

Mentoring for 12 - 21 year olds Service Overview

Early Help mentoring service commissioned by BathNES Council

Who are Mentoring Plus? We are a charity who has worked for over 20 years supporting young people facing significant challenges. Our model and its success are dependent on adult volunteer mentors. In addition to the commissioned service, we deliver primary mentoring, in-school services and out of school activities.

Why do we do it? We believe every child and young person needs some support. Some need specialist support to overcome obstacles, improve self-esteem, engage effectively with additional support services and access inspirational opportunities. We have found our mix of mentoring and activities allows young people to develop new skills, grow in confidence and make positive community connections that continue beyond their time with us.

What is mentoring? We believe a mentor empowers a person to see a future and help them believe it's a possibility. Rather than advising or telling, our mentors help mentees to identify goals, explore dilemmas and find their own solutions. In working with a young person a mentor can:

- Encourage positive choices
- Promote high self esteem
- Support academic achievement
- Introduce the young person to new ideas

For young people our service is optional, non-judgemental, friendly, boundaried, and can feel relatively long-term. Our mentoring service is not a substitute for parenting or required statutory provision such as social care, school or mental health services.

What are the referral criteria? Applicants must be 12 - 21 years old. They must live in BathNES. They must be interested in being mentored. They must be in need of 'Early Help' as defined below.

We specifically support young people identified as facing **two or more** risk factor from those detailed below:

- Displaying signs of anti-social behaviour
- Disengaged, excluded from or at risk of exclusion from education
OR; Not in employment or training (NEET)
- In or leaving care
- Experiencing significant challenges out of school – including factors such as a lack of role models, family breakdown, bereavement, isolation, historic domestic violence

Please see our [Referral Checklist](#) for a detailed breakdown of referral criteria and service limitations.

- We may accept re-referrals if a specific new risk or need has been identified.
- In order to ensure equality of access to service across the county, we reserve the right to limit the number of referrals in process from any individual setting.
- If during their time on the waiting list a young person begins working with a key worker from an equivalent service, such as Compass, we reserve the right to close the referral.

What is early help? BathNES Council define ‘Early Help’ as:

- *Providing effective support as soon as problems start to emerge or are identified, and bringing about change to prevent these from escalating or becoming long term.*

We believe this service is most effective working with young people when challenges begin to emerge. A regular comment from our practitioners is “*we wish we’d received this referral years earlier.*” This is especially relevant as it may take up to a year from accepting a referral onto the waiting list, through practitioner assessment to the point of weekly sessions with a mentor.

We therefore welcome referrals that can reference early signs of our referral criteria. It is in this context that referrals regarded as too ‘high-risk’ may not be accepted.

Why are our mentors volunteers? Our young people tell us someone volunteering time to mentor them makes them feel good about themselves. It also allows for an informality which enables young people to be more relaxed and open than they might be with ‘professionals.’

We are constantly inspired by the skill, generosity and diversity of volunteers who offer us their time. All our mentors are extensively trained, and closely supervised throughout their mentoring. This includes an interview, DBS check and a thorough referencing process.

We can't predict the gender mix of volunteers we have available. We often have more female volunteers and more referrals for young males. We will match a female volunteer with a male or female mentee, but not a male volunteer with a female mentee.

How does the mentoring work? Once matched we provide the following to young people for up to a year:

- ✓ **A named practitioner** assigned to support them
- ✓ **Introductory sessions** with their practitioner to develop a **Personal Plan**
- ✓ **Volunteer Mentor** working with them each week to develop confidence, have new experiences and access new opportunities
- ✓ **Activities budget** to spend each month with their mentor
- ✓ **Community project** to contribute and make a difference locally
- ✓ **Exit planning** with links to services and transitional support on leaving our service
- ✓ **Engagement in Team Around the Child processes** ensuring the voice of the mentee is shared with other professionals throughout this year

There is no charge for the service, although the referrer (or a named alternative contact) will be expected to continue a dialogue with our service throughout the mentoring.

Weekly Activities programme - Young people matched with a mentor or on the waiting list can access a range of free activities throughout the year. Invitations are posted to young people each term with places offered on a first come first served basis:

- ✓ **Evening and Holiday activities** - Small group activities to include anything from cooking, quad-biking, football, photography to digital music
- ✓ **Youth Reps (15+)** Exploring life, work, training & learning opportunities, with participants producing their own community projects.
- ✓ Mentees can stay involved with Youth Reps beyond mentoring.

What do young people say are the benefits of our mentoring service?

“I feel better about myself from being with my mentor”

“I’ve gotten wiser and more responsible. I was quite naughty. He’s taught me how to deal with things better.”

“I was in a bad place, wasn’t in school and didn’t go out. Now I’m back in school.”

“They’re good at making you look forward to stuff.”

“It’s nice to have someone to speak to about things, and I think that it has really helped me.”

“Look where I was at the beginning and look where I am now? She came along and my confidence went up.”

How quickly can mentoring be accessed? We are currently able to support a maximum of about x30 pairs of mentors and mentees at any one time. This allows us to sufficiently support and enable the success of each pair. Consistent demand for our service means we are required to operate a waiting list of x30 referrals maximum. By capping the waiting list at this number we are usually able hope to match accepted referrals within 6 months, with young people able to access activities during this time period.

Whilst on the waiting list the only service we can offer referrals are activities, which requires the young person to respond to the invitations sent out. Please note: whilst a referral is on the waiting list we do not have the capacity to be involved in Team Around the Child processes or work as their lead professional.

How can you refer a young person? Check the suitability of your referral using the [referral checklist](#). If your referral meets these criteria, please contact our office on **01225 429694** to discuss.

If there is capacity and we view the referral as suitable, you will be e-mailed a referral form to complete within one week. Once received, we’ll be in touch with the parent and young person with details of the service and our activities programme.

Thank you for your interest in Mentoring Plus.