
HOW DID YOU FIND OUT ABOUT ENTERPRISE MENTORS?

I found out about the project and Enterprise Mentors through Caroline. Caroline and I had worked together in the past through Connexions. Also, in terms of my experience, I had worked with young people, which Caroline knew, and I also did some volunteering locally with the Youth Offending Team and at a local charity.

WHAT ATTRIBUTES OR SKILLS ARE NEEDED TO BE A MENTOR?

I think that life experience is really important in terms of being a mentor. Patience is another one. Trying to get that young person to engage with you, so good communication skills, at being able to get that young person who, you know, dependent upon, I think it does depend upon the gender how you work with them. In terms of age and gender of the mentor, I think that is important. I personally get on better with boys, because I've got a son and kind of relate to that I think more easily. But I've watched, in my experience with other people who have been mentoring, I've watched men actually mentor very, very well. I don't know what it is, I think they can engage. And I also see when they're younger, it working a lot better for the mentee. I sometimes felt I was a bit of an old fogey and other times it was fine.

WHAT DID YOU GET OUT OF THE MENTORING RELATIONSHIP? AND WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM EACH OTHER?

I think in this project it was slightly more difficult to have a mentoring relationship, because the organisations that these young people were in could have been a bit more supportive, in terms of encouraging that young person to engage. But there was a young girl who I did work with, who actually wasn't with any agency, you know, she was on her own, and Caroline had introduced me to her, and that relationship worked because she was very positive. She was very engaging and she was a really nice young person. Had had a lot of difficulties, but I learned a lot from her because she was lovely. She gave a lot as well. But I think for some of the young people that we dealt with, I think it would have been helpful if their school or the pupil referral unit that they might have been with gave a little bit more from them to help that young person engage.

WHAT WOULD YOU SAY TO SOMEONE THINKING ABOUT MENTORING ON A SIMILAR PROJECT?

Give it a go. I think it's important to work with young people. I honestly believe – and because of my own working background, because I dealt with apprenticeships for most of my working life – they are our future. And some of them are so disengaged and have got so many issues to deal with that having somebody that's rational and not judging them is really, really important. And, you know, they need some help, so just give it a go.

WHAT ARE THE POSITIVES AND NEGATIVES?

I do a lot of voluntary work and I get a lot out of it. I work with special needs kids in the local charity that I'm involved in and they give me so much. I go along and I learn so much. I'm useless at sticking things and making things and they're brilliant, so I learn a lot. I do stuff with the Youth Offending Team. And I could take some of these kids home because they've got such awful lives. So I feel that if we can give them some positive experiences and respect them and help them move forward, that's brilliant. In terms of this project, it was just trying to give

them some normality and see that they did have a future and that there were things that they could actually work for and benefit from.

So those are the positives. I think it's very important to actually be able to give that something back. I know that's the kind of saying that everybody uses: give something back to the community. But I've lived and worked in Milton Keynes and it's been good to me, so this is my time to give back.

Negatives: I think there's a bit of a frustration in respect of the project ended. And, again, coming back to the previous point that I made about those organisations that some of those young people were with, I think they could have given a bit more commitment to it.

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