Scottish Mentoring Network

Guidance for Mentoring Projects: Moving your Service Delivery Online Members Appendix

Introduction

Since we first introduced our guide for members to move their mentoring programmes online, we have seen a vast increase in the volume of resources available which provide guidance and support about digital service delivery. We know that it can be very overwhelming for our projects to pick through these to find out what the key messages are and what is going to be relevant for them. We have put together this appendix to gather the top tips from across the membership, along with some practical resources.

By now, we know you will be quite far along with your digital mentoring journey, and we know that some of you have responded rapidly to the needs of your service users and their families. Inevitably, there will be lots of opportunities to review and learn lessons from the steps you needed to take to get your beneficiaries connected at the start of lockdown. The most important lesson we can all learn from this time is that no one solution will suit all projects.

Our role as the national intermediary for Mentoring Projects is to bring the knowledge and experience of our members together for best practice sharing. As such, we hope that our members can reach out to us, and each other, to ask for support. If you are struggling with an issue, it is almost guaranteed that someone else has struggled with the same situation, so please get in touch.

**Please note that this appendix and the original guide is by no means a comprehensive guide for delivering mentoring online**

Member Submissions – Top tips, Successes and Challenges from moving mentoring projects online

**Breakthrough Dundee**

* <https://www.breakthroughdundee.co.uk/2020/04/17/digital-mentoring-young-person/>

**Barnardo’s**

* WhatsApp Pilot: <https://docs.google.com/document/d/1TJdTm2SCK9buo5_t-tV33PKD8OyV26yKWVLSnYRNooA/edit>

**Light Up Learning**

* <https://www.lightuplearning.org/new-blog>

**Move On**

What solutions or top tips would you share from your experience of moving your mentoring project online?

1. Maintain the same ethos and approach to mentoring:

• We would recommend taking the same approach and ethos to online mentoring as we would face to face mentoring. Mentoring still has a clear focus which is about setting and achieving goals which young people can still think about and work towards.

• It’s important to provide as many opportunities for young people to have choices during this time. This can include the type of format they would like to communicate with (phone call, text, email, video call), choice of activity, and time of online meetings. It’s important keep in mind the challenges that young people face still remain; and some days they will be less likely to engage with mentoring. Choice may also include whether they want to continue with mentoring at this time.

• Don’t forget that mentoring is a time for young people to have a sounding board, an opportunity for distraction, and to learn new skills and achieve goals. This could be a great time to rethink goals or set brand new goals.

1. Use Creative approaches and keep planned meetings fun.

Moving our mentoring project online has meant we have been creative in our approach to meetings.

• We recommend including both the mentor and mentee in your ideas/suggestions for what meetings should look like.

• Send mentors resources for games, puzzles and activities that they can explore with their mentee. However, don’t send too much information, check with the mentor how much support they need to plan activities. Encourage matches to do activities like cooking or artwork at home and share pictures and recipes.

• Send something in the post! Send regular care packages and cards to mentees with ideas for activities, and things to keep them occupied. Send a thank you card to mentors, a reminder that we appreciate them still volunteering their time at this hard time.

• Have prompt questions for conversations mentors can use. Speaking on the phone or through video call is tough for many young people especially for those who struggle with confidence and communicating.

• We know that matches that are brand new might need a bit more support and time just now from match co-ordinators to help build the mentoring relationship remotely.

1. Recognise there have been changes to mentoring and the lives of young people and mentors we are working with.

• Having open and honest conversations regularly with mentors and mentees about how the service has changed is important to making sure everyone’s expectations are managed. Ensure regularly support and supervision and 3-way meetings with match co-ordinators happen to keep the mentoring relationship on track.

• Ask mentors if they are still in a position to mentor. Mentors may face new challenges like financial issues/loss of job, childcare issues and working from home.

• Recognise young people might want to wait for face to face mentoring to resume.

• Ask Mentors if there are any additional training they might need during this time.

• Ensure mentors are clear about safeguarding policies and procedures for remote volunteering.

1. Keep Boundaries and Structure in place

• Schedule meetings like you would have previously to keep mentoring structure clear. Remind mentors that it’s important that any contact is scheduled, consistent, and that the triangle of support is still here with Move On to keep everyone safe. Contact outside of scheduled meetings should be limited, and match co-ordinators should be aware of any planned remote meetings.

• Keep providing support and supervision and 3 way catch ups. However not more than we would normally, it’s very important not to overwhelm mentees with contact during this time.

• Mentors should provide feedback forms for all remote phone calls, zoom calls, texts or email support they have with a mentee. They should continue to report any concerns about their mentee and follow safeguarding policies.

• Mentoring is not a counselling service, if young people need additional intensive support or are struggling with mental health issues, they would be signposted to the appropriate specialist services.

• Talk about thing’s non COVID-19 related!

**What have been your biggest challenges of moving your mentoring project online?**

• Access to technology has been a significant challenge as not all of our mentors or mentees have access to Wifi, laptops, or smartphones to support online activities. Some of our mentors and mentees’ IT literacy skills are poor and that has meant staff having to spend extra time to support setting up activities and support calls. On the other hand, some of our mentees have been nervous to try video calls or talk on the phone while others have adapted well to the change.

• There are challenges around mentees having time, space and privacy at home for mentoring remotely. Busy households with many people living at home, has made it difficult for some mentees to get the time away from distractions to engage in mentoring. Likewise mentors, mentees and staff have had to adapt to new boundaries around the mentoring relationship.

• Keeping a routine for mentoring meetings while the young person is at home is a challenge. Many young people are out of a routine and struggling with motivation and structure. We know families are struggling and we have been supporting families more than ever with support for gas, electricity, food parcels, and signposting parents who are struggling with their mental health.

• Not being able to read the young people as well as in face to face meetings is tough. Young people we work with may not want to speak on the phone or video call due to anxiety and for these young people support has been limited to text support.

• A large part of the mentoring project is building confidence in meeting new people, visiting new places and using public transport for young people and these areas are not being built on for young people at this time.

What have been the best successes of moving your mentoring project online?

• Some of the young people we work with have found the video/voice call meetings easier for them than we anticipated. Young people we are working with are finding the positives of lock down spending more time with family, going outside when it’s quiet and trying new activities.

• The majority of matches have adapted well and mentees have been happy with the new format. Mentees who had previously been taking music lessons have been able to continue these remotely. We have provided mentees who are in need with top ups for mobile phone data, and helped others to access technology such as mobile phones and tablets.

• Mentees have said they enjoy having a weekly scheduled call with their mentor, which makes them feel better. This is something they can look forward to and expect each week. Mentors have reported learning a lot more about their mentee’s during this time through conversation. Likewise, they know that they can still contact Move On as well for any support they may need.

• Staff are learning more about how we can best use technology which we will carry forward when full services resume. For instance, there are opportunities for remote music or cooking lessons going forward where the class is too far for the young person and mentor to travel to. We have gotten better at using online video calls, started offering mentor support evenings, and we are piloting mentor training sessions.

• Staff have been thinking outside the box and become creative when coming up with match activities which can be done remotely. This is learning we can take forward when suggesting online classes for matches that work around the schedules of both a mentee and mentor