specific, culturally sensitive literature should be developed to explain mentoring programmes to young people. This literature should take into account the language and literacy levels of the young people the programme is trying to engage.

■ Training

The training and support of mentors is essential to the success of programmes. Training should focus on communication skills, motivation skills, ideas about relationship building, interaction with young people, setting boundaries, child protection issues, goal setting, and values and diversity awareness.

■ Management

Matching mentors to young people should be clearly managed and criteria for this should be developed and consistently applied. In matching mentors to young people, procedures should be developed that take into account the young person's preferences, those of their parents/carers and the volunteer mentor's. However, any stated preferences must be carefully considered to ensure that they are valid. Although it is not essential to match mentors and young people by culture or gender, it is essential that the cultural and other needs of the young person are recognised, respected and an attempt is made

to meet them. The mentor should understand the young person's cultural and community background. A formal system is required for monitoring the work of mentors. This must be regularly updated.

The relationship between the mentor and the young person should be supported, as intensively as possible, by a case manager who is in contact with the parents/carers of the young person, the young person and the mentor. Other practitioners should also be available to respond to the concerns and queries of mentors.

■ Service development

Yot and secure estate staff should have a clear understanding of the purpose of mentoring programmes and the young people they should seek to involve. Managers need to provide a framework for mentoring programmes. This should include:

- **a local protocol for working with young people that covers staff selection, staff skills, staff training, on-going support and, for those working in the secure estate, security;**
- **staff that are adequately trained and provided with support systems;**
- **realistic project targets related to staffing levels and budget constraints so that the quality of programmes can be maintained;**
- **clear referral procedures that are consistently followed;**
- **benchmarks and indicators of effectiveness;**
- **equality of access to services.**

All mentoring support should be appropriate to the young person's needs and should sit within a framework that is sensitive to their age, gender, ethnicity, cultural background, level of maturity and educational ability.

■ Monitoring and evaluation

Effective and efficient case recording systems should be established and maintained. In principle, they should monitor meetings between staff, mentors and the young person they are working with. They should also include input from the young person's parents/carers as well as an agreed grievance procedure.

Mentoring should be fully monitored and reviewed. Where appropriate, it should be independently evaluated. All monitoring and evaluation should be against a series of established benchmarks and indicators of effectiveness.

Managers should ensure that their regular staff supervision and appraisal processes are routinely informed by the *Key Elements of Effective Practice*. They should also implement the quality assurance process set out in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Quality Assurance Toolkit*.

Guidance

for Strategic Partnerships

■ Service development

Strategic partnerships should develop an understanding of mentoring and should support managers in promoting and providing mentoring programmes. Responsibility for raising the profile of programmes within their agencies and communities should be part of a strategic partnership's role.

■ Monitoring and evaluation

Strategic partnerships should review data on recruitment for programmes to ensure equality of access is maintained. Any additional benchmarks and indicators of effectiveness that a strategic partnership wants to develop, should be agreed with project staff and sit within the framework of the project's aims and objectives. These services should also be reviewed for the under-/over-representation of particular groups to ensure that they meet the needs of young people and their communities.

Strategic partnerships should take responsibility for disseminating and supporting the implementation of the *Key Elements of Effective Practice* and the quality assurance process set out in the *Key Elements of Effective Practice – Quality Assurance Toolkit*.

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