
GUIDE

Introducing and exploring befriending and mentoring as a preventative and early intervention tool in work with children

Partners

NKBL

<http://www.noknivesbetterlives.com>

YMCA

Scotland <http://www.ymcascotland.org>

With the support of

Befriending Networks

<http://www.befriending.co.uk>

Scottish Mentoring Network

<http://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk>

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INTRODUCTION

In 2013 **No Knives Better Lives** (NKBL) provided support to **YMCA Scotland** in the development of the ASPIRE community mentoring model.

ASPIRE is a programme which links an adult mentor with a child in P7 (age 11/12) with the purpose of reducing negative behaviour and attitudes, building resilience and confidence and improving engagement at school. The approach comes out of the earlier work of YMCA Scotland and the development of the Plusone mentoring programme, a highly successful programme which works with young people identified as most likely to move further into the youth justice system, the intention being to intervene when change in behaviour and attitudes might still be achieved.

In the process of developing and piloting the ASPIRE model, NKBL and YMCA Scotland recognised the benefits of sharing learning and encouraging others to consider the role that befriending/mentoring might have as a preventative, early intervention tool for children struggling with the consequences of negative behaviour, disengagement from school and community and the risks associated with peripheral engagement in anti-social behaviour and/or offending.

An independent agency **TASC (Scotland)** was appointed to produce a resource which captured and presented a way of working that might influence others in their approach to work with vulnerable and marginalised children. The resource that has emerged and is published here promotes the role and value of befriending/mentoring in work with some of Scotland's most disadvantaged children.

Project partners and acknowledgements

This resource has been developed with the participation of No Knives Better Lives and YMCA Scotland and facilitated by independent agency TASC (Scotland).

No Knives Better Lives - <http://www.noknivesbetterlives.com>

(NKBL) is part of the Scottish Government's work to reduce violence and tackle anti-social behaviour. More specifically, it is a youth engagement initiative that aims to educate young people about the dangers of carrying a knife and the devastating personal consequences it can have on their future. NKBL seeks to influence attitudes and values to change behaviours in relation to knife carrying through the production of educational and marketing materials, the delivery of national youth engagement programmes and the provision of training and resources for people working with young people. NKBL is part of the Scottish Government's work to reduce violence and tackle anti-social behaviour. To date, NKBL has been delivered in 11 Local Authority areas and from 2014/15 is moving towards a national delivery model.

YMCA Scotland - <http://www.ymcascotland.org>

The YMCA is one of the biggest youth organisations in the world. Founded in 1844, YMCA operates today in 119 countries working with 58 million people. Across the world, YMCA works to bring social justice and peace to young people and their communities, regardless of religion, race, gender or culture. In Scotland the YMCA operates in over 100 local communities through 32 local YMCA organisations working with the most vulnerable children, young people and families. Often based in the heart of a community, YMCA supports young people to achieve their fullest potential. The agency does this by working alongside partners in social work, other voluntary organisations police, education and local churches. Much of the YMCA's work is delivered by volunteers and each local YMCA is governed by local people who make up the Board of Trustees.

TASC (Scotland) - <http://www.tascagency.co.uk>

TASC is an independent social research agency who was commissioned to produce this resource.

Several agencies have supported this venture.

Scotland benefits from the work of two national agencies that support work in this area.

Befriending Networks - <http://www.befriending.co.uk>

Befriending Networks performs the role of providing information and support for new and established befriending projects. This helps agencies to develop effectively and efficiently by sharing experience and practice between projects. Befriending Networks also plays a developmental role for befriending projects in writing resources and setting guidelines and recommendations for best practice in managing them. As the umbrella organisation for befriending, Befriending Networks encourages befriending projects to exchange experience and develop good practice.

Scottish Mentoring Network - <http://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk>

The aims of Scottish Mentoring Network are to foster good practice in mentoring, promote the work of Network members and provide a national forum that will influence the development of mentoring across all sectors and inform policy and decision makers in Scotland. The Network provides a distinctively Scottish perspective on mentoring, which is developed and sustained through co-operation and partnership between mentoring providers and users at a national, local and thematic level and policy makers, funders and the academic community.

Local agencies who deliver befriending and mentoring services have also been generous with their time, talking about what they do and sharing written information about their work. Thanks to these agencies:

Aberlour Befriending Stirling

http://www.aberlour.org.uk/how_we_help/services

Aberlour Childcare Trust Moray Youth Point

http://www.aberlour.org.uk/how_we_help/services

Befriend a Child (Aberdeen)

<http://www.befriendachild.org.uk/>

Befrienders in Argyll

<http://www.befriendersforchildren.co.uk/>

Edinburgh Befriending Consortium

This is a partnership between Broomhouse Centre (West Edinburgh), Sunflower Garden (East Edinburgh) and CHILDREN 1ST (North and South Edinburgh)

http://www.totalcraigroyston.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2013/10/00652_Edinburgh_befriending_consortium_leafletV17.pdf

Families First (St. Andrews)

www.familiesfirststandrews.org.uk

East Ayrshire Befriending Service

<http://www.east-ayrshire.gov.uk>

Link Adolescent Befriending Project

<http://www.linkbefriending.org.uk/>

Stable Life

<http://www.stablelife.org.uk/>

INtegr8 Befriending Service (West Lothian Youth Action Project)

<http://www.wlyap.org.uk/>

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PART 1

Prevention is always better than cure. That is a simple truth which we should apply widely in our thinking and practice. There is a crying need to shift the balance of effort and investment 'upstream' to build a real national effort around support for children and families and indeed to apply the principles of **early intervention** and **prevention** more generally.

Professor Susan Deaco

Joining the Dots: A better start for Scotland's children

This section of the resource sets the scene for a better understanding of the role of befriending and mentoring for children in Scotland, a country whose ambition is to be the best country in which to grow up.

Early intervention

The concept of early intervention can apply at any stage of life. Examples of early intervention can be seen in support for new parents helping them to manage the challenges of caring for a new born child, it also operates in the work of credit unions who introduce families to a saving culture, and early intervention has also shown real benefits for people who are diagnosed as having dementia, helping them live with and manage the condition.

When it comes to children the notion of early intervention certainly has an important resonance when we think about how to protect children from harm and maximise the child's potential.

A commitment to early intervention runs through much of the policy that impacts on children. Early intervention is not framed as a thing that is done to an individual, family or community. Rather it is a proactive, empowering intervention. For the Scottish Government a commitment to early intervention is the precursor to work which might be seen as preventative. In the joint Scottish Government and COSLA policy statement 'Early Years and Early Intervention' it states:

A key part of any early intervention policy is building the capacity of individuals, families and communities to secure the best outcomes for themselves. It is about moving from intervening when a crisis happens towards prevention, building resilience and providing the right level of support before problems materialise.

When it comes to children and young people the Early Intervention Foundation argues that early intervention is very much linked to action, to identifying who needs support and then doing something for the child before harm is done or difficulties become entrenched.

Every baby, child and young person needs support to achieve their potential, but some children require extra help along the way. Early intervention is about getting additional, timely and effective support to children who need it – enabling them to flourish and preventing costly, harmful long-term consequences.

Having made a moral case for recognising and acting on the needs of the child as early as possible, the Foundation also highlights both a financial and social imperative to act early.

This not only improves outcomes for children but also saves money. How much better to help the child before he or she is excluded from school, or commits a crime or goes into care – for the child, family, community and wider society.

Prevention

The old adage 'prevention is better than cure' is sometimes accredited to Erasmus the 16th century humanist, priest and social critic. It has become accepted as a 'common sense' approach to averting problems before they happen or become entrenched. In terms of this resource, the idea of prevention is linked to outcomes.

Prevention can be proactive, it can mean we plan ahead to ward off possible problems; for example every school should have an anti-bullying policy and ensure positive relationships are formed within a safe school environment. But prevention can also be about reacting when the practice of early intervention has recognised a potential problem. Often then the child is on the threshold of something we might want to avoid; for example the breakdown in relationships with adults in their school or finding themselves on the periphery of local anti-social or criminal activity.

In a Scotland where we want every child to be cared for and loved, we can agree that children should not experience social isolation, bullying or abuse. Nor should they be exposed to harm from adult use of drugs or alcohol or experience violence at home or in the community. Prevention of these damaging experiences leads us to make commitments to children, for example they should have access to good public services, including an education and an experience of school that meets their needs.

In Scotland we can look to the Getting It Right for Every Child (GIRFEC) framework to help us understand that all children should be safe, healthy, achieving, nurtured, active, respected, responsible and included. Scotland is also committed to implementation of the rights of all children and young people enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

A practical commitment to GIRFEC and the UNCRC requires us to do all we can to prevent poor outcomes for children. Again, the idea of action is important, so that if the child in our community or school is at risk of harm, if they are not as safe, healthy and happy as they should be, what are we going to do to intervene, to prevent potential or further harm?

Prevention matters because we have a duty to protect children. It matters because the longer a child is left without hope and a belief in themselves or others the greater difficulty they will experience in relationships later in life. It matters because doing nothing has a cost for public services picking up the pieces of a more complex situation further down the line. The Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services made such a point:

A clear conclusion that we draw is that, if public services are at once to promote social justice and human rights and to be sustainable into the future, it is imperative that public services adopt a much more preventative approach; and that, within that, they succeed in addressing the persistent problem of multiple negative outcomes and inequalities faced by too many of the people and communities of Scotland.

Nurture

Across education and children's services, in both statutory and voluntary sector agencies, there is a growing interest in and commitment to nurturing approaches. Some of what might be considered to be 'nurturing' is often intuitive to people, in this sense it is about caring and loving a child and being aware of their needs as well as helping them to learn pro-social behaviours and empathy for others.

If a child has not always had positive experiences, where there has been neglect, stress or turmoil then there can be a role for others – teachers, children's workers, a befriender or mentor – to build a relationship with a child in which opportunities can be created to learn and practice new ways of being with others, building understanding and skills they need for positive interpersonal relationships.

Befriending, or perhaps in particular mentoring a child, can have a particular focus, for example on learning a new sport or helping the child improve school attendance (we explore this more later) but one-to-one befriending and mentoring with a child can be nurturing when it has characteristics such as these:

- The befriender or mentor creates a safe space or place to be when they meet with the child.
- The befriender/mentor and child eat together and share news.
- The relationships is given time to develop.
- Adult and child play together.
- Both adult and child are encouraged to listen to each other.
- The child is encouraged to verbalise how they feel.
- The befriender/mentor understands that all behaviour is communication; challenging behaviour is recognised and discussed and pro-social behaviour is encouraged.
- A befriender/mentor understands and pays attention to points of transition and change because these are often stressful for the child.
- Adults model the behaviour they seek from children: adults are caring, respectful and they listen.
- While befriending/mentoring is usually a one-to-one relationship, if children are brought together for any activities there is always a good ratio of adult to child participants.

Addressing risk and building protective factors

A befriending/mentoring relationship with a child can have a profound impact as an early intervention and preventative tool when it has a clear intention to address risks and build protective factors.

As an example, thinking about **risks**, if we consider children who are involved in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity they are more likely to be children who have had poor experience of school, truanted, lacked boundaries and respectful relationships at home and held a low opinion of their community; in other words there is a lack of positive attachment to others and low aspirations.

Alternatively **protective factors** buffer the child against challenges, stress and turmoil. The child who has good parental supervision, higher self-esteem, who uses their leisure time to get involved in constructive social activities, is more likely to be connected positively to others and to school. Additionally, the child who has what might be thought of as a natural mentor or befriender in their life, an adult with whom they have a positive and influential relationship, are less likely to get involved in problem behaviours. Thus their outcomes will be more positive.

The role of mentoring and befriending can be to take a step back and to identify what risks a child is facing by asking some key questions in order that these risks might be clearly articulated:

How are things at home? What is the child's attendance at school like? How are their friendships and peer relations? Have they been identified by Police or Children's Services as being on the periphery or already engaged in anti-social behaviour or criminal activity?

If responses to such questions highlight risks in the child's life then further questions can be considered in order to find a counterbalance in order to develop protective factors:

What support does this child need? What would they benefit from in terms of addressing attitudes, social skills and peer relationships? Are there ways to help the child view school positively? What positive social and community activities could the child be supported to access? Would a positive relationship with an adult befriender/mentor help the child to learn and model new ways of engaging with others?

In recognising risks and understanding protective factors it is important for the befriending/mentoring programme to be realistic about what can be addressed and to be open with children and families about the purpose of any intervention. These are the kinds of issues that support from the agencies **Befriending Networks** and **Scottish Mentoring Network** can help a project address.

Understanding befriending and mentoring

'Thanks to Befriending Networks for permission to draw on their publication.'

Good Practice in Befriending.

The terms **befriending** and **mentoring** can both be used to describe a relationship between a volunteer adult and a child which is initiated, supported and monitored by a voluntary or statutory agency. Services are usually based in a community, and offered to a child who has a particular need for a befriender/mentor – perhaps to reduce isolation, increase confidence or resilience or improve wellbeing. This is distinct from a friendship which is a private relationship.

While befriending or mentoring for a young person or an adult need not be face-to-face (it could be delivered online or on the telephone) the model of befriending or mentoring for children this resource describes should be thought of as face-to-face, predominantly one-to-one but could also be delivered to groups of children working with a group of befrienders or mentors.

For some people the distinction between befriending and mentoring is important, for others less so. In recognising the distinction between the two approaches a key factor can be the extent to which the relationship is concerned with achieving specific goals. With this in mind, Befriending Networks has developed this useful continuum to help a service decide how to think about and describe the model it adopts.



Looking across this continuum you might think about befriending and mentoring in this way:

1. Befriending

At point one of our continuum befriending is concerned with informal, social support for a child for whom it will be beneficial to develop a trusting relationship with an adult befriender over time. The befriender can work with a child to reduce isolation and provide a positive relationship where the child has few. As a result of the befriending relationship the child might grow in confidence, or their might be other benefits, but these are not set as formal objectives.

2. Befriending

Whilst providing informal, social support (as already described) there may be additional things that befriending wants to achieve with the child, for example increasing the participation of the child in community activities – perhaps a local football club, swimming regularly at the local pool or joining in with a summer play-scheme. However, maintaining the principal intention of befriending means that although these things might be achieved the success of the relationship is not dependent on them, so it is the positive relationship that is most valued.

3. **Befriending/Mentoring**

Once again, work that might be described as befriending/mentoring maintains a focus on providing informal, social support while also using the supportive relationship to go on to achieve other stated objectives. This could include increasing the child's confidence so that they can engage more independently with other activities. If this is the model of work the project wants to undertake then the objectives which are intended would be spoken about, agreed and reviewed between the befriending/mentoring agency, the befriender/mentor and the child and their family.

4. **Mentoring/Befriending**

Moving toward a mentoring/befriending model we would see that the volunteer mentor/befriender would be more focused on developing objectives with the child, although this might be done in quite a low key way, over time. To help develop shared objectives the volunteer mentor/befriender would spend social time with the child, building their relationships and trust, and keeping the child's family informed of progress.

5. **Mentoring**

At this point of the continuum the role of the volunteer mentor is to work with the child to agree objectives at the outset, to ensure the child's family is informed, and then to work toward meeting these. Again, a trusting relationship is a key to success but the social elements of the relationship are intended to keep an eye on the objectives agreed at the start.

6. **Mentoring**

Mentoring can also be more clearly focused on meeting the objectives agreed at the start, and in this case the social relationship between the volunteer mentor and the child or young person is less of a focus. However, having said this a successful relationship between the child/young person and their mentor is always built on trust and reliability.

Getting It Right for Every Child and the Named Person

Getting it Right for Every Child is also known as GIRFEC. This is a national policy that wants to make sure all children and young people have their needs met so that they can fully achieve their potential. The GIRFEC values and principles stress the promotion of children's well-being by keeping them safe, promoting their development and respecting their views. GIRFEC is important to the practice of befriending and mentoring because it provides a framework within which all adults work together in the best interests of the child. There are also important issues to be considered in terms of working together and information-sharing.

To help adults work together the GIRFEC approach looks at eight areas of wellbeing. These are recognised as areas in which children and young people need to progress in order to do well now and in the future. They allow those responsible for the care and support of children, including members of their own families, to look at a situation in a way that will help them identify any needs and concerns and plan with the child and family any action they need to take. The eight wellbeing indicators are:

- Safe
- Healthy
- Achieving
- Nurtured
- Active
- Respected
- Responsible
- Included

Thinking about wellbeing through the GIRFEC approach gives everyone a common language and a way to gather information about a child's world, making sure the child is growing and developing, and has everything they need from the people who look after them both at home and in the wider community.

In 2014 the Scottish Parliament passed new legislation which incorporates aspects of GIRFEC into law. Of interest to agencies developing and delivering befriending or mentoring work with children will be the role of Named Person and new guidance on information sharing.

The Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 requires Local Authorities and Health Boards to provide a Named Person for every child from birth to 18 years old. The Named Person has a duty to promote, support and safeguard the wellbeing of a child; they are the first point of contact through which the child, their family and those in contact with the child can raise concerns or seek advice. For a child in primary school the Named Person is likely to be their head teacher, and in a secondary school the head teacher or deputy head with responsibility for pastoral care.

There are duties for various public bodies to assist the Named Person, share information with them and comply with requests for help. However, there are no new powers of compulsion. That is, the Bill does not give the Named Person any powers to force a child or family to do anything. If powers of compulsion are required, this can be done under existing child protection and Children's Hearings legislation.

The Act also provides for information sharing to support the duties of the Named Person. The Act states that information is shared only if:

- It is 'likely to be' relevant to promoting, supporting and/or safeguarding the wellbeing of the child (rather than 'might' be).
- The views of the child are considered as far as reasonably practicable.
- It does not prejudice the conduct of any criminal investigation or the prosecution of any offence.

If these conditions are met, information can be shared in breach of a duty of confidentiality. Until the new Act becomes law in 2016 the Scottish Government is developing and will publish for consideration a set of guidance which will support the Act; this will address the role of the Named Person and the issues associated with information sharing.

YMCA (Scotland) Aspire: a profile of a mentoring approach

The Aspire mentoring programme emerged from the learning and success of **YMCA Scotland's Plusone mentoring** approach. Plusone was developed with social work and police colleagues as **early intervention** to divert vulnerable young people out of the criminal justice system.

From Plusone the vision emerged for a mentoring approach that engaged as **early** as possible and as a **preventative approach** with children identified as being vulnerable to experience a disconnect from school and community life as teenagers. It was also important to YMCA Scotland that the model would provide the option of effective mentoring support to as many children as possible and as such it would be possible for a local community group to manage the programme, so the Aspire model seeks to reduce the cost down to the bare essential elements without compromising safety and integrity.

Through the autumn of 2011 YMCA Scotland put together the core elements of the programme through partnership work with two Primary Schools and High School in the Oxfords community of Edinburgh. Mentors were recruited through a local host partner, in this case from Central, a local church that was keen to volunteer to support vulnerable children and families in the area. Across their work YMCA recruits from a range of community groups and from members of the community.

Aspire mentoring is aimed at children who have just entered Primary 7, are in their final year in primary education and for whom there are concerns in terms of their behaviour or attitudes. Concerns may include poor engagement at school, deteriorating relationships at home or early signs of anti-social behaviour in the community. The children who might take part in an Aspire programme may not easily navigate the transition to high school or settle easily into this new environment. Engaging at this stage therefore becomes all the more important as the community based mentoring relationships builds sufficient confidence, stronger positive peer groups and pro-social behaviours that can be sustained into the teenage years. YMCA Scotland believes that investing in children at this stage of a vulnerable young life may be the most valuable commitment that can be made to an individual.

Having developed the programme through extensive piloting YMCA Scotland is keen to support other communities to adopt the Aspire model. The Aspire approach is now being developed in four further communities where YMCA will work with a local host agency, offer support, training and the practical materials needed to establish and operate the programme.

YMCA (Scotland) welcomes enquiries from organisations and communities interested in Aspire. These should be made to:

Peter Croy
National General Secretary
YMCA Scotland
Peter@ymcascotland.org

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www.noknivesbetterlives.com



PART 2

It is the need of every single one of us, child or grownup, to feel wanted, to feel we belong and that we matter to someone else in the world. We all know, from our own experience, that feeling isolated from those around us, alienated from society, makes us sad, even angry. The deeper this isolation becomes, the more hurtful and resentful we feel and the more this is reflected in our behaviour. Such behaviour only leads to greater alienation. Children who from an early age feel alone and apart from the rest of the world, and there are so many of them, who become angry and hurt, have little chance of leading fulfilled lives. They are lost from the start. Above all, they need friendship, the solid warmth of someone who cares and goes on caring. With such lasting friendship, self-worth and self-confidence can flourish, and a child's life can be altered forever.

Michael Morpurgo

This section of the resource highlights the core components of mentoring and befriending, what it can achieve as a preventative and early intervention tool in work with children, as well as some of the challenges that should be considered.

The purpose of befriending/mentoring in work with children

Befriending or mentoring a child can be used as a tool to address risks or difficulties and build strengths or protective factors, particularly so when there is an opportunity to intervene early and prevent further deepening of problems. A befriending/mentoring project, and through it the befrienders/mentors who work with children, can have a significant impact in the following areas:

Addressing social isolation and providing social opportunities and skills

When a child is isolated or has been unable to participate in the play, sports, learning or leisure activities available to other children, a befriender or mentor can introduce new opportunities that build skills and confidence. Building skills and confidence might well be related to a particular activity of interest to the child (or taking time to try lots of things to find and develop an interest) but they can also be about interpersonal skills and ways of being and behaving with others.

The befriender/mentor as a consistent and reliable adult

A common theme throughout this resource is the central issue of trust. In order to build trust the befriender/mentor must prove that they are a consistent and reliable adult. Learning to trust adults and to communicate with them will help a child connect with the other relationships and support they need for life.

Thinking about behaviour and choices

Befriending or mentoring may well be considered an appropriate response to a child's needs where there are concerns about the child's behaviour and choices, perhaps because these behaviours and choices bring the child into conflict with others or isolate or exclude them from experiences which would be beneficial. Personal reflection, and in time consideration of alternative ways of behaving or reconsidering the choices we make, is a challenging process for any person; for a child this takes time, something which a befriender or mentor can offer.

Reflecting on relationships with peers

A hope for any child is that they have positive peer relationships. However children can be isolated by peers, they can struggle to build friendships, or they can get into relationships with individuals or groups whose choices or behaviours put them at risk. Within a befriending/mentoring relationship it is possible to create space where these issues are recognised and talked about, and where new ways of being with peers can be considered, planned and reviewed.

Building engagement with school and learning and addressing non-attendance and school exclusion

When children disconnect from school and learning this has a major impact on future outcomes. While parents and carers, schools and other professionals who may be involved with the child have responsibilities to work on school non-attendance, disaffection or exclusion a befriending/mentoring relationship provides a space to talk about both difficulties and aspirations, to try to help the child reconnect with both formal (school-based learning) and/or informal community-based learning opportunities. With a child's permission

it is also possible for a befriending/mentoring project to communicate successes and positive outcomes from the befriending/mentoring relationship, helping to re-frame a view of a child as problematic to one which is balanced by positive attributes and achievements.

Considering family life and relationships

The focus of a befriending/mentoring project is on the child but clearly children live their lives in the context of family and relationships with parents, carers, siblings and other family members are of importance. While respecting both child and family privacy, children will (early on or in time) talk about family relationships and just as befriending/mentoring projects can help the child reflect on relationships in school they can also be used to support the child to consider improving relationships at home. Once again (and building on ways in which the befriending/mentoring project has decided to engage with families) positive feedback about activities and achievements can positively influence relationships at home.

Preventing offending

The model of befriending and mentoring discussed in this resource has been to set the approach in the context of early intervention and prevention. In their primary school years, or early years of secondary school, children can find themselves on the periphery of anti-social behaviour and criminality. The relationship which a befriender or mentor seeks to build with a child can be used to address such experiences, to help the child reflect on the pressures or influences that see them get involved in situations, to think about the consequences of behaviours and choices and to seek out alternatives.

Key elements of a befriending/mentoring approach

This section of the resource identifies the core components that underpin befriending or mentoring with children. Should you be considering the approach to work with children the next step would be to approach **Befriending Networks** or **Scottish Mentoring Network** who can provide detailed guidance and support.

A focus on the child

At all times the focus of any befriending or mentoring project should be the child; perhaps this is self-evident, but there can be other pressures, perhaps self-imposed, or from a funder or partner agencies, to work with a particular child, or reach target numbers, or shift emphasis. Every project can change, that is in the nature of reflection and monitoring and evaluation, but to be faithful to the ethos and meaning of a befriending or mentoring approach the child remains at the centre.

A second element of the **child at the centre** is the need to emphasise that the role of befriender/mentor is not to 'solve' the problems a child might face but to get alongside the child and help her/him to reflect on challenges and risks – it is through the building of understanding and self-worth that the child can be better equipped for their life.

A community focus

A strong element across successful projects is a firm location in the community from which participating children come. This foundation in a child's community – whether that community is geographical or a community of interest – means that there are opportunities found and created to consider risks and build protective factors in ways which are real, practical and useful to the child. Long after the befriending or mentoring relationship has been ended the likelihood is that the child remains in their community and it should be the hope and intention of a befriending or mentoring intervention that the child is then better equipped to navigate their way through life in their community.

Voluntarism and consent

Any child's involvement with a befriending or mentoring project should be based on them having information about what the project is about and what it will mean to them to get involved. Information should be provided in written format, this should be in language that the child will understand, avoiding jargon. It can be useful for the befriending/mentoring provider to go over this with the child to make sure it is explained verbally and accurately. Children also need a trusted adult to go over this information with them, after this initial run through, giving them the chance to form and ask questions. It is then important that the child has some time to think about what getting involved will mean for them and so a formal request or invitation to them to become part of the project should come after they have had at least a few days to think it over or ask questions. A child should never be put under any pressure by adults to take part, no matter how much the adult believes it might be to their benefit.

It is likely that the befriending/mentoring project will want to make sure that the child's parents or carers are also on board and give their consent to their child's involvement. The information that is written for the child, if it is clear and full, can also be used to communicate with parents and carers. Again, it can be useful to meet and explain this information verbally as assumptions should not be made about literacy.

A befriending/mentoring project might ask a child or their parent/carer to formally consent to take part by signing an agreement to take part. This needn't feel like something that is too contractual or complex, it might just be a statement at the end of the information sheet that says something along the lines of:

I have read and understood the information about the project. I have had the chance to think about taking part and to ask questions. I would like to take part.

Finally in terms of voluntarism and consent, this is something that should be reviewed regularly. Feelings about participation can change and so in any ongoing review of engagement with the child their agreement to continuing participation should be checked.

An approach that is non-stigmatising and positive

Wherever the befriending/mentoring project sits on the continuum of work described earlier (see page 11) a child will be involved in a programme because the adults who care about them think that they might benefit from a positive and consistent relationship with an adult. It is important to be clear with a child (and their family) about reasons for involvement. Early engagement with a child and their parents or carers provides an opportunity to stress that identifying needs, building relationships or confidence and providing new opportunities is a positive thing to do. Everybody needs a bit of support to achieve their goals.

Building a trusting and stable relationship

Mentoring or befriending a child is about getting on together, continuity and regular contact. The adult needs to help the child understand that they are a consistent and positive presence, one that turns up, sticks around and keeps promises. An important factor in a befriending or mentoring relationship is trust. And so it is self-evident perhaps that at the centre of the mentor/befriender and child relationship is the rapport and the bond that is developed.

Clarity of purpose and intent

Issues already highlighted in this section – voluntarism, consent and framing befriending and mentoring as a positive intervention – have already alluded to the need for clarity of purpose and intent when a project works with a child. This clarity needs to run through all engagement so that the befriending or mentoring relationship does not lose focus, gains are then easily identified and when the relationship has achieved what it set out to do endings can be done positively.

Practically, and from the outset, a befriending and mentoring project needs this clarity to be evident in referral criteria and systems, including the parameters there are in terms of which children the project seeks to work with and who the project will not be suitable for.

Screening, training and support for befrienders and mentors

Successful projects understand that their work needs to be based on best practice when it comes to systems and planning and sustaining the level of resources they need – but ultimately it comes down to the quality of the adult befrienders and mentors they recruit, train and support. The agencies Befriending Networks and Scottish Mentoring Network provide support in these areas and can also point to other initiatives that operate near a new initiative or work in ways which are similar to those planned.

Rights

All public agencies in Scotland have a role to play in a national commitment to meaningful implementation of the rights of the child that are enshrined in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child. Perhaps it is implicit in the work of befriending and mentoring projects that there is an understanding of the importance of the child's right to be safe, healthy, happy and included but making these understandings more explicit through reading and training (for befrienders and mentors and children) about the rights of the child can enhance the work of befriending and mentoring.

Resources

Practical but central to the development and delivery of any work is thinking through what resources are needed. Other befriending and mentoring projects will be in a good place to share from their experience what the day-to-day costs of running a project are. Other projects will also have experience that can describe what kind of role and support might be required from other local agencies or hosts, but also what might be short term and what needs to be planned for as the project grows.

For community-based, volunteer led or dependent programmes it is important to consider carefully what is being asked of the people involved because they are the key resource of any befriending or mentoring project. It is important to ensure then that what is asked of people is not only do-able at the beginning, when there is a lot of goodwill and enthusiasm, but later too.

Monitoring and evaluation

There is an expectation on voluntary sector agencies, including those providing befriending and mentoring projects, to systematically collect information about their activities and then to consider that material and reflect on progress towards the purposes which the project has set for itself. Establishing an approach to monitoring and evaluation that is manageable and useful – rather than one that feels cumbersome or daunting – should be considered as early as possible. There is help out there, from the key agencies already mentioned and from Evaluation Support Scotland who work specifically with the voluntary sector.

By learning how to evaluate your own activity you will discover what works or doesn't, and how to make use of that learning to measure the difference you are making. **Evaluation Support Scotland**

Challenges in delivering a befriending/mentoring approach

This section of the resource highlights the challenges that are implicit in the development of a befriending or mentoring approach to work with children. Other agencies have encountered and addressed issues such as these. If you connect with Befriending Networks or Scottish Mentoring Network they can provide further information, support and also connections with other providers.

Getting referrals right and saying no

Every befriending and mentoring programme needs to be clear and specific about what it wants to achieve. Earlier, this resource identified a range of possible areas which might be the focus of the befriending/mentoring relationship. When it is clear what the project is interested in then referral criteria can be developed so that it works with children who will benefit from the support a befriender/mentor can provide. It is important that a project does not feel pressured into working with a child just because they are in the locality and they are vulnerable or marginalised. A positive experience and a successful outcome for the child depends on matching their needs with the capacity and focus of the befriending/mentoring programme.

Creating and sustaining the relationship

Children are very different, some will take to a relationship with a new adult befriender or mentor enthusiastically, and others will take time, particularly so where a child's experiences have led them to mistrust adults. Sustaining a relationship starts at the beginning, with clarity about the purpose of the befriending/mentoring programme, and continues throughout with regular review and the possibility for child and adult to inform and influence the developing relationship.

Over time satisfaction for child and adult will come when there is a feeling and recognition that a new and important relationship has been formed. Programmes can take different approaches to helping nurture the relationship between adult and child in the early days – some set up meetings and time at the child's home, some in a local centre, others will take time early on to establish activities the child likes to do so that they can get engaged and be comfortable while they spend time with their befriender/mentor.

If the relationship isn't working

The beginnings of any relationship can be difficult. At the early stages of a befriending or mentoring relationship it is important that any difficulties are spoken about and addressed constructively; this must always remain a voluntary engagement for both people and learning to communicate and sort out misunderstandings or disagreements in the first weeks and months will help sustain the relationship. If however volunteer or child decide they just don't get on well enough then this needs to be respected, no-one should be judged, and through discussion about what either volunteer or child want from the programme a better match should be found.

Having enough information and respecting privacy

Children who may benefit from engagement with a befriender or mentor may well be engaged with other supports and services, or their family might be. Children can sometimes feel that everyone knows their business, that they are viewed as a collection of problems or challenges rather than as a child with potential. The agency that hosts or manages the befriending/mentoring project needs to have **enough** information about a child in order to decide if what they offer has some merit for the child, but the key word is **enough**. The child and their family should also be able to decide when some information is shared, and they will do so when they have trust. When it comes to the adult befriender/mentor again they need to know enough to ensure in the engagement with the child that the child is and remains safe and engaged. As well as rights to feeling safe and being cared for children and families have the right to privacy and to family life. These are difficult things to negotiate and support from experienced befriending and mentoring programmes will help explain how this can be navigated.

New legislation in Scotland – the Children and Young People (Scotland) Act 2014 – puts some important aspects of GIRFEC, including guidance on information sharing, into law from 2016. The guidance will be clear that any information sharing needs to be necessary, relevant and proportionate to any concern about the wellbeing of the child. Please refer to the earlier section on **'Getting It Right for Every Child and the Named Person'**.

The importance of family

A child's family circumstances may be difficult but they will often have strong bonds to their parents and carers and siblings and wider family. It is important then that the befriender/mentor shows respect toward families. Different programmes take different approaches to the amount or nature of contact a befriender/mentor has with a child's family – or to what extent family contact is managed by the programme manager – but whatever is decided, however family contact is maintained, parents and carers need good information and feedback about how their child is doing as part of the programme.

Relationships with other agencies

Community based befriending and mentoring programmes need good relationships with other local services. This means providing information about the programme to others and ensuring an understanding of how local services operate – including education, children's services, local voluntary agencies, churches, etc. Good relationships with other agencies also help the project communicate positively about the children who are part of the programme and helps connect the children and families to activities, support and services they might benefit from.

Management systems, policies and protocols

From good financial systems to child protection to keeping records to recruitment of volunteers – like all voluntary sector agencies every befriending and mentoring programme needs management systems, policies and protocols that are fit for purpose. This can seem a bit overwhelming but support is out there, these material have been developed by others and there is advice and training to make them work for you.

Child protection

The most fundamental requirement of any work with children is to ensure they are safe and cared for. There is support from Befriending Networks or Scottish Mentoring Network about how to navigate this important area.

Endings

When a befriending or mentoring programme establishes its purpose and considers what it wants to achieve it is important to think about the end of the befriending/mentoring relationship. Endings are important because a befriending/mentoring relationship (however it describes its purpose, see page 17) should never be about creating a dependency. Of course supporting a child to move on from a successful relationship may well be somewhat sad but different programmes have worked on ways to help a child and their befriender/mentor to recognise and celebrate successes and the need to move on.

REFERENCES & SOURCES OF SUPPORT

Befriending Networks

Befriending Networks provides information and support for new and established befriending projects.
<http://www.befriending.co.uk>

Scottish Mentoring Network

The Network fosters good practice in mentoring and provides a national forum that influences the development of mentoring.
<http://scottishmentoringnetwork.co.uk>

YMCA Scotland

In Scotland the YMCA operates in over 100 local communities through 32 local YMCA organisations working with the most vulnerable children, young people and families.
<http://www.ymcascotland.org>

GIRFEC

More information about Getting It Right for Every Child
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/337339/0110683.pdf>

Joining the Dots: A better start for Scotland's children

An independent report by Professor Susan Deacon
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/343337/0114216.pdf>

Early Years and Early Intervention: A joint Scottish Government and COSLA policy statement

<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2008/03/14121428/0>

Early Intervention Foundation

The Foundation wants every baby, child and young person to realise their potential by having the basic social and emotional skills that most take for granted.
<http://earlyinterventionfoundation.org.uk>

Commission on the Future Delivery of Public Services

Report on the Future Delivery of Public Services by the Commission chaired by Dr Campbell Christie
<http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2011/06/27154527/0>

Befriending Networks Good Practice in Befriending

Available from the agency
<http://www.befriending.co.uk>

Children's Rights

More about children's human rights and the UNCRC from Children's Parliament:
<http://www.childrensparliament.org.uk/resources.html>

Evaluation Support Scotland

Evaluation Support Scotland works with voluntary organisations and funders so that they can measure and report on their impact.

<http://www.evaluationsupportscotland.org.uk>

Education Scotland

Education Scotland is the national body in Scotland responsible for supporting quality and improvement in learning and teaching from early years to adult learning and community learning and development. Education Scotland brings together a number of organisations and teams whose work contributes to key areas of the agency's remit.

For more on Curriculum for Excellence:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/thecurriculum>

For more on every child and young person's entitlement to personal support:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/supportinglearners>

Recognising and Realising Children's Rights is a professional development resource for adults working with children:

<http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/r/childrensrightsresource>.

[asp?strReferringChannel=educationscotland&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-615801-64](http://www.educationscotland.gov.uk/resources/r/childrensrightsresource.asp?strReferringChannel=educationscotland&strReferringPageID=tcm:4-615801-64)