5.5 MONITORING AND SUPPORT

Kia mau koe ki te kupu a tōu matua – Hold fast to the words your father gives you.

OVERVIEW

Figure 11. Monitoring and support - key activities

Monitoring the relationship → Assessing the relationship → Supporting the relationship → Feedback on the relationship → Acknowledgment

Ongoing monitoring and support of mentors and mentees is critical to your programme's success. This will help ensure the safety of the young person, assess the quality of the relationship being formed and enable programme staff to respond in a timely manner to specific needs and/or challenges being encountered in the relationship that may cause it to falter.

In her research summary, Sipe (2002) highlighted the importance of monitoring (supervision) and support in fostering the development of successful mentoring relationships. In particular, whilst initial orientation and training prepares mentors for their role, ongoing monitoring and support from programme staff provides the encouragement mentors need to keep meeting with their mentees and to get through the challenges so that the relationship has a chance to develop, rather than dissolving prematurely.

Contact with all parties should ideally be in person or via phone rather than solely relying on email or a web-based form. Programme staff should have a list of pre-prepared questions to use for these conversations in order to assess the quality of the relationship being formed from both the mentor and mentee's perspective. This will provide valuable information for supporting the individual match.

Regular contact with mentees will help keep communication channels open for them to raise anything that is making them uncomfortable. The processes should enable programme staff to provide support and advice to mentees in response to their identified needs.

Regular feedback to mentors on the impact the relationship is having on the mentee is an important component of the support function. It can help reinforce their motivation for mentoring. It also provides programme staff with the opportunity to ensure mentors have realistic and positive expectations about the relationship.

Organised activities and events for mentors, mentees and their families can be an effective means to enhance the relationship. For parents/caregivers, it is a great way to involve them and get their support for the relationship.

Recognising and acknowledging mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers throughout the relationship is also important and can again help to enhance the relationship.

5.5.1 Monitoring the relationship

Monitoring the relationship should be consistent and frequent over the course of the match. To achieve this, it is recommended programmes undertake the following activities.

Establish a schedule to contact mentors, mentees and their parent/caregiver on a regular basis. For mentors and mentees, consider contact twice per month for the first month of the match and once per month thereafter. For parents, contact on a monthly basis is recommended (MENTOR, 2015).

Create questionnaires to use for these meetings. The questions should cover: how often have they been meeting; what activities have they done together; how are they finding the relationship; do they have any concerns or issues they would like to raise; do they need any additional support; mentors and parents/caregivers should also be asked their perception of the impact of the mentoring is having on the mentee – what changes are they observing.

Maintain records of the conversations to monitor the progress of the relationship and the mentee's development over time. Tracking this progress can also help pick up any behavioural patterns or other issues that may require special attention.

Monitoring and support will vary depending on the type of mentoring and setting where mentoring is taking place. For instance, with site-based programmes (e.g., schools) there should be ample opportunity for programme staff to observe the activities of the mentor and mentee, and assess if their meetings are going well and are achieving good outcomes for the young person. For community-based programmes, events may provide programme staff with the opportunity to observe the relationships firsthand. For group mentoring, monitoring and assessing group dynamics will be important.

Monitoring and support contact may need to occur more frequently should challenges arise. This may particularly be the case when supporting 'higher risk' young people. However, it is important not to micro-manage and to keep in mind that the match is a relationship and may therefore need time for rapport and trust to develop.

5.5.2 Assessing the relationship

The information gathered from monitoring the relationship should enable programme staff to assess the quality of the relationship being formed from the perspective of all parties and help determine the specific support required for individual matches (refer to Section 3).

Programme staff should also assess whether the relationship is encountering challenges that could lead to early termination. Anticipating closure and preparing mentors and mentees for it can help manage any negative consequences.

Programmes may consider including an opportunity to review the relationship match after a set period of time. For example, assessing after one month appears to be a relatively common practice. This allows both the mentor and mentee to express how they are feeling about the relationship, to address any issues before they escalate and, in some cases, decide to conclude the relationship. Programmes should have clear procedures in place to handle these types of closures. This should include whether they attempt to rematch the mentee with a new mentor and vice-versa (refer to Section 5.6).

It is important not take things at face value and to be proactive about supporting the match as both mentors and mentees may lack confidence to express concerns about the relationship.

5.5.3 Supporting the relationship

Research shows that when mentors receive high-quality support from the programme, they report stronger relationships with their mentees and are more likely to continue their mentoring relationship (MENTOR, 2015).

In the initial stages of the mentoring relationship, mentors will need regular ongoing support to help them continue to develop skills and confidence and deal with specific issues that may arise. Mentors need to be confident that professional staff are there to assist them when they have issues, concerns or do not feel that they are making progress in the relationship. Staff

should be available to mentors to answer questions that arise, troubleshoot when there are issues and concerns in the match, and recommend alternative strategies for what can be done in the mentor and mentee relationship (Weinberger, 2005).

Programme staff may need to provide mentors with ideas for activities, advice on managing a particular behavioural or communication issue and so forth. Support may also include access to additional resources and/or further training on particular topics.

Having one-to-one support available to mentors can help solve problems that may arise. Mentors may also benefit from establishing a schedule of regular group support/training sessions for mentors. These sessions should be responsive to identified needs and the evolving relationship. This provides the opportunity to undertake ongoing training, as well as providing peer support for mentors. Set a topic for each session, such as an ethical dilemma mentors may face with their mentees.

5.5.4 Feedback on the relationship

Programmes should provide regular feedback to their mentors about their mentee and the relationship. This will help them to develop their mentoring skills and modify their approaches, behaviours and activities in order to meet mentee needs.

Programmes need to ensure they have clear procedures for mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers to raise any concerns or issues they may have. It is a good idea to incorporate alternative means (email, phone, face-to-face) for people to be comfortable raising these concerns.

An **escalation process** should be available to deal with instances where someone is dissatisfied with any aspects of the support they are receiving, and to ensure these issues are resolved promptly.

A clear and accessible **complaints resolution process** to receive and resolve any complaints should also be available. These

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VOICES FROM THE FIELD

The whole of youth is so important - Solomon Group Youth Services Programme, Auckland

The Auckland-based Solomon Group Youth Programme co-ordinator Sid Tuaoi says 'The programme relies on key elements all being connected to make it successful for youth and families.'

While educational achievement is a key focus of the Youth Mentoring Programme where the youth are given direct mentoring support, this is centred within a broader range of activities and services. This holistic approach on mentees and families needs means the programmes can address issues over and above standard youth mentoring programme delivery. The programme's close monitoring allows it to nimbly adapt to youth needs and circumstances.

Sid said 'Collaboration and communication is needed with schools, families, funders and youth and is so important for the Youth Mentoring Programme to achieve our goals. When the whole of the youth's world is looked after, then the youth is more likely to succeed. The programme's success relies on good relationships with school heads of departments, who see the value of the programme for their schools, the youth and for the family.'

processes need to be fair and reasonable and ensure any complaints are dealt with in a timely manner, with parties being kept informed throughout the process and about the outcome. Programme staff need to be mindful of the need to act with discretion and protect the interests of the young person involved.

These processes need to be equitable, sensitive, inclusive and timely, enabling honest feedback to be given, and confidential.

5.5.5 Acknowledgement

Recognition and acknowledgement of mentors, mentees and their parents/caregivers throughout the relationship is important and can help support and enhance the relationship.

A regular schedule of events provides opportunities for everyone to get together and acknowledge and celebrate the mentoring relationships. These events help build a sense of community within the programme that allows mentors to identify with the programme's goals, to feel bonded with other mentors and to feel pride in their association with a valuable endeavour. They also provide opportunities for participants to socialise with other matches in the programme, for mentors to see their mentees in a wider context and to role-model healthy relationships. For mentees and their families, events can provide access to a wider community of support. Ensuring mentors feel respected should also improve retention.

Checklist 7. Effective Practice – Monitoring and Support

Consistent and frequent monitoring and support of the mentoring relationship helps ensure the safety of the young person, assess the quality of the relationship being formed, and enables programme staff to respond in a timely manner to specific needs and / or challenges being encountered in the relationship that may otherwise cause it to falter	CHECK
Establish a **contact schedule** to monitor the mentoring relationship on a consistent and frequent basis.	
Create a **questionnaire** to use when contacting mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers to check on how the mentoring relationship is progressing.	
Maintain **records** of the conversations with mentors, mentee and parents/caregivers to monitor progress of the relationship.	
Analyse **information** obtained through monitoring to assess the quality of the mentoring relationship and to determine any specific support required.	
Establish clear procedures for **handling matches that end prematurely** including transitioning/re-matching the mentee (refer Section 5.6 for further information).	
Provide **ongoing support** to mentors and mentees in response to their identified needs and the evolving relationship.	
Provide **regular feedback** to mentors about the mentee and the relationship to help develop their mentoring skills to meet their mentee's needs.	
Establish procedures for mentors, mentees and parents/caregivers to **raise any concerns** they may have about the relationship. This should include an **escalation process** if anyone is dissatisfied with the support they are receiving, and a **complaints resolution process** to resolve any complaints if they are received.	
Ensure mentors are **acknowledged** for their contribution throughout the mentoring relationship.	