



Outreach and Reintegration Service Accredited Peer Mentoring Programme Framework

Mission Statement:

‘Encouraging and developing student self-esteem and confidence through the use of peer on peer support to improve behaviour and avoid permanent exclusion from school’

Rationale

The Outreach Service Peer Mentor Programme has been designed as an additional support programme aimed at preventing school exclusion. The programme offers young people experiencing difficulties in school an opportunity to receive support, advice and guidance from older students who have experienced similar challenges themselves and have overcome barriers to positively re-engage in learning. The programme is available to students at risk of exclusion and those returning to mainstream education following permanent exclusion from school.

Our aim is to work in partnership with all schools and academies across the London Borough of Bexley to establish a peer mentor programme which meets the needs of children and young people whilst contributing to the development of the New Horizons Federation and the wider strategic vision of the local authority.

Programme Overview

The programme targets secondary students who exhibit challenging behaviour and those returning to mainstream education from alternative provision and permanent exclusion. Peer Mentors are trained to offer support and advice and to deliver 1:1 sessions covering a range of topics which often form barriers to learning resulting in exclusion from school.

These include but are not limited to;

- Managing Feelings and Emotions
- Dealing with Conflict
- Building Positive Relationships
- Who to go to in School for Help
- Behaviour Triggers and Hotspots
- Positive Communication
- Self-Esteem
- Self- Reflection

Peer Mentor Training

Peer mentors are volunteers who feel they can offer time to younger students to provide guidance on making good choices and advice on whom to go to in school when things get tough. As there needs to be a level of maturity and responsibility within the role, mentors are selected from KS4 and KS5 (NCY 10-13) to provide mentoring to students from NCY 7.

Trained mentors will receive regular supervision and guidance from the school designated staff member to ensure swift and timely access to adult help, support and guidance at all times. As the programme is accredited by the National College for Vocational Organisations (NCVO) all mentors will receive a certificate confirming their appointment on the programme. This accreditation can also be included on applications to sixth form, college and university as an example of voluntary practice and responsibility.

Each mentor receives a handbook and information pack which contains all documents related to the programme. During training mentors are made familiar with the programme structure, the planned sessions focusing on specific topics and are provided ice breakers to help them get conversation started and scripts to help them complete the session in the event they find engaging with the mentee difficult.

All training is delivered by the Peer Mentor Coordinator to ensure mentors are fully confident in all areas of delivery including what to do when a safeguarding concern is identified or raised. All mentors must attend a 60 minute training session and commit to confidentiality regarding the issues raised and discussed during the mentoring sessions.

Safeguarding

Safeguarding measures are in place to ensure the Peer Mentor is not left responsible for high level concern or serious difficulties which require specialist support. If a child confides to a Peer Mentor something which may place the child or others at harm, the case immediately transfers to the home school's Designated Key Staff member who will take appropriate action in accordance with the home school's safeguarding and child protection policy.

As the scheme is designed to address low level behaviour, no child who poses a threat to other young people will be included in the programme. All young people referred to the scheme will be formally referred by the home school with a full risk assessment undertaken. Where evidence suggests a young person may pose a threat, a referral to external agencies for more specialist support will be made by the home school in partnership with the programme coordinator.

Programme Delivery

The programme requires peer mentors to undertake training and attend a meeting where materials included in the scheme will be shared, discussed and agreed. Mentors will have an opportunity to practice hosting sessions together to ensure they are fully confident and happy prior to beginning the mentoring role. All mentors will become members of the Peer Mentor Steering Group. This group will consist of mentors from all schools across the London Borough of Bexley with meetings held every half term facilitated by the programme coordinator. A review of the programme content, delivery, session topics and outcomes will be included with opportunity for students to request new materials or make changes based on their personal involvement in the scheme.

The programme will run for 6 weeks with sessions taking place once a week for a minimum of 25 minutes. Sessions can be extended with the approval of the designated staff member if the mentor or mentee has made a request or where the mentor feels the session timing is inadequate to meet the needs of the mentee. Sessions will be carefully timetabled to minimise disruption to either parties learning.

Success Criteria

Through the use of the Peer Mentoring Programme we hope to encourage and further develop confidence and self-esteem of both mentor and mentee. The Peer Mentor can pass on valuable

and credible advice reflecting on their own experiences and showcasing the positive changes in their own behaviours leading to success. The mentee will benefit from support of young people who they can better identify with and who have first-hand experience of the challenges they face understanding change is possible and achievable.

Where the mentee evidences a positive change in behaviour and this change is consistent over time, an application may be made to train as a peer mentor to help others in similar situations and circumstance. In all cases an application must be supported by a member of school staff with evidence provided to support the improved behaviour choices.

Success criteria will include but will not be limited to the following data;

- Reduction in the number of detentions
- Reduction in the number of fixed term exclusions
- Increase in the number of positive comments recorded by staff
- Increase in active participation within the school community
- Mentee self-assessment indicates improved feeling of worth and self esteem
- Permanent exclusion is avoided

Parental Consent

In addition to the support from school teams and students, it is essential parents agree to their children being part of the programme. Mentors and mentees will require parental consent to be gained prior to being accepted on the programme. Opportunity for parents to be fully informed of the programme content and impact on young people participating will be provided through presentations delivered to the school by the programme coordinator.

Our aim in the future is to establish a parent peer group targeting parents who have experienced the challenge of managing young people whose behaviour has resulted in exclusion from school. This can be a stressful and emotionally draining experience for parents who often feel guilty and isolated when regularly informed of their child's poor behaviour at school.

Further information

Full details regarding the Peer Mentoring Programme can be located on the New Horizons Federation Website and from the Programme Coordinator;

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