

Every conversation starts with the child”

“Trusted Relationships”



Welcome to this week's blog which has been written by sue Naylor and which showcases some really positive work achieved through the mentoring program. The Trusted Relationships program is a Government initiative and in North Yorkshire and York is intended to and successful in helping to foster positive, protective, persistent and long-term relationships between vulnerable young people at risk of exploitation and supported and trained trusted young adults and adults. The project tests the relative effectiveness of three types of support models:

Restorative Advocates (individuals with lived service experience)

Mentors and...

Trusted adults identified from within young people's own networks who can support them into adulthood. The project will track which group of young people have the strongest outcomes.

Welcome to the monthly Trusted Relationships Blog!

This month, the focus is on the Strand 1 element of the Trusted Relationships Program – volunteer mentoring, managed by Alison Cammiss.

We also consider the impact COVID-19 has had on the changing nature of county lines and CSE/CCE.

Strand 1:
Support for children and young people who are identified as being at risk of CCE (including County Lines, CSE and Modern Slavery). Delivery is through volunteer Mentors – specialist adult volunteer mentors who will become the ‘Trusted Relationship’ with the young person. The volunteer mentors are co-ordinated and managed by Alison Cammiss .

COVID 19, lockdowns and CCE/CSE

COVID-19 and the subsequent lockdowns have shown a significant change in the way county lines criminals have operated and recruited and exploited children and young people.

Trains are a massive part in moving drugs and there has been a conscious effort to target trains recently by placing plain clothed officers on the train stations. Covid19 stopped that, transport was limited and closely monitored and cars moving around became very obvious to police. During these times police were able to monitor these modes of transport well.

COVID-19 made it very difficult to move young people from an exporting to an importing area discretely as they have been doing previously and so young people within the import area were increasingly being used and moved about.

The result was that we saw a change in young people going missing. Rather than a young person being moved about for a week or more from one area to another, what we have seen is that young people have been going missing for a few hours at a time/ overnight, largely within their home area. Local young people are going missing for large blocks of time, not really going anywhere far but, crucially, with no explanation. Recent stats show that 53% of missing records are young people involved in CCE/CSE

Volunteer Mentors and Independent Return Interviews

The volunteer mentors within Strand 1 play a crucial role in engaging with young people who are regularly going missing. If a young person is linked with a mentor or an Independent Visitor we ask them to conduct the interview as they have the relationship with the young person.

When a child is found, they must be offered an independent return interview. Independent return interviews provide an opportunity for young people to talk to someone completely independent of Children's Social Care to uncover information that can help protect children from the risk of going missing again, from risks they may have been exposed to while missing or from risk factors in their home.

In York, The Volunteer Service deliver this service for young people in care (CYPIC), or alongside the Exploitation Team children on a CP plan or CiN. They use a variety of ways to engage young people in these interviews, including the opportunity to attend ‘virtually’ using the ‘Attend Anywhere’ app which has been successful in providing a less intimidating, less intrusive video call alternative to face to face visits.

Volunteer Mentoring

Children/Young People and their families are supported in a variety of ways in York, dependent on their individual needs and the assessed level of risk. Which means that at any point, different services will move in and out of children/ young people's lives. It is common for a child/young person to move between these services.

Whilst this can be an appropriate response to the changing risks and needs, it does mean that that individual child/young person will come into contact with numerous professionals with no real sustained or consistent relationship with a key worker.

This is where the volunteer project can make a real difference to the child/young person's experience of being 'helped' and supported.

If a child/ young person is referred for a Trusted Relationships mentor, they are matched to someone appropriate for them and the relationship begins. The volunteer will remain involved as the consistent and supportive person for as long as is required.

The Volunteer Mentors in York are specialist adult volunteer mentors who will become the 'Trusted Relationship' with the young person. Every volunteer mentor receives training and has valuable skills and knowledge with which they can offer tailored and appropriate support to the child/ young person.

Here is a case study which highlights the positive impact a mentor can have:

We linked J with an experienced mentor as we felt they were '*hard to reach*' but had stable roots within their family and a network or support that they were failing to engage with at this point. We would have liked to have linked J with a male mentor as they had lost their father when there were 11 years old and had recently lost their grandad and had no other male role models in their life however we did not have any male mentors available.

The mentor B, worked in a school as a behavioural support worker and had previously mentored for us under a different scheme, therefore we knew them well and felt that they could offer J the support they needed.

After our initial introductions B picked J up and took them for some food in order to start building a relationship and explain their role further. B agreed they would check in with J regularly by text and take them out once a week, however they did also explain they would not be rewarding J for negative behaviour and although they would meet, they would not be doing fun activities if J's behaviour deteriorated.

J informed B they would like to do some form of exercise or sport which B explored and also spoke to the YJS about what they were doing with J as they did not want to duplicate.

The link between B and the YJS became the link that made a difference to J behaviour, the Youth Justice Officer would inform myself and B of missed appointments and non-compliance with J's order as the trust grew between J and B, B was able to support J to make all statutory appointments but to also give J time and space to talk about what was going on in their life.

On one occasion J met B with their hand all smashed up, B was able to talk though the incident and get him some medical care. J would not have had the avenue to talk to anyone without the mentoring provision which would have had the knock of effect of them missing YJS appointments, however, on this occasion B could speak to the YJS and explain the situation therefore ceasing the risk of any escalation of the order.

Another example of the mentoring relationship making a difference is when J went missing they would still answer B texts and the mentor could inform us of any information, in particular there were able to explain to J what was going to happen if they missed any further YJS appointments. In this case J let B pick them up and take them to the YJS appointment therefore they were not breached and was able to complete the work undertaken by the YJS.

J was often frustrated by Children's Social Care and would refuse to see the social worker, again B was able to explain the difference multi agency working makes and that CSC would cease once J's behaviour changed. This highlights the difference a long term mentor makes and that the relationship is the most important factor surrounding a young person in order to work with them. B was able to feedback to me that J was not happy with his social worker and would like to change, this did happen however J was stepped down to Child in Need and from this point his behaviour changed for the better.

B spent a lot of time talking to J about positive relationships and safe sex which J seems to have taken on board, I do not think these conversations would have happened if J did not have a mentor and it is the little things that make the big differences.

The relationship between B and J came to an end naturally, J had moved on in their life for all the right reasons. B and J had a last meeting and J had my contact details should they need to speak to B again, hence having some control over the ending and feeling like they have someone should they need it.

This led to J contacting me about their apprenticeship, B had informed J that there were available for further support should J need it therefore when the young person was struggling to 'join up the dots' with the apprenticeship application they asked for support. The main issue was the young person had tried various avenues to get back in touch with the apprenticeship team at City of York Council but had been unsuccessful, their relative was providing the placement but needed the young person to make some introductions.

The mentor and I were able to make the links and ensure the young person and their relative were contacted earlier rather than later, the main delay was around the pandemic and the uncertainty of courses starting in September.

The mentoring relationship enabled the young person to have someone to turn to when getting frustrated with systems, and hopefully long term help them to understand there are processes that take time but with patience and persistence they achieve positive outcomes.

Outcomes:

Safety / Vulnerability
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J stopped offending • J knows where to go to ask for help • J has a positive network around them
Stability and Support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J has a long term positive partner • J is getting on better with their mum • J can contact me if they want further support
Emotional & Physical Wellbeing
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J attends the gym regularly • J goes to work everyday
Reduced Criminal Activity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • J is not offending now
Engagement

- J continued to engage with their mentor for 5 months after statutory services ended and the relationship ended positively
- J goes to work everyday

Attitude towards Education / Training / Employment

- J is now in a full time apprenticeship

Participation in meaningful and positive activities

- J is keeping fit through exercise

Reduced Costs to Society

- No longer offending therefore no cost to Youth Justice Service
- Attending apprenticeship therefore no cost to benefit system
- In a positive relationship and aware of safe relationships therefore no cost to NHS

How do I refer?

If you'd like to refer someone for a Trusted Relationships mentor, then please contact Alison Cammiss in the first instance who is happy to talk this through with you. Alison.cammiss@york.gov.uk

As always, if you'd like any further information about TR please contact Sue Naylor sue.naylor@york.gov.uk, Alison Cammiss: Alison.cammiss@york.gov.uk or Kate Dunne kate.dunne@york.gov.uk.

Please let me have your thoughts on this, or any other blog. It would be great if any of you were interested in writing a blog around a practice areas or indeed if you have any great work you would like to share.

Thought for the week...



Let me have your comments about this blog or about social work in general here...

What is going well	What is not going well	What would you like to change
Comments		

Dallas Principal Social Worker. Head of Quality Assurance and Safeguarding

