



## Volunteer Mentoring for 11-21 year olds (21-25 with SEND and in need of Early Help)

### Service Overview

Early Help volunteer 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 this commissioned service, we deliver primary mentoring, in-school services, Student & Family Support 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. Our mix of mentoring and activities appeals to young people and allows them 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 their future and helps 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 higher self esteem
- Support academic engagement
- Introduce the young person to new ideas

For young people our service is non-judgemental, friendly, boundaried, and can feel relatively long-term. We only mentor young people who actively wish to be mentored. 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 11-21 years old (in year 7 and above). They must live in BathNES. They must be interested in being mentored. They must be in need of 'Early Help' as defined below. Applicants aged 21-25 may also be supported if this service is suitable for them. They must have a confirmed diagnosis of SEND from a clinical professional, be in need of 'Early Help' and live in BathNES.

We specifically support young people identified as facing **two or more** risk factors 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, and usually limit this to young people who have not been mentored in this service for more than 12 months.

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 with this service it becomes clear that volunteer mentoring is not a suitable service for the young person we reserve the right to close their 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.

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 several months from a referral being accepted to a young person being matched with a mentor.

We therefore welcome referrals for young people with **early signs** of our referral criteria. Referrals judged to be too high risk or high need for safe working with a volunteer may not be accepted. We have other services which may suit young people in these circumstances – call us for details.

### **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
- A 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
- Regular reviews with their practitioner
- Exit planning with links to services and transitional support on leaving our service
- Professional 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. The referrer (or a named alternative adult contact) will be expected to continue a dialogue with our service throughout the mentoring.

## **Weekly activities programme**

Young people in our service can access a range of free activities throughout the year. Invitations are shared with young people each term with places offered on a first come first served basis. Evening and school holiday activities may also be available.

## **Participation**

We encourage young people who are interested to stay involved with the charity, representing young people's interests, building skills and helping to plan and deliver activities. Our Youth Reps and Girls Group both meet regularly and transport is provided.

## **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 volunteer mentoring be accessed?**

We are currently able to support a maximum of about x36 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 can only open to referrals when we have capacity to assess them within an acceptable time. It may take several months between a referral being accepted and the young person being matched with a mentor.

### **How can you refer a young person?**

Check the suitability of your referral using the referral checklist. If your referral meets these criteria, let us know that you would like to be added to our referrers' mailing list. Once you are on this list, you will be informed about when we are opening to applications to refer, with all the information you will need to complete this process.

Thank you for your interest in Mentoring Plus.