Foundations
What Works Centre for Children & Families

REFLECTIVE TOOL

For actioning the Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide

FIND MORE INFORMATION & RESOURCES: FOUNDATIONS.ORG.UK/TOOLKIT/PRACTICE-GUIDES/MENTORING-AND-BEFRIENDING

Department for Education

foundations.org.uk

About this tool

This step-by-step reflective tool is designed to support local authorities in actioning the key principles and recommendations in the Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide. It does this through providing light-touch guidance which helps set the Practice Guide's key principles and recommendations in the local context by considering local data and evidence such as professional knowledge, lived experience, and population and organisational data.

The Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide is one in a series of guides setting out the best available evidence for leaders in the children's social care sector to support effective practice and improve how services are commissioned, developed, and delivered. Practice Guides have been commissioned by the Department for Education to support local areas to achieve the outcomes of the Children's Social Care National Framework.[1] Designed for service leaders and commissioners, this Practice Guide outlines the broad key principles and specific interventions that have been shown to be most effective to support mentoring and befriending, and the strength of the evidence behind them.

In this tool, we use the term 'mentoring and befriending' to recognise the overlapping definitions of the two approaches, which are explored further in the Practice Guide. However, within the body of evidence, the term 'mentoring' is more commonly used alone to describe the programmes recommended in the Practice Guide. Where this is the case, we have followed the terminology used in the underpinning evidence to be consistent across the supporting resources.

---

1   See https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/657c538495bf650010719097/Children_s_Social_Care_National_Framework__December_2023.pdf

The children and young people in scope for this Practice Guide

This practice guide recommends mentoring and befriending interventions and practices that are proven to be effective in improving outcomes for children and young people up to 25 years old who are care-experienced, considered at risk of being placed in care, or at risk of poor developmental outcomes. Throughout this Practice Guide, wherever we refer to 'children and young people', it is this population group that we are talking about, and not all children and young people.
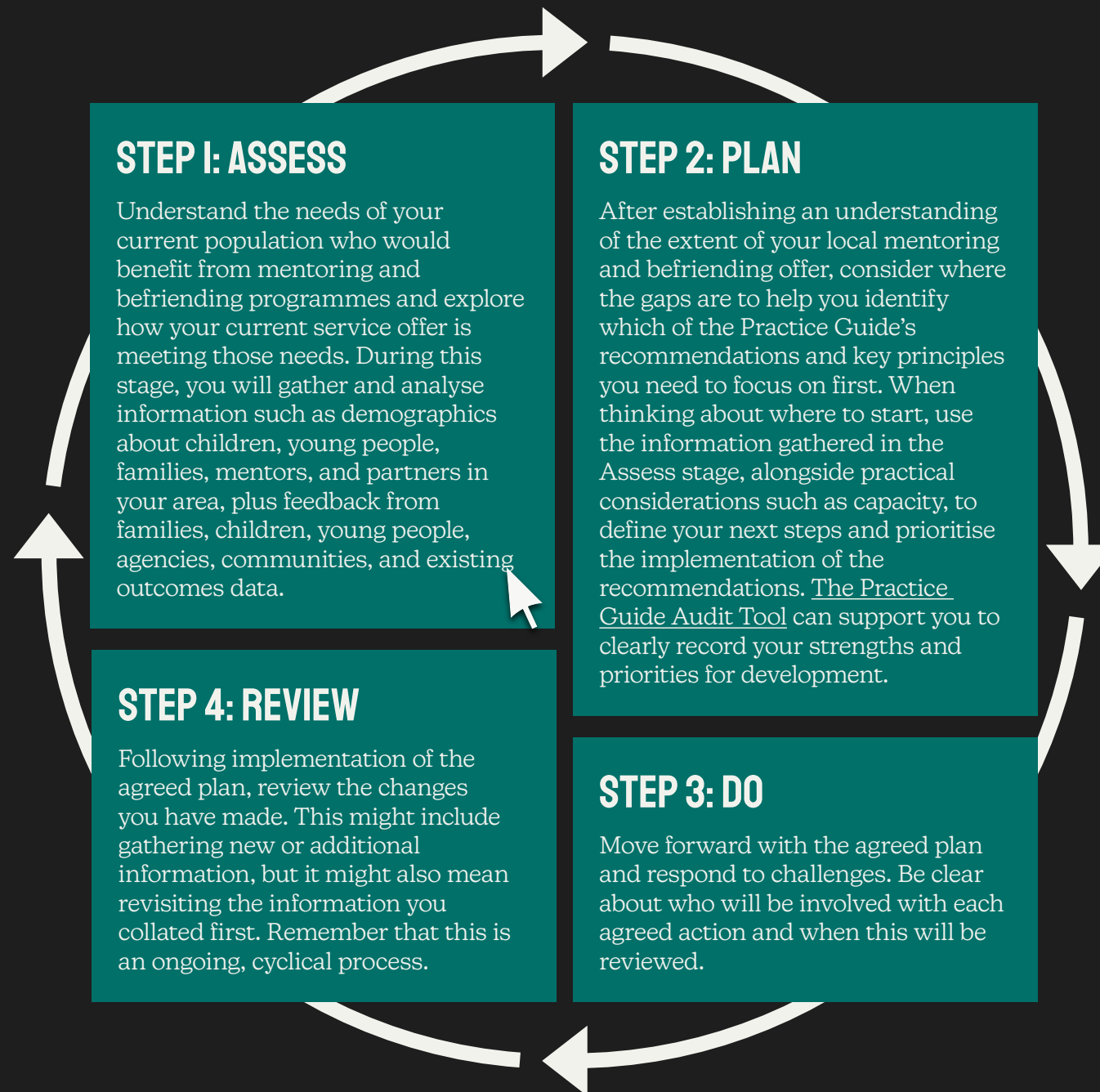
In this Guide, children and young people 'at risk of being placed in care' or 'at risk of poor developmental outcomes' refer to those with exposure to adverse or traumatic family environments which may feature, for example, abuse, neglect, parental substance abuse, parental imprisonment, family violence, housing instability, and parental mental illness.

In this Guide, 'young people' refers to people aged 18 to 25 years old, and 'children' refers to those under the age of 18, unless otherwise stated.

Who should use this tool?

It is intended that key stakeholders involved in the local mentoring and befriending offer will work together to assess, plan, do, and review. These are likely to be senior leaders, including (but not limited to) Directors of Children's Services (DCSs), Directors of Public Health, Local Authority Chief Executives, Elected Members (including Lead Members for Children's Services), and children's services commissioners. This tool is also relevant to agencies that commission, fund, and deliver mentoring and befriending programmes in local areas, such as voluntary and community sector organisations.

This resource is structured around the Assess, Plan, Do, Review approach:

STEP 1: ASSESS

Understand the needs of your current population who would benefit from mentoring and befriending programmes and explore how your current service offer is meeting those needs. During this stage, you will gather and analyse information such as demographics about children, young people, families, mentors, and partners in your area, plus feedback from families, children, young people, agencies, communities, and existing outcomes data.

STEP 2: PLAN

After establishing an understanding of the extent of your local mentoring and befriending offer, consider where the gaps are to help you identify which of the Practice Guide's recommendations and key principles you need to focus on first. When thinking about where to start, use the information gathered in the Assess stage, alongside practical considerations such as capacity, to define your next steps and prioritise the implementation of the recommendations. The Practice Guide Audit Tool can support you to clearly record your strengths and priorities for development.

STEP 4: REVIEW

Following implementation of the agreed plan, review the changes you have made. This might include gathering new or additional information, but it might also mean revisiting the information you collated first. Remember that this is an ongoing, cyclical process.

STEP 3: DO

Move forward with the agreed plan and respond to challenges. Be clear about who will be involved with each agreed action and when this will be reviewed.

As local contexts are continually changing, and it is important for services to be responsive, the Assess, Plan, Do, Review approach in this resource is intended to be ongoing and cyclical. Following a structure like this allows you to clearly keep track of the progress you are making, and your rationale for making the changes you do.

How to use this tool

Each stage of the Assess, Plan, Do, Review approach has questions to guide you in reflecting on your local context in relation to the key principles and recommendations in the Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide. This tool acts as a starting point for local areas to prioritise the implementation of the recommendations in the Guide. We encourage you to record your reflections in response to each question, for future reference and to track your progress. The Audit Tool can support you with this. You may also wish to use the reflective questions to help structure conversations with stakeholders, partners, and colleagues to prompt discussion and deliver actions.

Throughout this resource we use the language of the Children's Social Care National Framework to reflect the core audiences:

- Local leaders: Primarily DCSs – have strategic responsibility for the whole local children's services system, and join-up and partnerships with other agencies. This also includes strategic leaders where relevant e.g. Directors of Public Health, Assistant Directors in Children's Services.

- Local commissioners: Make choices on allocation of money to providers, service specifications, market shaping, and contracting. They can be based in a local authority (LA), an NHS trust, Integrated Care Board, or be a joint role where co-commissioning is present.

- Practice supervisors: Usually Heads of Service or team leaders who report to senior leaders. They are responsible for supervising and setting conditions for practice and frontline service delivery. They line manage practitioners.

- Practitioners: Direct practice professionals who work with children, young people, and families. For the purpose of Practice Guides, these are usually social workers or family support workers, but they can also be professionals from other agencies (e.g. volunteers, youth workers, key workers, or justice workers), sometimes in multi-disciplinary teams. When using this tool, senior leaders should reflect about the practitioner audience each guide relates to.

We use symbols throughout this resource to indicate how questions relate to one, more, or all of the key principles and recommendations, as in the example below:

- What specialist training are your kinship service staff offered? **KP1**

The key principles and recommendations are summarised in the table below, alongside the symbols associated with each one.

KEY PRINCIPLES

Key Principle 1 KP1

Model strong leadership that promotes collaboration, maps local programmes, and understands their interactions to improve outcomes.

Key Principle 2 KP2

Develop flexible programmes that allow tailored support to be provided to a child or young person so they can sustain a meaningful mentor–mentee relationship.

Key Principle 3 KP3

Give children and young people autonomy and control over the form and purpose of their mentoring or befriending relationship.

Key Principle 4 KP4

Target mentoring support at young people leaving care, living in supported or temporary accommodation, and living independently.

Key Principle 5 KP5

Carefully match mentors and mentees, taking into consideration interests, experiences, and personal attributes.

Key Principle 6 KP6

Ensure mentors are supported to meet the needs of mentees through training and supervision.

Key Principle 7 KP7

Consider using self-motivated (volunteer, natural, or peer) mentors who can foster an independent relationship with a child or young person.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation 1 R1   STRONG EVIDENCE

Offer evidence-based mentoring programmes to children in out-of-home care due to experiences of significant harm, to support their general mental health and improve post-traumatic symptoms.

Recommendation 2 R2   GOOD EVIDENCE

Offer evidence-based mentoring and befriending programmes to children and young people who are involved, or are at risk of involvement, with the youth justice system to reduce offending and re-offending.

Recommendation 3 R3   PROMISING EVIDENCE

Offer evidence-based mentoring programmes to children in out-of-home care to improve successful (and long-term) reunification.

Recommendation 4 R4   PROMISING EVIDENCE

Offer evidence-based mentoring programmes to children who are in out-of-home care due to experiences of significant harm to achieve greater permanency.

Recommendation 5 R5   PROMISING EVIDENCE

Offer evidence-based mentoring programmes to children and young people with special educational needs (SEN), or severe mental health challenges, to increase self-determination skills and support their transitions from care.

Recommendation 6 R6   PROMISING EVIDENCE

Offer evidence-based mentoring programmes to children and young people to improve employability.

Where a question applies to all of the key principles and recommendations in the Practice Guide, this is indicated by this symbol ALL

STEP 1: ASSESS

Start to develop your approach by understanding the current position of your mentoring and befriending provision in relation to the needs of young people and families in your local area. Draw on relevant information such as feedback from professionals, wider partners, mentors, those who have previously accessed mentoring programmes, young people and families, and relevant local population needs data.

The questions and prompts in this section are designed to encourage reflection on the mentoring and befriending needs of care-experienced children and young people and those at risk of entering care in your local area.

Gathering information/seeing the big picture

The needs of children and young people in your local area

- What do your data and information sources tell you about the care-experienced children and young people and those at risk of entering care in your area? Are there any common themes?

- Consider your population of young people transitioning out of care: how has mentoring and befriending supported them? How could they engage or benefit? What does the feedback from young people and the data tell you about this?

- Are mentoring and befriending relationships encouraged for children and young people? What does the take-up of this form of support tell you? Are there any groups of young people in need who are not accessing or engaging with support? How could they engage or benefit? Consider the make-up of these groups, including the diversity, looking for strengths and any gaps.

Lived experience

- How do young people from minoritised ethnic backgrounds perceive the mentoring and befriending offer? What strengths and gaps do they see?

TIP

This might be information that is already available or known, or you may need to gather and collate information to identify which key principle(s) and recommendation(s) to prioritise and plan for as part of Step 2. Consider how current this information is, and which partners you may need to link with to find out more about the current landscape. If you are at an early stage of developing your local mentoring and befriending offer, you may find it helpful to consider how the following prompts around your population can support you to develop your local offer.

- How do young people leaving care, living in supported or temporary accommodation, and living independently experience your mentoring and befriending offer? How could they engage or benefit? What are the percieved strengths and gaps in the offer for this group? R5

- How do children and young people placed in fostering and residential care due to significant harm perceive your mentoring and befriending offer? How could they engage or benefit? Consider the 9–11 preteen age range. What strengths and gaps do they experience? R1

- How do young people in foster care with SEN or severe mental health challenges experience your mentoring and befriending offer? How could they engage or benefit? What strengths and gaps do they experience? R1 R5

The application of mentoring and befriending in your local area

- Reflect on your reunification processes for children in care. Do you offer mentoring and befriending as part of this process? How could evidence-based mentoring and befriending programmes be included in the reunification process? R3

- What does your information around permanency and placement stability tell you? Explore how mentoring and befriending could support greater permanency. R4

- Explore the information you have around children in kinship care. Consider their needs and access to mentoring and befriending programmes. What have you learnt here? How could they be better engaged and how might they benefit? Who needs to be aware of this/take action? R1 R2 R4

- Consider how children and young people who have had interactions with the youth justice system engage with mentoring and befriending programmes. What does your information tell you about this group? How could they be better engaged and how might they benefit? R2

- Consider how young people in Staying Put arrangements engage with mentoring and befriending programmes. What does your information tell you about this group? How could they be better engaged and how might they benefit? R6

Mentoring programmes available in your local area

- How do you/could you engage children and young people who are at risk of entering care?

- Do you have a clear overview of the mentoring and befriending offer in your local area? Who are your key partners working in this space? Who do you need to engage with to develop your offer? Consider local authorities, health, police, education, voluntary, and community organisations.

- Do you share or publish your mentoring and befriending local offer? How might you plan to do this? How do you ensure children and young people get to know about it?

- What does access to these programmes look like for different groups of children and young people? Consider young people leaving care, living in supported or temporary accommodation, and living independently? How might you plan to enable access?

- How do you consider the needs of racially minoritised children and young people? How do you understand the specific risks and vulnerabilities of Black, Asian, and Mixed Heritage children and young people? How might you plan your mentoring and befriending programmes to enable access for these groups?

- How do you/could you consider access to programmes for other groups of children and young people, such as younger children, children with experience of significant harm, children with SEN or complex medical needs? **R1**

- Do you have a local mentor pool? What does it look like? Does it include paid, volunteer (for example, independent visitors, Personal Advisors, key workers, youth workers, Youth Offending Service workers), peer or natural mentors (from within a young person's existing social network)? Does your/how can your mentoring offer enable choice in relationships and good matching for young people with respect to age, ethnicity, religion, etc.? What strengths or gaps can you see? **KP5** **KP6** **KP7**

- How are mentors supported to meet the needs of mentees through training and supervision? How might you plan to provide this support? The role of the mentor coordinator is crucial and is explored further in KP6. **KP6** **KP7**

Training and supervision for mentors

Training may be formal or informal and include:

- » Educational content on trauma-informed approaches, child development, and Mental Health First Aid
- » Content to develop skills such as boundary-setting, trust building, and assertive communication appropriate to the age of the child or young person the mentor is working with
- » Practical guidance on the required commitment and expectations for the mentoring and befriending role.

Supervision may include:

- » Regular check-ins with a mentor coordinator
- » Peer support
- » A focus on overcoming potential barriers
- » Mitigation for premature or unplanned ending to the relationship.

- Do your current programmes reflect elements of what works, as shown through the evidence-based interventions explored in the recommendations? How might you plan to incorporate these elements as you develop your local offer? (See the summary of interventions explored in the Practice Guide). `ALL`

Making connections

- Are you aware of the breadth of services and agencies offering mentoring and befriending support in your local area? How do you communicate with them, include them, and ensure a shared understanding of the needs of your children and young people? How do you plan to engage others and develop your offer? `KP1` `KP6`

- How do/can services collaborate to align priorities and build relationships to ensure good communication and successful delivery across partners of mentoring and befriending programmes? `KP1`

- How can mentors act as a positive link for the mentee across other services and their wider support system – e.g. schools, families, residential centres, community groups? `KP6` `KP7`

- How do/can services work together to enable access to mentoring and befriending programmes for those in most need: young people leaving care, living in supported or temporary accommodation, and living independently? Consider ethnicity and other groups of children and young people here, such as those with SEN, complex medical needs or younger children. How could they be better engaged and how might they benefit? `R5`

- How do/can you engage connections across services and the community to enable young people who have had interactions with the youth justice system to access mentoring and befriending programmes? Consider community groups, schools, colleges, families, etc. `R2`

- What other support (e.g. socio-emotional and communication support) is/could be offered to support the child or young person to sustain a meaningful relationship with their mentor? `KP2`

Developing a shared understanding

- How developed is the shared understanding across local leaders, practice supervisors, and practitioners, children, young people, and their families of the benefits of mentoring and befriending for care-experienced children and young people and those at risk of entering care? How can you develop this shared understanding? `KP1` `KP2` `KP7`

- How developed is the shared understanding across children and young people, their families, and the wider network of the benefits of mentoring and befriending for children and young people? How can you develop this shared understanding? **KP2** **KP4** **KP7** **R1** **R2** **R5**

> ### Benefits of mentoring and befriending for children and young people
>
> Mentoring and befriending programmes can:
>
> » Help children and young people struggling with isolation, feelings of rejection, and a lack of community and emotional support
> » Provide practical support as children and young people transition to independence, such as supporting them to access employment and education and develop important life skills like managing finances
> » Increase self-determination skills and support transition from care.
>
> Children and young people identify a variety of perceived positive outcomes of participating in mentoring, including:
>
> » Gaining practical knowledge needed at the point of transition to adulthood
> » Emotional support to address new challenges
> » Increase in confidence, social acceptance, coping skills, and self-esteem through the supportive and empowering relationship with the mentor
> » A relationship with a positive role model as they transition to adulthood
> » Their mentor introducing them to new environments and activities.

- Consider how you can develop an understanding of the benefits of mentoring and befriending relationships for: **ALL**
  » Young people who have had interactions with the youth justice system
  » Younger children
  » Young people transitioning out of care
  » Young people living in supported or temporary accommodation
  » Those living in a residential home, semi-independent accommodation, high-needs placement, or secure children's home
  » Young people living independently
  » Those with SEN or severe mental health challenges

- Is there a shared understanding throughout different layers of responsibility within the system of the positive impact mentoring and befriending relationships can have on permanency and reunification? How can you develop this shared understanding? **KP2** **KP7** **R3** **R4**

- How does your multi-agency-workforce update raise awareness of the benefits and increase understanding of the local mentoring and befriending offer? How regularly does/could your multi-agency-workforce update do this? How can you develop this? **KP1** **KP2** **KP7**

- How do/could practice supervisors ensure there is a current understanding of the mentoring and befriending local offer across practitioners and agencies working with young people and their families? **KP1** **KP2** **KP6** **KP7**

- How do/could practice supervisors ensure there is a current understanding of the mentoring and befriending local offer across a young person's wider network (family, foster carers, community)? **KP1** **KP2** **KP7**

- How can awareness of the benefits of mentoring and befriending be raised among those working with young people leaving care, living in supported or temporary accommodation, and living independently? **KP2** **R5** **R6**

- How do/could you involve families and the care-experienced child or young person's wider network in mentoring and befriending programmes? **KP1** **KP4**

Meeting the needs of mentees (children and young people participating in a relationship with a mentor)

- What supervision and training are/could be offered to mentors across the mentoring and befriending programmes in your local offer? How effective is this in equipping the mentors with the right support, knowledge, and expertise to meet the needs of the mentee? What are the strengths here? Where are the gaps? How do you know this? KP1 KP2 KP5 KP6 KP7

- What support is/could be offered to the young person to enable them to maximise the benefits of the relationship? You might want to reflect on how effective this support is, what impact this has/could have on the child or young person, and any strengths or gaps in the offer of this type of support. KP2 KP3 KP4 KP5 KP6

Supporting children and young people to get the most out of mentoring programmes

» What socio-emotional support can be offered, such as communication skills, experiences of trauma, and behaviours that challenge?

» Consider the specific needs of the young person, paying particular attention to potential barriers to the young person forming a positive connection with their mentor as they facilitate mentor–mentee relationships.

» How can the relationship be flexible and respond to the specific needs of the young person, including those related to their age, gender, temperament, and life experiences?

» How can the relationship be flexible and creative to respond to a young person with complex needs, including experiences of trauma, behaviours that challenge, attachment difficulties, development or learning disabilities, and experiences of adversity?

» Is the young person aware of the benefits of these relationships?

» How can they be encouraged to approach the relationship with an open mind?

Note: additional training and supervision may be required to support effective peer mentoring.

» Is the training offered to mentors age-appropriate to the children and young people they are working with? How could you develop this?

- Are mentoring relationships flexible and able to respond to the specific needs of the child or young person, including those relating to age, gender, ethnicity, and life experiences? How can you develop this? What does the feedback from the young people say about this? **KP2** **KP5** **KP7**

- How do practice supervisors consider the specific needs of the child or young person, paying particular attention to potential barriers to the child or young person forming a positive connection with their mentor as they facilitate mentor–mentee relationships? How could this be developed? **KP2** **KP5** **KP6** **KP7**

- How are/could you develop the pool of mentors to enable appropriate and thoughtful matching for the child or young person? How do/could you ensure a rich diversity across interests and experiences (including care experience), personal attributes (e.g. age, ethnicity, gender), mentor type (paid, volunteer, natural, or peer) and career aspirations? **KP5** **KP6** **KP7**

- How are you enabling those young people in most need to access mentoring and befriending programmes? How could you enable this? Are you clear about who these young people are, services they access, and the wider network you can promote to encourage engagement? **KP2** **KP3** **KP4** **KP7** **R5**

  » Note: Local leaders should focus on supporting young people who have the most difficulties forming positive relationships, because they could benefit the most from mentoring. Consider those leaving care, living in supported or temporary accommodation, and living independently. Consider young people who have experienced loss and rejection in their previous relationships with adults; they may find it harder to establish a close relationship with a mentor.

- How could/are children or young people enabled to have a say over what they are looking for in a mentor and what information is shared? **KP3** **KP5** **KP7** **R5**

  » Note: Choice here matters for the individual as they may prefer a person outside their community or someone with a similar cultural background; the young person must feel they have a choice.

- How could/are children or young people given autonomy and control within their mentoring or befriending relationship? How could you plan to enable this autonomy and control? **KP3** **KP5** **KP7** **R5**

Planning to enable autonomy and control for children and young people in their mentoring and befriending relationship

This should include:

» Agreeing on the length and frequency of meetings

» Deciding when and where sessions take place

» Support to set and achieve their goals

» Support to set clear emotional and communication boundaries, including flexible contact and use of technology

» Choosing the types of activities undertaken.

Your local strategy

- How do/could your strategic aims make connections to the positive outcomes that can be achieved through mentoring and befriending relationships for children and young people?

- What areas of practice are most in line with the best available evidence? How have you identified these? What can you learn from developing these strengths?

- Have you connected your mentoring and befriending ambitions to your local strategy?

Consider using the Audit Tool with stakeholders to support your judgements here.

STEP 2: PLAN

Once you have looked more closely at your existing mentoring and befriending offer, you can consider where there are gaps in support to help you identify which key principles and recommendations you need to prioritise and plan for. The Practice Guide Audit Tool can be used to summarise priorities, reflections, progress, and actions.

Enhancing current practice

- What can you do to bring your current provision more closely in line with the evidence? Refer to the summary of interventions, which summarises interventions from the Practice Guide. Use the Audit Tool to support your discussions here.

- Consider how your current programmes meet the key features of the interventions explored in the Practice Guide – see the summary of interventions.

- How can you move closer to these? Who needs to be involved?

- How do you direct young people, families, carers, potential mentors, and professionals working with these groups, to your local mentoring and befriending offer and support them to access the services available to them?

- How have young people experiencing adversity and at risk of being placed in care and those who are care-experienced in your local area been involved in the design and review of the mentoring and befriending local offer? How do you encourage honest, open feedback?

  » Agree how to engage connections across services and the community to enable more children and young people to access mentoring and befriending programmes.

  » Consider all partners identified in Step 1 – for example, community groups, schools, colleges, families, etc.

  » Consider who needs to be involved to agree any new ways of working.

  » What barriers to engagement do you need to address? Who will be involved and what steps can you take?

  » Who needs to be aware of the developed/refreshed offer?

  » How do you plan to find out if any actions have impact? How will you gather voices for the different partners, groups of children and young people, families, foster carers, other agencies etc.?

Consider how to prioritise and take action in response to the:

- 'Your local strategy' prompts in the assess step. **CLICK TO GO TO SECTION**

- 'Gathering information/seeing the big picture' prompts in the assess step. **CLICK TO GO TO SECTION**

- 'Making connections' prompts in the assess step. **CLICK TO GO TO SECTION**

- 'Developing a shared understanding' prompts in the assess step. **CLICK TO GO TO SECTION**

- 'Meeting the needs of mentees' prompts in the assess step. **CLICK TO GO TO SECTION**

STEP 3: DO

Now that you have assessed, prioritised, and planned, it is time to take action to strengthen your local mentoring and befriending offer. It is normal to encounter challenges and barriers during this stage, but there are steps you can take to mitigate and/or successfully navigate them.

The questions below can help prompt your thinking if you start to feel stuck.

- Reflect on any enablers that have supported you to make changes in practice – what can you learn from these?

- Think about any barriers you're facing – how can you overcome them? Do you need to seek support from others?

- Consider the progress you have made so far – is it happening as you expected?

- Are you managing to capture the information you need to know whether the changes made are having a positive impact on children and young people experiencing adversity and at risk of being placed in care and those who are care-experienced?

- What is the feedback from stakeholders, partners, children and young people, their wider networks, families, and mentors?

- Do you need to revisit the Practice Guide to make sure you are remaining aligned to the key principles and recommendations?

- If you are offering support that you weren't before, how have you integrated this with existing services? How are you promoting this to children and young people, their networks including their families, and other agencies? Is any troubleshooting required?

STEP 4: REVIEW

Once your plan is in action, begin the process of reviewing the changes you have made. Remember that this is an ongoing, cyclical process. The Audit Tool can support you to record your thinking.

Revisit the 'Your local strategy' section from the assess step:

- How do your strategic aims make connections to the positive outcomes that can be achieved through mentoring and befriending relationships for children and young people?

- What areas of practice are most in line with the best available evidence? How have you identified these? What can you learn from developing these strengths?

- Have you connected your mentoring and befriending ambitions to your local strategy?

Consider using the Audit Tool with stakeholders to support your judgements here.

The questions below can support you in reflecting on your support offer in the review stage.

- What have you learned from the data or information you have been gathering about the changes you have made?

- Are the changes you have made still aligned with what you know about the specific needs and strengths of your young people?

- Have the demographics or characteristics of children and young people requiring support changed? What does this mean?

- Have the type (i.e. paid, volunteer, natural or peer), demographics, or characteristics of your mentor pool changed? Is the pool now more or less reflective of the demographics and characteristics of children and young people in need of mentoring support?

- What is missing? Are there groups of children and young people that you are finding it hard to reach or engage with on mentoring programmes? How can you overcome this?

- How aware are children, young people, families, and partners in your area of the mentoring support available and how they can access it? Has this improved and could it be further improved?

- What could you do to improve the quality and accuracy of the information you collect, collate, and share about your mentoring and befriending local offer?

- What other data collection might you need to consider moving forwards?

- How are you analysing your data, and ensuring it is shared and understood to impact decision-making?

- What are children and young people (mentees), families, the wider network around the child or young person, and mentors telling you about their experiences of the changes in support? What about other partners working in this space locally?

- Which recommendation are you going to focus on next?

- How does this inform your future thinking? As this is a cyclical process, the review activity should inform your ongoing assessment of mentoring and befriending services to contribute to ongoing improvements.

- When thinking about your local mentoring and befriending offer, what have you learned about how this is achieving its intended outcomes?

TIP

You may need to consider the information you have been collecting and/or revisit the information you collated in Step 1 when initially assessing your existing support offer.

Fostering Healthy Futures for Pre-Teens, explored in Recommendation 1

Intervention description: Fostering Healthy Futures for Pre-Teens (FHF-PT) is a one-to-one mentoring and skills group programme targeted at children aged 9–11 living in out-of-home care. The programme aims to empower children to foster their own healthy futures. The programme can lead to improved cognitive, social, and behavioural functioning in care-experienced children.

Intervention components:

- **Skills groups:** groups use a structured curriculum which combines cognitive-behavioural strategies with activities aiming to support children in processing adverse childhood experiences. Topics could include problem solving, anger management, emotion recognition, cultural identity, and resisting peer pressure.

- **One-to-one mentoring:** mentors support children by advocating for needed services; creating relationships with children to serve as positive examples for future relationships; helping children practise skills learned in group; engaging children in social, cultural, educational, and recreational activities; and promoting positive future outlooks.

Who can deliver the intervention: the intervention is delivered by three practitioners:

- **Skills group:** delivered by a clinician, psychologist, or social worker with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

- **One-to-one mentoring:** delivered by a social worker with a bachelor's degree.

- **Group supervisor:** a social worker with a bachelor's degree in psychology.

Training requirement for practitioners:

- Practitioners are given eight to nine days of training and a yearly eight-hour booster session.

- Supervision of practitioners: supervision is done by two clinical supervisors and a skills supervisor.

Delivery setting: secondary schools, community, home.

More information on the FHF-PT programme can be found online: https://guidebook.eif.org.uk/programme/programme-5#:~:text=FHF%2DP%20is%20a%20positive,foster%20their%20own%20healthy%20futures

The Adult Connections Team (ACT) programme, explored in Recommendation 2

Intervention description: The ACT programme is an enhanced outreach programme involving provision of externship services, which is a short-term professional learning experience, and involves young people shadowing professionals to learn about their field. The ACT programme is effective in significantly reducing offending and arrest among young people.

Intervention components:

- Youth-led outreach
- Coordinated mentoring
- Job readiness training.

Who can deliver the intervention:

- **Enhanced outreach:** youth specialist.
- **Mentors:** volunteer mentors.
- **Job readiness training:** employment specialist.

Intervention duration:

- **Enhanced outreach:** unspecified duration – to be done as needed.
- **Mentoring:** one-to-one in-person mentoring, conducted over a year or longer.
- **Job readiness training:** 20 hours; one-to-one training or paired, in-person sessions.

Training requirement for practitioners: three hours of training before matching mentors with mentees.

Delivery setting: community.

Fostering Healthy Futures for Teens, explored in Recommendation 4

Intervention description: Fostering Health Futures for Teens (FHF-T) is a 30-week programme of community-based one-to-one mentoring for young people aged 13 to 15 years old in foster care due to adverse childhood experiences such as instability in housing placement, caregivers or school, parental substance abuse, parental mental illness, or parental incarceration. The programme supports young people to build on their competencies and reduce adverse outcomes.

Intervention components:

- Weekly one-to-one mentoring
- Skills training
- Teen–mentor workshops with career shadowing.

Who can deliver the intervention:

- **Mentoring:** graduate students studying psychology or social work. Each mentor is paired with three young people.
- **Workshops:** facilitated by professionals with subject-specific expertise.

Intervention duration: 30-week one-to-one in-person mentoring sessions, lasting between 1 and 3 hours each week.

Training requirement for mentors: four-hour weekly individual and group supervision. Mentors attend seminars designed to support them throughout their mentorship.

Delivery setting: community.

More information on the FHF-T programme can be found online: https://www.fosteringhealthyfutures.org/programs/teen

My Life/TAKE CHARGE programme, explored in Recommendation 5

Intervention description: My Life is an adapted version of the TAKE CHARGE self-determination programme, which was previously designed for disabled young people. Like the TAKE CHARGE programme, My Life provides youth-led coaching and near-peer mentoring, to enhance self-determination and goal achievement.

Intervention components:

- One-to-one coaching in self-determination skills
- Group mentoring workshops.

Who can deliver the intervention:

- **Mentoring:** near peers – that is, young adults who were formerly in foster care (three to four years older than participants).
- **Coaching:** intervention delivery staff members and supervised graduate students in social work.

Intervention duration: 9–12 months in total, with weekly one-to-one in-person coaching and mentoring, and up to 4 workshops.

Training requirement for mentors: group or individual coach certification training taught by My Life supervisor either in person or virtually; 32 hours over 1 or 2 weeks.

Delivery setting: community.

Target population: young people, aged 15–19, transitioning out of care, including disabled young people and those with mental health conditions.

More information can be found online: https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/my-life/detailed

The Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach Programme, explored in Recommendation 5

Intervention description: The Massachusetts Adolescent Outreach Programme (MAOP) is a voluntary mentoring programme which pairs young people with an outreach worker who works closely with them to achieve set goals related to the young person's needs. The programme can empower young people to develop skills of an independent adult, support their participation in higher education, support them to achieve permanency by connecting them to a caring adult and identifying a support network for young people.

Intervention components: outreach workers help young people with a variety of activities such as applying for college, getting a driver's licence, and gaining employment. This involves signposting the young person to other support services, or direct support from the outreach worker, such as assisting the young person to complete a job application.

Who can deliver the intervention: volunteer outreach workers.

Intervention frequency: at least once a week, one-to-one in-person support.

Training requirement for mentors: specialised mentor training to ensure mentors understand young people in foster care.

Delivery setting: community.

Target population: young people transitioning out of care.

More information can be found online: https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/massachusetts-adolescent-outreach-program-for-youths-in-intensive-foster-care

Better Futures, explored in Recommendation 5

Intervention description: Better Futures is designed to support young people in foster care with severe mental illness to improve self-determination skills, as well as prepare for and enter post-secondary education.

Intervention components:

- A summer programme on a university campus
- Individual peer coaching
- Mentoring workshops.

Who can deliver the intervention: Peer coaching and mentoring can be delivered by young adults aged up to 28 years old in higher education, who are care-experienced and/or experiencing mental health challenges.

Intervention duration:

- **Summer programme:** four days, three nights spent on university campus.
- **Peer coaching:** one-to-one in-person coaching, twice every month over nine months.
- **Mentoring:** five group workshops held in person/face-to-face.

Training requirement for mentors: 40 hours of training on the foster care system, mental health, education, and general coaching techniques. Weekly individual and group supervision sessions run by intervention managers.

Delivery setting: community, university campus.

Target population: young people aged 16 to 18 years old in foster care who are experiencing significant mental health challenges.

More information can be found online: https://www.cebc4cw.org/program/better-futures/detailed

This resource is part of a set of publications linked to the Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide:

- Mentoring and Befriending Practice Guide: https://foundations.org.uk/toolkit/practice-guides/mentoring-and-befriending
- Quick Guide: https://foundations.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/04/quick-guide-mentoring-and-befriending.pdf

Find out more about the series of Practice Guides foundations.org.uk/practice-guides

We want to hear from local leaders who are engaging with the Practice Guides.
Get in touch at practice_guides@foundations.org.uk.