

Promoting Youth Mentoring as Part of the Children's Action Plan: Self-Assessment Form

1 Background

In October 2012, Government announced a set of actions to fundamentally change and improve the way we identify, support and protect vulnerable children and young people. As part of this plan, Government announced that it would promote youth mentoring, by encouraging adults to volunteer to mentor young people through existing mentoring programmes. The purpose of the promotional activity is to grow the pool of available mentors so that more vulnerable young people have the opportunity to benefit from a mentoring relationship with an experienced, caring adult.

We would like to invite you to put your programme forward to be promoted through this initiative. This is an opportunity to look at building your volunteer mentor base and growing your programme in the communities in which you work. It also represents an opportunity for you to be a part of a nationwide initiative to improve the lives of children and young people. The initial promotional campaign is due to kick start at the end of April. Further details on this will follow.

Youth mentoring programmes promoted will be those that meet the scope of the initiative as outlined below and are able to demonstrate they have safe volunteer mentoring systems, practices, procedures and protocols in place. A set of criteria has been developed by the Ministry of Health, the agency leading this initiative, in collaboration with the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network, and have been reviewed by a cross-government Project Working Group and a reference group of sector representatives associated with the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network.

In order to be involved in the promotional campaign please complete this self-assessment form and return it to the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network. Your self-assessment will be considered by the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Youth Development and the New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network.

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2. Scope of initiative

For the purposes of this project, youth mentoring is defined as:

“a process in which a more experienced, trusted guide forms a relationship with a young person to offer support, guidance and encouragement, to assist young people to realise their potential.”

A youth mentoring programme is defined as:

“formalised arrangements where a third party matches a mentor and mentee (or a group of mentees) who work together through a planned, structured programme over a sustained period.”

The programmes that are considered “in scope” for this initiative are:

- formal mentoring programmes for vulnerable young people aged 10–17 (inclusive)
- both one-to-one and small group mentoring, where participation is on a voluntary basis
- programmes seeking to deliver a wide range of educational, emotional, social, practical and career-related outcomes, based on the needs of the individual at the time of the mentoring
- programmes that involve an enduring relationship between a mentor and a young person.

Programmes *not* captured within the scope of this initiative are:

- mentoring for parents, whānau and others not aged 10–17 years old (e.g. through parenting programmes)
- mentoring directed to vulnerable children aged nine years and under
- peer-to-peer mentoring (i.e. where the mentor is also a young person)
- programmes involving mentoring, but where mentoring is not a structured component of the core activity
- workplace mentoring provided as part of employment arrangements
- student faculty mentoring provided by employees of academic institutions (e.g. guidance counsellors at high schools, university student services)
- case management carried out by social workers
- mentoring ordered by the Youth Court
- natural and informal mentoring relationships.

The rationale for the inclusions is based on research, which suggests that:

- programme structure is important – formal, structured mentoring programmes have the strongest evidence base for their effectiveness, and include quality and safety assurance features
- a wide range of positive outcomes are linked to youth mentoring programmes, including behavioural, attitudinal, health-related (incorporating social and emotional wellbeing), interpersonal, motivational and academic outcomes
- while one-to-one approaches to mentoring are generally effective, there is far less analysis of the effectiveness or otherwise of group mentoring programmes. However, group mentoring can be more appropriate in some contexts (eg. cultural).

The focus on 10 to 17 year olds reflects an understanding that this is the time during which children begin the transition through schools, adolescence and toward adulthood and independence. The developmental needs of this group are distinct, and mentoring programmes may focus on shaping values, social obligations and a sense of belonging or ‘place’ in the world. In contrast, the outcomes sought within younger age groups are likely to include developing a child’s self-worth and individuality, through sharing time, friendship and encouraging positive attitudes and behaviours¹.

We acknowledge that several programme providers who offer mentoring to children 10–17 years old also offer mentoring to children slightly younger and slightly older. Programmes will be considered on a case by case basis, and it is likely that some programmes spanning ages on either side of the target group, as well as the target group, will be included. Many other actions in the Children’s Action Plan focus on the developmental and protective needs of younger children.

Peer-to-peer mentoring is not included in this work programme as the Children’s Action Plan focus is on encouraging adults to take up mentoring roles. Therefore peer support programmes offered by many high schools throughout New Zealand are outside the scope of this initiative. In addition, the focus on vulnerable children means that it is particularly important to ensure that mentors have a suitable level of life experience, maturity and skills to respond appropriately to mentees’ needs.

Finally, the exclusion of mentoring ordered by the Youth Court, and mentoring that takes place in the context of employment or academic settings, reflects a desire to ensure that the focus remains on structured programmes that are widely accessible to adults interested in becoming volunteer mentors, as well as to vulnerable young people with a wide range of needs who enter the programmes voluntarily.

¹ New Zealand Youth Mentoring Network (2008), *Guide to Effective Practice in Youth Mentoring in New Zealand* pp 12-13.

<p><i>Please describe your youth mentoring programme, including:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>programme structure (focus, setting and mode of delivery of the programme)</i> • <i>target group (young people the programme serves)</i> • <i>mentor sources</i> • <i>programme goals.</i> 	
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3. Criteria for vetting and screening of potential mentors

Mentoring programmes have adequate vetting and screening processes in place with which to identify and exclude unsuitable candidates.

Vetting and screening requirements include:

- full Police vetting checks including information subject to the Criminal Records (Clean Slate Act) 2004
- photographic proof of identity and proof of current address
- two referee checks with reputable individuals with close knowledge of the applicant for at least one year
- interview with the applicant, including a focus on disclosure of previous involvement with children and young people and assessment of the appropriateness of the applicant for the role in terms of character and attitudes.

Mentoring programmes monitor and undertake regular Police checks of individuals to ensure the ongoing safety of children and young people. At a minimum, this is once every three years. Initial vetting and screening, and repeat vetting processes, are fully documented.

Vetting and screening prospective mentors	
<p>Please describe any processes you use to confirm a person's identity, residence and investigate their offending history.</p>	
<p>Please describe any arrangements you have for gaining individuals' consent to you contacting agencies and individuals for information on the applicant. What do you ask them to consent to?</p>	
<p>Please describe any other information you request from other organisations.</p>	
<p>Do you undertake repeat Police checks? How frequently do you do this? Do you request information that might be subject to the Criminal Records (Clean Slate Act) 2004?</p>	

What do you take into consideration when reviewing information obtained in Police checks?	
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Determining the suitability of applicants to mentor	
What characteristics (eg. attitudes, temperament, personality) do you look for in prospective mentors? How do you assess or look for these characteristics? Are any of these minimum requirements?	
Are there any particular skills or experience you require prospective mentors to have to be accepted on the programme?	
What information do you screen for relating to an applicant's previous contact with children and young people? What are your information sources for this?	
How many referee checks do you undertake? Do you have any requirements relating to referees, such as how long they have known the mentor?	
Please describe any other screening processes you use when considering an application from someone wanting to volunteer to mentor.	

4. Criteria for accepting young people on to the programme

Mentoring programmes have processes in place to establish whether a young person can be accepted on to the programme. This includes obtaining information relating to the involvement of other agencies, and any known risk factors, such as history of violence, aggression and dishonesty. The safety of volunteers is taken into account when considering whether to accept a young person on to the programme.

Accepting young people on to the programme	
Please describe any criteria and/or screening and selection processes you have for accepting young people on to your programme. Please include any information you request and collect from other organisations.	

5 Criteria for matching and monitoring/maintaining the relationship

Programmes have processes in place to find the most suitable match of mentor with young people, focusing on the developmental needs of the young person, and considering the interpersonal capabilities and social circumstances of both the mentor and the young person. Both mentors and young people are given the opportunity to have their say on the match before it is finalised.

These processes provide guidance to providers on:

- matching mentors and young people
- monitoring and supporting the match
- closing the relationship
- understanding why mentoring relationships have not been successful and respond appropriately, and
- transitioning young people to a new mentor in the event a mentoring partnership ends prematurely, or
- appropriately transitioning young people to alternative arrangements if required.

Mentors are provided a full profile of young people before the relationship commences.

Please describe the processes you follow to match mentors and young people.	
What involvement do the mentor and young person have in the match?	
Is the match (relationship) between the mentor and young person formalised by way of an agreement? If so, what is included in this agreement?	
What kind of information do you provide mentors about the young person before the mentoring relationship commences?	
What kind of information do you provide to the young person about their mentors before the mentoring relationship begins?	
Please describe any processes you have to monitor and support the match.	

What are your policies for dealing with a mentoring relationship ending prematurely?	
What are your policies for “closing” a relationship at the end of the programme?	
Have situations arisen where you have needed to transition young people to alternatives arrangements to mentoring? How do you manage these situations?	

6 Criteria for preparing young people for the mentoring relationship

Prior to initial engagement with their mentor, young people are oriented in the programme, so that they have a clear understanding of what they can expect from the programme, how to engage with the mentor and the provider, and what to do if there are any problems.

Young people are made aware of complaints processes and made to feel comfortable about raising any concerns they have about the mentoring relationship.

Please describe how you prepare young people for the mentoring relationship.	
What information do you provide to young people in relation to raising concerns, making complaints and exiting a relationship?	

7 Criteria for obtaining parents and caregivers consent

Parental and carer consent and support for the programme and mentoring relationship is secured as appropriate.

Please describe the involvement of parents and caregivers in the programme. Include any requirements and procedures for obtaining consent.	
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8 Mentor training and support criteria

Providers have a comprehensive induction and training package in place for mentors.

At a minimum, induction training should cover the expectations of the mentor, the programme structure, safety and security and how to be an effective mentor.

Mentors have access to regular ongoing support, particularly in the early months of the mentoring relationship, and also have access to ongoing and refresher training. At the start of a relationship, we recommend support be provided on a monthly basis, moving to quarterly as the relationship matures.

Records are kept to monitor the progress of the relationship, the development of the young person and to detect any issues requiring additional attention.

Please describe your induction and training package for mentors and what it covers.	
Do you provide ongoing training for mentors? Please describe what is provided and at what point it is provided.	
What is the nature of support you provide to mentors, and how frequently is this provided? Include any additional support provided when needed.	
What do you have in place to monitor the progression of the relationship and the development of the young person?	
Please describe any other processes you use to ensure the quality of training and support.	

9. Training and support for trainers criteria

Providers have systems in place to ensure that programme coordinators, mentor trainers and others involved in supporting mentors and young people have the right skills, experience and support to undertake their role effectively, and be engaged in ongoing training and development.

Please describe any requirements and arrangements you have regarding the skills, experience, training and development of programme coordinators and training.	
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10. Support for young people

Programme coordinators undertake contact with young people to ensure that the relationship is tracking well.

What are the arrangements for contact between the programme provider and the young person during the mentoring relationship?	
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11 Programme duration criteria

Mentoring relationships are for sufficient duration and intensity to allow time to establish a trusting relationship and achieve the developmental goals of the programme and the young person.

Please describe the duration and intensity (ie. frequency and length of contact) of mentoring relationships.	
Please describe how the duration and intensity of your programme relates to both programme goals and the goals of the young person.	

12 Complaints process

Mentoring programmes include clear and accessible complaints processes, and procedures to guide providers in the management of complaints, to ensure that the process is fair and reasonable, and protects the interests of young people.

Please describe your complaint resolution processes.	
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13 Continuous improvement

Mentoring programmes have processes in place to frequently review and improve practices and service quality, for the purposes of ensuring their programmes are safe and effective.

<p>What kind of monitoring, review and other continuous improvement processes do you have in place? Please describe what these cover and how frequently they take place.</p>	
<p>How are these processes used? Please provide examples.</p>	
<p>What processes do you use to measure the:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• effectiveness of programme processes• effectiveness of mentoring relationships, and• development and outcomes of young people.	