

# **Evaluation Report**



## **Pilot**

# **Mentoring Project**

June 2014 to March 2015

**Ian Robson**

**Operations Manager**

# **Evaluation of a Pilot Mentoring Project**

## **PART 1 – The Pilot Mentoring Project**

### **Background & Rationale**

The pilot mentoring project (PMP) was set up to work with young people who experience anxiety issues that impact on their transition from primary to secondary school. The transition from primary to secondary school is known to cause increased anxiety in those who are susceptible (TaMHS and Young Minds, 2014). Northern Learning Trust (NLT) who set up the PMP have a proven success record in providing mentoring to young people and adults in a variety of situations. The PMP ran from June 2014 to March 2015 and was funded internally by NLT.

### **Aim of the Project**

The aim of the PMP was to provide a mentor for each young person who needed support in making the transition between primary and secondary school. A mentor is a positive role model who can be there for the young person to listen to them, help them build up their confidence and self-esteem and support them in the challenges that they face.

### **Mentor Recruitment Process**

Mentors were recruited through advertising within Newcastle Volunteer Centre. Two mentors were recruited through this route. Both were female, educated to graduate level and between 21 and 24 years of age. Mentors completed full DBS clearance.

Because of the low numbers of mentors recruited through CVS, two further mentors were recruited from within NLT's staff. Both were male.

### **Mentor Training**

In house training was provided by NLT who have many years of experience in mentor training and hold an Approved Provider Standard from the Mentor and Befriending Foundation.

### **Mentee Recruitment Process**

The mentees were recruited from Targeted Mental Health in Schools (TaMHS) and North of Tyne Community, Children and Young Peoples Services (CYPS). They were referred by workers at these organisations who felt that the young people would benefit from the mentoring project.

## **Mentees**

Over the course of the PMP, four young people were supported by a mentor – 3 boys and 1 girl. Two of the boys were aged 10 and in their last year of primary school. The girl was aged 11 and also in her last year of primary school. The third boy was aged 12 and already in secondary school but was identified by TaMHS as having anxiety issues and requiring the support of a mentor.

During the mentoring process, one of the primary school children moved up to secondary school. The boy who was already in secondary school moved up from Year 7 to 8. The other two children remained in primary school during the course of the mentoring and will be going to secondary school in September 2015.

## **The Mentoring Process**

The Project Manager of the PMP took the referral from TaMHS or CYPS. The Project Manager then met the young person and their parent/guardian at their home to ensure the PMP was appropriate for the young person and the young person was appropriate for the PMP. At this stage, Health & Consent forms were completed, emergency contact details collected and a Home Visit/risk assessment form completed.

The Project Manager then matched the young person to a suitable mentor and informed both parties of names. The Project Manager arranged and facilitated a meeting between the mentor and mentee with the parent or guardian present. This enabled the parents/guardian to meet the mentor. However, the Project Manager kept this meeting short so the mentor/mentee could start their first meeting.

## **Mentor/Mentee Meetings**

All mentees had a minimum of 10 meetings with their mentor, averaging around 20 hours of contact in total. Mentors met weekly with their mentees.

The mentor asked the young person what activities they would like to do and future sessions comprised of these activities, plus a reflection on how their week had gone in terms of what had gone well and what could have gone better. This allowed the young person to reflect and better understand themselves whilst being listened to in a non-judgmental way. The mentor would then be able to offer advice and guidance as appropriate.

At the end of each session, a plan for the next meeting was made and the mentor would complete a record sheet which comprised of a brief summary of the meeting, a reflection on how the young person seemed to be coping and any concerns could also be noted.

**1<sup>st</sup> session** – Getting to know each other. Empower the young person by negotiating what day and time to meet. Finding out from the young person which activities they are interested in undertaking.

**5<sup>th</sup> session** – review and reflection on how the mentor relationship is progressing. Also planning the last meeting in order to let the young person know that the process is time-limited. The mentoring relationship is time limited to prevent dependency and promote an awareness of transition through moving positively to the next stage.

**Final session** - always a celebration. Main focus is on an enjoyable activity that the young person has helped plan and organise.

### **Mentor supervision**

Mentors had 1-1 monthly supervision with the Project Manager. Submission of the record sheets enabled the Project Manager to monitor how the process was going and follow up any concerns raised by the mentors.

## **PART 2 – An Evaluation of the Pilot Mentoring Project**

In order to evaluate the PMP, a two stage approach was taken. Firstly, an analysis of the record sheets was undertaken. The record sheets comprised of a summary of the mentor/mentee meeting, a reflection by the mentor on how the meeting had gone and observation about the mentee, and a section where the mentor could raise any concerns. Secondly, telephone interviews were undertaken with two of the young people and their parents/guardians and an email questionnaire was completed by their referrer. This enabled two detailed case studies to be produced which give an in depth account of the PMP.

### **1. Analysis of the Record Sheets**

Record sheets are completed by the mentor after every meeting with the mentee. Therefore, at least 10 record sheets were available for each mentor/mentee relationships.

The following findings have arisen out of an analysis of the record sheets:

- a) **Young people engaged well with the process.** Young people met with their mentor regularly. There were very few cancelled or missed meetings, and when these had occurred they were due to reasons such as the ill-health of the mentee or mentor. On only 2 occasions the mentee had not turned up to meet the mentor.
- b) **A range of activities were undertaken.** Activities which the young people asked to do included basketball, trampolining, skate-parks, shopping, visiting museums, going to cafes and bowling.

c) **Evidence of positive interactions.** Whilst out and about the mentor, undertaking various activities, the mentor was able to observe how the young person interacted with adults and other young people. Most of the comments made by mentors were very positive.

- Polite and courteous to adults at the activity centres
- Saying please and thank you in shops
- Sharing what they had bought with the mentor (awareness of other)
- Asking the mentor what they would like to do (awareness of other)

d) **The young people disclosed and discussed a number of issues with their mentors during the sessions.** Examples of issues discussed included:

- Losing temper
- Running away from the house
- Discussing incidents that had happened at school (refusing to come in after playtime)
- Peers saying hurtful things about mentee or mentee's family
- Fighting with peers
- Being bullied at school
- Concerns about starting secondary school
- Being in detention
- Making friends
- Relationships/difficulties with parents/guardians
- Relationships with absent parents

e) **Limitations of discussions.** There was evidence on the record sheets that young people would sometimes not want to discuss negative events or would raise a topic but then not want to discuss it in detail or were reluctant to return to the discussion the following week. These included:

- Mentee reluctant to talk about problems mentioned to mentor by parent/guardian
- Avoiding answering questions about how getting on with other children
- Reluctance to talk about difficulties with parent/guardian
- Becoming frustrated by being asked about difficult issues

f) **Concerns raised by mentors.** Mentors were asked to raise any concerns they observed during the sessions. These generally centred around behaviour issues.

- Transition back to home after a mentoring session could sometimes be difficult with the young person being disrespectful or confrontational. However, after

some mentoring sessions it was noted that transitions back into the family home could be easier

- Inability of the young person to interact with peers/make friends
- Young person being fascinated by older children who were smoking and drinking

g) **Advice and guidance offered by mentors.** The mentoring sessions enabled young people to reflect on what had gone well for them during the week and what could have gone better. Mentors helped young people identify what helped a situation go well and what factors could cause a situation to deteriorate. By doing this, young people were empowered to reflect on their own behaviour and develop strategies to help deal with potential difficult situations. Advice and guidance that mentors were able to offer included:

- Talking about how to get your point across without causing an argument.
- How to make the right choices in school in order to improve behaviour
- Making a revision booklet for a science class
- Making a diary so young person could keep a log of his week and his feelings during the week
- Strategies for managing frustrations when unable to do what you want
- Risks of jumping out of windows
- Negotiating skills to help work towards a good outcome for everyone
- How to ignore peers when they say hurtful things
- Why it might be best not to say hurtful things back as this can cause situation to escalate and alternatives for this situation

## **2. Analysis of Interview Data**

In order to look in more depth at the PMP, telephone interviews were undertaken with two young people, their parents/guardian and the referrer was asked to fill in an email questionnaire. The data obtained from these interviews is presented as two case studies.

### **Case Study 1 – Lee**

At the time of the mentoring, Lee was 10 years old and in his final year at primary school. He was referred to the scheme by TaHMS because he was displaying challenging behaviour both at school and at home. He found it difficult to make and retain friends; he was easily led and struggled with sanctions and change. As Lee was approaching the transition to secondary school, it was felt that managing the change needed to be a positive experience

for Lee and that he would benefit from some positive role modelling and one-to-one support outside of school.

TaHMS made the referral to the PMP. When asked why the referral was made the referrer commented *“I have referred two male pupils for support with behaviour and coping with transition change. This was with a view to them having positive role models to work with and allowing their families to engage and learn techniques for managing challenging situations. There is a real gap for pupils, especially boys aged 10 years to 13 years in our area of work.”*

Lee lived with his grandmother and after the initial visit by the Project Manager, both Lee and his grandmother were happy to take part in the PMP. Lee was matched with a male mentor who saw Lee eleven times between October 2014 and February 2015 for a total of 24 hours. Lee and his mentor did a range of activities including trampolining, skate boarding, football and museum visits.

Although Lee was always polite and well behaved during the mentoring sessions, both Lee and his grandmother spoke of ‘incidents’ and outburst of anger so developing ways of managing his anger was one of the targets agreed by Lee early in the mentoring relationship. The mentor noted that Lee could interact appropriately and with ‘confidence and maturity’ when interacting with peers and adults. The mentor used Lee’s own positive behaviour to help him develop strategies for dealing with anger and frustration. “We talked about negotiating skills. I gave Lee examples of when I had observed him using them” (Record sheet 4). The mentor encouraged Lee to build on these examples of where things had gone well.

At session 5, with the support of the mentor, Lee made himself a diary and suggested that he would record any incidents that happened between sessions and his thoughts and feelings. Lee enjoyed keeping his diary and also used it to set himself 3 targets based around an incident at school where Lee had become very upset by his peers and Grandma had to go to the school to calm him down. Lee’s targets were: to ignore peers who say hurtful things to him; try not to get upset when peers say hurtful things about him or his family; try not to say unkind things back (Record sheet 5) . However, at the next session Lee had written in his diary that he found it difficult to ignore his peers (record sheet 6). This was something that the mentor encouraged Lee to keep trying to do and suggested strategies such as ‘counting to 10’ ; ‘breathing’ and ‘walking away’.

Lee was an easily-led boy who engaged in risk taking behaviour. During the mentoring process, Lee ran away from his house by jumping out of a third floor window. The mentor discussed with Lee what the risks were of doing this. They also discussed the difference between his Grandmother’s reaction to the dangerous stunt compared to his peer’s reaction (record sheet 3). Lee’s grandmother was pleased to have someone explain to Lee the risks of his actions.

Lee's grandmother was very positive when speaking about the project and commented *"He got to go out and when he got back he was better behaved and in a better mood and more confident"*. She would *'definitely'* recommend the PMP *"It helps children talk through problems and things with someone else...he got to talk about things because he doesn't like talking to me or his dad."*

Lee's evaluation of the PMP was that it was *'extraordinary'* and that *'I had a brilliant time'*. Lee's grandmother had her own health issues and as a result did not feel able to take Lee out. So for Lee, *'getting out of the house'* and *'doing stuff with other children'* were the best things about the PMP. When asked to reflect on anything that he does differently since his time on the PMP, Lee commented *'I play out on my scooter more, play football and play out more'* possibly reflecting an increase in confidence. At school Lee felt that he was able to interact more with other children *'It's easier'*.

## **Case Study 2 – Ryan**

At the time of the mentoring, Ryan was 12 years old and about to move into his second year at secondary school. He was referred to the scheme by TaHMS. He was displaying challenging behaviour both at school and at home. Ryan found it difficult to make friends and found change of any kind difficult to manage and had found the move to secondary school particularly challenging.

Ryan lived with his mother and younger brother and after the initial visit by the Project Manager, both Ryan and his mother were happy to take part in the PMP. Lee was matched with a male mentor who saw Ryan fourteen times between August 2014 and March 2015 for a total of 26 hours. Ryan and his mentor did a range of activities including basketball, bowling, skate boarding, shopping and visiting cafes.

Unlike Lee described above, Ryan was often very reluctant to talk about issues and would ignore questions asked by his mentor, on occasion becoming frustrated by being asked questions. However, sometimes Ryan would engage in conversation about what was happening at home or school and this gave the mentor the chance to talk about better ways of managing difficult situations. For example, *"the best way to get your point across without causing an argument"* (Record sheet 5). On a separate occasion Ryan opened up about getting into trouble at school and the mentor was able to listen and ask Ryan how he thought he could handle the situation differently the next time (Record sheet 10). Ryan had also engaged in making a science revision booklet for his course at school (Record sheet 11).

Ryan also had a troubled relationship with his Dad and would tell the mentor that he did not like staying there or had had an argument with his Dad but he was never keen to elaborate (Record sheet 7).

Unfortunately for both Ryan and the mentor, the last session did not end well when Ryan reacted badly to his mother saying she would not buy him a new mobile phone until his



birthday. He refused to say good bye to the mentor who was 'disappointed that the session ended in this manner' (Record sheet 14). However, during the follow up telephone interview, Ryan asked if he could bring a card in for his mentor and apologise for his poor behaviour during the last session. This demonstrated that the relationship had been meaningful for Ryan and that he appreciated the mentor's interest in him *"I know it was voluntary and it feels good that [mentor] took the trouble."*

Ryan also felt that the mentoring relationship had been helpful as it had given him *"a different way of looking at things...after detention at school [mentor] helped me to think about things and realise it wasn't right"*. However, Ryan was very disappointed that his time on the PMP had come to an end as he felt had it continued *"I would still have someone to talk to and would get out of the house"*.

Ryan's mother spoke positively about the project *"[Mentor] was an excellent, positive, calm male role model. He listened and he discussed issues with me like 'I hope I haven't pushed him too far'. [Mentor] was fantastic, very polite and kept in touch and was clearly interested in Ryan.....it was great for Ryan's self esteem"*

Both Ryan and his mother appreciated the fact that the mentor was someone who was there for Ryan. The fact that someone took the time to listen to Ryan, take him out and allow him to try new things was a boost for Ryan's confidence and self esteem.

Ryan's mother mentioned the *"meltdown"* that Ryan had had at the end of the last session over the mobile phone but felt the fact that Ryan was upset with himself afterwards showed that he was learning to reflect on his poor behaviour. *"He was very upset with himself that he had let [mentor] down and was upset that he was never going to see [mentor] ever again....mentoring helped him reflect on his poor behaviour and he has been very good since then."*

For both Ryan and his mother, having a positive male role model and *"someone else to talk to, not involved with the family"* was a positive experience for Ryan. *"[Mentor] challenged Ryan to talk about things that he found difficult."*

## Conclusion

All the parties involved in the PMP – mentees, parents/guardians and referrers had positive comments to make about their experience. The young people, their guardians and the referrers would all recommend the PMP. The referrers commented that they would very much like to use the PMP again and that the demand for the service already existed *"Depending on funding and availability we could refer 10 to 15 cases per year"*.

This clearly demonstrated that there are a number of young people who would benefit from the services of the PMP to assist them in their transition to and within secondary school.

The PMP has been successful and provided insights into how the support of a 1 to 1 mentor can raise a young person's self esteem and confidence which can in turn help make the transition between primary and secondary school a less anxious time.

In light of this evaluation, NLT will be seeking funding to develop the PMP into a service to help meet the needs of those most in need of support.