

# **More than Mentors Progress Report for CYP Mental Health Local Transformation Plan, Barking and Dagenham Clinical Commissioning Group**

**Dr. Nick Barnes, Strategic Lead for More than Mentors**

## **Introduction;**

More than Mentors is a new and creative model of peer mentoring, which has been co-designed and co-delivered as a pilot study in east London. Through the Department of Health's "health and social care volunteer fund" Community Links has been invited to take the lead in rolling this programme out in 5 boroughs across the capital – with Jo Richardson Community School and Eastbury Community School, both in London Borough of Barking and Dagenham, being the first schools where we have successfully delivered this intervention.

More than Mentors draws on the best evidence from across the field, exploring peer mentoring as a way of preventing significant mental health conditions in young people. Peer mentoring – where older adolescents support their younger peers – has been shown to prevent the development of mental health problems in research studies. However, frequently in practice, little attention is given to the evidence around recruitment, training and support of these volunteer mentors. Community Links, with a wider partnership team (including East London Foundation Trust and the Anna Freud Centre) are working with adolescent volunteer through to commissioners, to further co-develop, test, evaluate and subsequently disseminate an approach which sustainably delivers an effective voluntary peer mentoring workforce across London.

## **Working relationship between More than Mentors, Barking and Dagenham CCG and wider stakeholders;**

Starting working with the borough in March 2017, the More than Mentors team have been working alongside the Barking and Dagenham CCG and the Education Department within the local authority to ensure that this programme adds value to the wider preventative agenda of the Local Transformation Plan(LTP) – recognising the need for building resilience as one of the key objectives when looking to support young people earlier, and prevent the development and emergence of significant mental health needs.

As the project has developed and evolved, we have been able to liaise with the wider Children and Young People's workforce within the borough, and have met with the local CAMHS service to ensure there is robust and transparent governance and safeguarding procedures between the project delivery team and the wider networks responsible for Children and Young People's Mental Health and safeguarding.

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### Outcomes and Evaluation of More than Mentors between March - July 2017;

The evaluation of the More than Mentors is being conducted independently by the Anna Freud Centre - Evidence Based Practice Unit. This evaluation is an iterative process, combining both quantitative and qualitative components. From our initial data we have the following findings from the 2 secondary schools we have worked with so far;

Total participants in the programme: N = 40 (20 mentors and 20 mentees, 75% female)

	Mentors	Mentees
<b>Gender</b>	10% male, 90% female	40% male, 60% female
<b>Mean age</b>	16.4 years	13.2 years
<b>Ethnicity</b>	27.3% White British 18.2% Any other white background 13.6% Black African 13.6% Bangladeshi 9.1% Pakistani 4.5% White and Black African 4.5% Other	34.8% White British 21.7% Any other white background 8.7% Black African 8.7% Other 4.3% Bangladeshi 4.3% Any other black background 4.3% Chinese
<b>FSM eligible</b>	27.3%	52.2%
<b>SEN support</b>	0.0%	21.7%

### Quantitative Analysis –

We are awaiting analysis of the quantitative data that is being processed from this first cohort, and expect this to emerge in early November 2017. The measures that make up the child wellbeing questionnaire include the Student Resilience Survey (SRS), the Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) and the short Warwick and Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (WEMWBS). We have also been looking at students attendance and attainment at school, alongside wider demographics.

### Qualitative Analysis -

Looking at the more qualitative feedback we have applied 3 approaches so far;

1. Mentor Training Feedback Questionnaires – completed by all Peer Mentors after they have completed their training
2. Independent semi-structured interviews with Mentors and Mentees at the end of mentoring process – conducted by a research assistant from the Anna Freud Centre
3. Mentoring experience questionnaires – completed by mentors and mentees at the end of the mentoring process.

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Exploring this feedback further;

**1. Training feedback questionnaires** – these have provided feedback about specific domains of the training, and we have selected quotes from a variety of surveys;

**Skill-building** - “I understand the difference between being friends with the mentees and being their mentor as they communicate in different ways, e.g. mentors suggest solutions and friends give direct answers to the problem”.

**Confidence** - “[I feel more confident in becoming a peer mentor] due to the regular and open discussions we have, as a group, we discuss feelings the mentee may feel and how to get them to open up, in the most relaxed and informal way possible”.

**Practice** - “It was helpful as I could visualise the human errors which could be committed during the sessions. So I understand ways from avoiding these errors” “Being a peer mentor puts you in a position where you have one-to-one contact with your mentee. The role plays were often observed and watched by all the group, not allowing us to act as ourselves”.

**Benefits of participation** - “It is very beneficial to your knowledge regarding mental health as well as your future career path. You also help someone whilst doing this”

## **2. Independent Semi-structured interviews with mentors and mentees;**

A research assistant from Anna Freud Centre has been able to analyse 4 (2 mentees, 2 mentors) interviews (out of a total sample of 8 interviews) to explore themes and views about the mentoring process. The research questions asked in these interviews were;

*What was helpful about More than Mentors?*

*What was not as helpful, or what could be improved?*

Some emerging findings include;

### **(i) For the Mentors;**

*What was helpful about More than Mentors?*

Mentors experienced personal development and growth - “I’ve definitely built on myself as a person. Like I’ve become more patient, definitely. And I’ve just become more tolerant as well, ‘cause what feels like a really tiny thing to me is a massive thing to [my mentee]. So I’ve been able to take things into perspective a lot more. It’s probably made me a lot more well-rounded as a person, so that’s good.” – Mentor.

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Mentors developed new skills - “[My mentee and I] got on really well, but I’d say it was still professional, in the sense that I was still there to help her. I wasn’t just there to be like, I’m gonna wave a magic wand and everything’s gonna be better, or I’m gonna be your friend and talk to you for an hour. It was a brilliant mix of being able to be a friend but also be able to help her out” – Mentor, Cohort 1

Mentors felt genuinely helpful to mentees, which gave them a sense of accomplishment and happiness.

*What was not as helpful, or what could be improved?*

Mentors had conflicting views about the length of the mentoring sessions, with one finding them too long and another not long enough

One mentor said they would have liked to have had a recap of the training at the end of the programme.

### **(ii) For the mentees;**

*What was helpful about More than Mentors?*

Mentees felt listened to by their mentor- “I: How’d you feel at the beginning of each meeting with your mentor? P: Happy. ‘Cause I know like, she’s gonna listen. And sit there and not judge me on it. ... she proper listens. Like, sometimes, no one listens. But she proper listens.” – Mentee, Cohort 1

Mentees felt they could speak to their mentor about things they couldn’t talk to friends or family about

Mentees learned tips and tricks from their mentors about managing anger, improving friendships, and building confidence at both home and school - “I: What kinds of things have you learnt after working with your mentor? P: To be nice to people. ‘Cause like, sometimes like, if they barge me, I’ll go like, what, who you barging? And I get really rude to ‘em. And now I don’t do that no more, ‘cause I’ve learnt to control it and just walk away from it.” – Mentee, Cohort 1

One mentee wanted to become a mentor to help others like he was helped.

*What was not as helpful, or what could be improved?*

One mentee wanted to know more about why they were recruited, as they were uncertain why they had been chosen for the project since they hadn’t volunteered.

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3. Experience of mentoring' questionnaire – key findings expressed as a Wordle

*Mentees words to describe their mentors*



*Mentors words to describe their mentees*



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### Next steps

Over the few months we have been liaising with schools and youth groups across the borough to explore the opportunity of delivering the More than Mentors programme within their settings. We have also been looking to adapt the programme to ensure it works for the young people and the setting, rather than making it a “one size fits all” model.

As a result we have the following programme of activity;

London Borough	School/ Community Group	Numbers of Mentors	Start date for Training
<b>Barking and Dagenham</b>	Jo Richardson Community School	30 mentors recruited and interviewed	2 <sup>nd</sup> October and 4 <sup>th</sup> October (2 cohorts of training)
	All Saints School	15 mentors recruited	2 <sup>nd</sup> November 2017
	Eastbrook School	15 mentors recruited	November 2017
	Robert Clack Community School	12 – 15 mentors recruited	November 2017
	Eastbury Community School	10 mentors to finish mentoring programme – COHORT 1	November 2017 – looking co-develop MtM Ambassadorial role with students.
	Dagenham Park schools	Up to 15 mentors	November 2017 / January 2018
	Barking and Dagenham Young Carers	Up to 10 mentors*	Taster session run with Young Carers in July 2017. Looking for training to start January/February 2018

\* - The recruitment of this group is dependent upon a request from the UCL ethics committee that we can recruit mentees aged 9 and 10 years of age – given the requests of this specific group.

If we are able to complete all the work outlined above, then we hope to have trained up a minimum of 120 peer mentors by early 2018, and would therefore hope to have supported 120 mentees within the borough by the end of the Spring Term 2018.

Our aspiration is to build on the supportive relationship we have with the Barking and Dagenham CCG and the Barking and Dagenham’s Department of Education in order to be able to offer More than Mentors in every secondary school across the borough, by the completion of the project in March 2019.

In 2018 we are also aspiring to ensure we have a **Training the Trainers** package in place and available to staff within Barking and Dagenham

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## Reaching Out

Given the working relationships we have developed within the borough of Barking and Dagenham, we have also been able to propose further suggestions to support the mental health and emotional wellbeing of children and young people within the borough – work that is “reaching out” beyond the original remit of the More than Mentors brief, but hopefully will enable a more sustainable impact

There are 2 significant suggestions that are emerging;

1. **Supporting vulnerable students during transition** – Following conversations with some of the primary schools within the borough, we are looking to explore how these More than Mentors peer mentors could support students who are anticipated to experience a difficult transition from primary to secondary school. Being aware that problems around transition can significantly contribute to disengagement from education and learning, and subsequently lead to students being excluded and disenfranchised, this is very much a preventative approach to emotional wellbeing.
2. **Launching a student-led, schools-based mental health conference** – With such a considerable number of students being trained within the borough as More than Mentors peer mentors we are keen to ensure that they support the wider student population and help articulate a voice about young people’s mental health across the borough. In the next Mental Health Awareness Week (May 2018) we will be looking to co-design and co-produce a mental health conference with young people from across the borough to raise awareness about mental health and emotional wellbeing, to challenge mental health stigma and to ensure that children and young people within the borough are at the heart of taking our services forward – **Nothing About Us Without Us.**

These are exciting times for the More than Mentors project as we start to scale up the original work and begin to reach the numbers that we feel will demonstrate significant impact. But we are very aware this work would not have been possible without the support of the Barking and Dagenham CCG and the borough’s Education Department. Thank you.

If you require any further information please contact;

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