

Kirklees Youth Offending Team – Mentoring Scheme

The Kirklees Youth Offending Team's Mentoring Scheme can play a vital role in helping to direct young people away from offending behaviour. The principle aim of the scheme is to establish a positive and reciprocal relationship between a Mentor and a young person. Befriending, advising and supporting are key factors of this relationship and through them a Mentor can learn more about a young person's individual needs and problems, many of which may contribute to their offending. At the same time a Mentor can find out about a young person's interests and their aspirations.

There is within this relationship an opportunity for the young person to develop their personal and social skills through which they can be encouraged both to stop offending and realise their ambitions.

Our Mentoring Scheme has been established for a number of years and it is a permanent feature of the Youth Offending Team. The Mentoring Scheme is designed to complement the role of Supervising Youth Offending Team Officers and any other interventions we provide. Because of the very nature of the work we carry out with young people who offend the mentoring scheme can only be of benefit in reducing youth crime.

The commitment to the Mentoring Scheme is voluntary on the part of the young person and the Mentor. This aspect of the scheme is essential and results in more productive outcomes. In essence, the relationship is based on equality, trust and mutual respect.

Mentors Help Young People To:

Mentors undertake a number of tasks within their relationship with young people and the main focus of their role is to

- Deter young people from a life of crime
- Explore and realise the young person's ambitions and assist in developing his/her skills.
- Offer them opportunities to meet new people.
- To enable them to establish positive relationships
- To engage young people in constructive leisure activities

Added benefits

There are also a number of additional areas attached to the scheme which offers Mentors an opportunity to gain more experience in other areas , for example:-

Prison Visiting

The purpose of this area is to identify and train Mentors who are willing to visit young people in custody.

Intensive Supervision & Surveillance Programme

This area gives an opportunity for Mentors to work with the more serious and persistent young offenders. Mentors are involved in this scheme in a similar way to the general mentoring scheme. The difference is that they can be asked to provide a minimum of one contact per week and work in very close liaison with the ISSP staff.

Appropriate Adult Scheme

It is a legal requirement that an 'Appropriate Adult's is present to ensure the welfare and rights of young people through any police interview. The Appropriate Adult Scheme comprises of a rota of volunteers which can be accessed between 8.45 am – 11.00 pm by the Youth Offending Team, dependant upon the time of the call request from the Police/Emergency Duty Out of Hours Team.

Commitment Towards Mentors

The Youth Offending Team takes responsibility to ensure that all Mentors are trained to:

- Undertake their role effectively and work as part of a multi-agency team
- Contribute appropriately to statutory orders imposed on young people by the Courts.
- Participate in structured mentoring programmes working towards agreed goals.

The training is designed to be as informal and interactive as possible and incorporates the following elements:

- Communication Skills
- Confidentiality
- Boundaries
- Diversity Awareness
- Child Protection

Support

Support and on-going training are provided on a monthly basis throughout the year. A meeting is held every four weeks to enable volunteers to meet up on a more informal basis. It is an opportunity for new and existing volunteers to meet and support each other and of course share good practice.

The meeting takes the format of a buffet meal followed by a guest speaker and the opportunity for informal discussion. These meetings are included as part of an on-going training and development Programme.

Accreditation

Our scheme has a full accreditation status through the Open College Network. The accreditation is optional to all those who apply to become Mentors and will enable them to obtain a nationally recognised qualification

Feedback From Young People

The feedback received from young people indicated that they found mentoring to be a worthwhile and useful experience. Feedback from supervising Youth Offending Team Officers also suggests that young people benefited from the mentoring relationship.

Mentoring is a wonderful and unique way of working with young people involved in the Criminal Justice System. The voluntary nature is an important feature of the scheme and this contributes towards a Mentor and a young person establishing a positive and rewarding relationship. The scheme cannot function without people who give up their own time so that they can make a difference to the lives of others.

The scheme's success is recognition of the dedication and commitment of volunteers and we can only go from strength to strength.

If you would like any further information please contact:

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