

Giving young people support to fulfil their role as mentors- Headstart Newham¹

HeadStart Newham has recognised that to do their job well, peer mentors need training and ongoing support.

More than Mentors is a peer-to-peer mentoring programme for secondary school pupils, run as part of HeadStart Newham. The mentors (age 14-15) support younger pupils (age 11-13) to make a positive transition from primary to secondary school.

Mentors have experience of the types of mental health problems the mentees are facing, such as mild anxiety, problems with peers, or mild behaviour problems. This means they can empathise with what their mentees are going through.

Mentoring takes place during weekly after-school group sessions. These start with group games to help develop positive relationships, followed by the one-to-one mentoring. The sessions end with a group training session, or clinical supervision, for the mentors only. This is important as it offers an opportunity for the mentors to reflect back on the session and voice any concerns they may have, such as around safeguarding issues or bullying.

What makes the programme different is the **training and ongoing support offered to the mentors**. They attend two days of initial training in the school holidays, which is delivered by a HeadStart Youth Worker and a Clinical Psychologist, followed by ongoing bite-sized top-up training during the mentoring journey. The initial training covers topics relevant to being a mentor, but is also an opportunity to emphasise the importance of fully committing to the programme. The ongoing training covers themes which are appropriate to the stage of the mentoring journey, including how to manage the ending of the mentoring relationship. **Ongoing training helps the mentors to remember their initial training and reflect on their own progress**. Mentors also receive a handbook and toolkit, which they work through with the mentee.

“...I’m not very confident putting my hand up and everything, and then when I met my mentor she really helped me build up my confidence”, Mentee²

“It makes you feel like you make a difference”, Mentor³

School staff said that pupils who took part as both mentors and mentees showed improvements in their communication, behaviour and confidence. Although not all mentees identified benefits from taking part, those who felt they did benefit described outcomes such as improved self-control and self-awareness, whilst mentors talked about gaining new skills such as how to use tools to communicate with others and to mediate difficult conversations and situations. They reported that the skills they developed helped them to improve relationships at school or at home.⁴

[HeadStartnewham.co.uk/activities/more-than-mentors/](https://headstartnewham.co.uk/activities/more-than-mentors/)

¹ The National Lottery Community Fund. (2018). *HeadStart briefing*. [forthcoming]

² Mooney, M. (2018). More than Mentors a review of Year 1 intervention delivery from the perspective of pupils, school and delivery staff. [Unpublished]. A summary of this report available at: <https://www.headstartnewham.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/More-than-Mentors-Summary-and-learning-2016-17.pdf>

[Accessed 4 Feb 2019]

³ Mooney, M. (2018).

⁴ Mooney, M. (2018).