



Mentoring Programme: Referral Criteria

Introduction

Mentoring has the potential to be a powerful personal development tool for the young person engaged. This guidance outlines for professionals the types of support needs which can best be met by mentoring, and how young people who present with these needs can be referred.

The Safe Space Mentoring Programme

Safe Space offers a mentoring programme which matches suitable young people aged 11 – 19 years in year 7 and up (up to 25 years with a LDD or for care leavers) with a mentor. The young person and the mentor meet on a regular basis (generally once per week) about the issues or problems which may be holding them back from achieving their full potential. The aim of the mentoring programme is to equip young people with the necessary skills to make informed and positive choices in their lives. The duration of mentoring support for an individual young person is approximately 6 months.

Mentors

All mentors are volunteers and are supported by a full time member of staff, the Safe Space Mentoring Co-ordinator.

Safe Space makes a concerted effort to recruit mentors from a wide variety of backgrounds, however professionals need to be aware that it is not always possible to meet a young person's preference for a particular mentor. For example, there are less male mentors than there are female mentors.

Mentors undergo a robust recruitment procedure which includes a personal interview and an enhanced DBS check.

Once accepted to the programme mentors undertake 2 days of initial training. Training covers topics such as the role of a mentor, the stages of mentoring, safeguarding, professional boundaries, confidentiality, information sharing and equality and diversity.

It is important to remember that mentors are not qualified counsellors or social workers. Although mentors have been accepted to the programme because of the qualities they display, e.g. the ability to motivate and inspire, and the ability to communicate in a non-judgemental way, they do not have the full training or qualifications that would be needed to support young people with complex needs.

The Mentoring Relationship

A mentoring relationship is focused on assisting the young person to achieve specified and agreed goals. Mentors do not carry out home visits. All meetings with young people are in a public place, e.g. a café, school or library, and all meetings have the purpose of empowering the young person to make informed decisions for themselves by discussing the options available.

Mentees can expect the mentor to show a genuine interest in their lives and a commitment to helping them achieve their aims.

Referral Criteria

To ensure that mentoring is a beneficial experience for the young person, it is important that they are matched with a mentor who is able to support their needs. For this reason professionals should assess the support needs of the young person prior to any referral.

As a general rule mentoring is most effective for those young people with low to mid level support needs. For example, confidence building, time management skills, personal skills to help make new friends, or assistance with job hunting. Mentoring is less likely to be suitable for those young people with intensive or complex support needs, e.g. mental health concerns or diagnosis, or where there are child protection concerns.

The Safe Space mentoring programme is a voluntary programme so only those young people who have expressed an interest in being matched with a mentor should be referred. It is important to note that mentors generally work on their own, out in the community, on a one to one basis with young people. For health and safety reasons it will generally not be acceptable to refer a young person who has a history of violent or aggressive behaviour. Signed parental consent is required for referrals for young people under the age of 13.

Mentoring should not be used as a 'stop gap' whilst the young person is awaiting support from another service. Professionals should always consider any other referrals that have been made and how (or if) mentoring might fit with these. Referrals are not accepted from parents or carers, all referrals need to be initiated by a professional and agreed by the young person.

Please note that any one referrer or school/college may only make a maximum of 2 referrals at any time free of charge, and any one district team/service may only make a maximum of 5 referrals at any time free of charge. Please contact the Mentoring Co-ordinator to discuss options for funding additional referrals if needed.

Referral Process for Professionals

1. Consider the level of support needs of the young person. Those with low to mid level support needs can be referred. Those with complex or intensive support needs should be referred to the relevant agency for professional support.
2. Professionals should discuss with the young person the structure of the programme, the benefits and boundaries of working with a mentor, and the commitment required. It is advisable to contact the Mentoring Co-ordinator to check availability in that area before any guarantee is made to the young person; a referral form can then be requested from the Mentoring Co-ordinator.
3. The professional should support the young person to complete the referral form, outlining why they would like to work with a mentor and completing a statement outlining any background information and support needs that the mentor may need to be aware of.
4. Once the referral has been made the Mentoring Co-ordinator will consider the referral and match suitable young people with a mentor.

Continuing Professional Involvement

If possible, the professional who made the referral is asked to attend the first meeting to facilitate the introduction of the mentor and the mentee. A referral to the mentoring programme does not necessarily mean that the referring professional will cease to work with that young person. Dependent on the support needs of each particular young person the level of continuing professional involvement will differ. In some cases mentoring will be a tool used by a professional alongside the support they are already providing to that young person. In other cases it may be beneficial for the professional to contact the young person to check that they are benefiting from the mentoring relationship. All relevant feedback should be provided to the Mentoring Co-ordinator.

Contact Details

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