

Amplify

A
NATIONAL
VOICE

ANV National Voices Networking Event

coramVoice)))
getting young voices heard

Coram Voice

**‘Stable Homes, Built on Love’
Engagement Work - Feedback**

**Session 7 Building Relationships:
Rethinking Independent Visitors,
Befriending & Mentoring**

Session 7 - Building Relationships: Rethinking Independent Visitors, Befriending & Mentoring

The in-person workshop took place on Wednesday 25 October as part of the Amplify event.

The workshop focused on independent visitors, befriending and mentoring services. We started by explaining independent visitors, mentoring and befriending by interviewing Rebecca from the Department for Education (DfE) about DfE's work around this area at the moment.

Who we heard from:

A total of 25 young people attended the session. They were aged 15-25+ and were from across England.

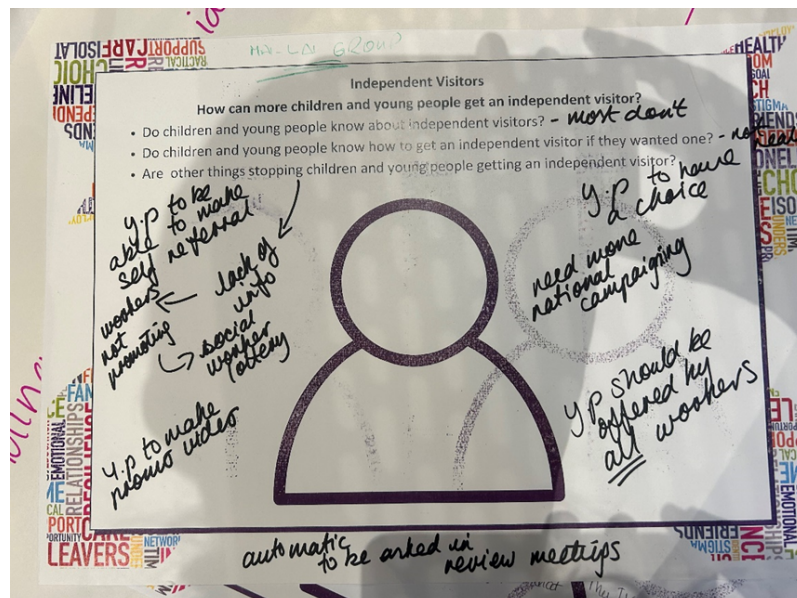




Independent Visitors: How can more children and young people get an Independent Visitor?

Do children and young people know about independent visitors?

- Young people and children don't know about independent visitors.
- Some young people said they didn't know they were called that.
- Social worker has never explained this service. We have not been given any info regarding this.
- However, some young people said that they did know what an independent visitor is.

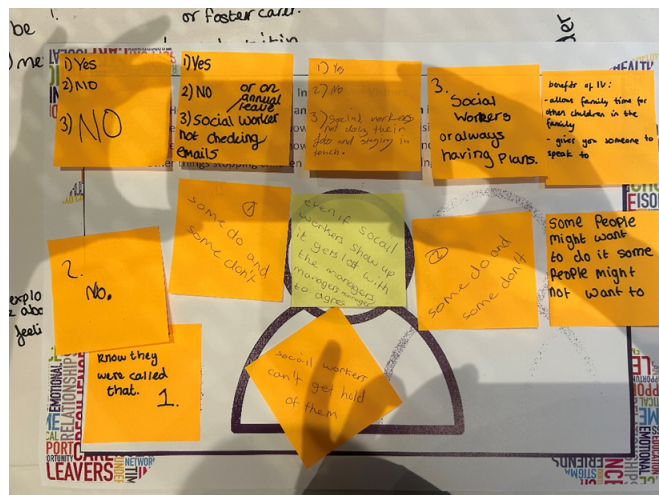




Independent Visitors: How can more children and young people get an Independent Visitor?

Do children and young people know how to get an independent visitor if they wanted one?

- Lots of young people said they didn't know how to get an independent visitor.
- There needs to be more national campaigning.
- Young people should be offered by all workers.
- I think for young people to know about both services, have workers talk about, shown online, leaflets.
- Some adults/ social workers aren't aware of an independent visitor role/ service.
- Promote at Looked After Reviews to sell Independent Visitor.





Independent Visitors: How can more children and young people get an Independent Visitor?

Are other things stopping children and young people getting an independent visitor?

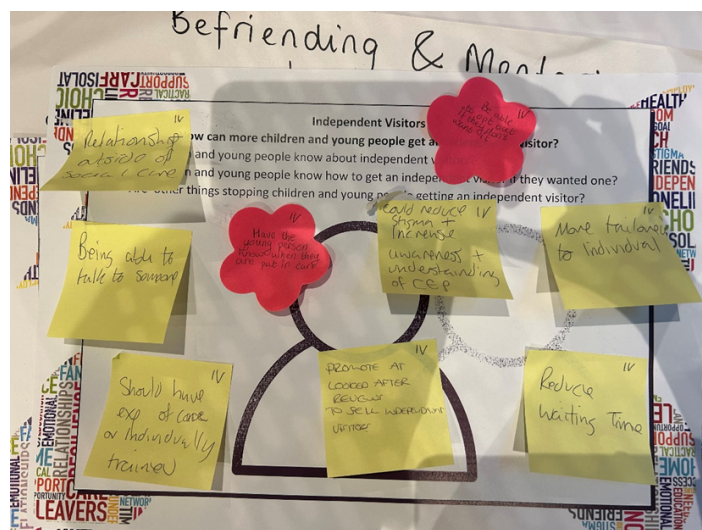
- Not enough information - workers not promoting - social worker lottery. Young people to be able to make self-referral.
- Social workers not doing their job and staying in touch.
- Some people might want to do it, some people might not want to.
- Even if social workers agree it gets lost with the manager's manager's manager to agree.
- Policies are getting in the way due to the fact that everything takes too long and if I was telling something to my social worker it has to go to their boss for something to actually come of it.



Independent Visitors: How can more children and young people get an Independent Visitor?

Are other things stopping children and young people getting an independent visitor?

- More tailored to individual.
- Have the young person know when they are put in care.
- Could reduce independent visitor stigma, increase awareness and understanding of care experience.
- Age varies in different local authorities.
- Lack of understanding on who they are or what they do.





Independent Visitors: How can more children and young people get an Independent Visitor?

Other things you wanted to say about independent visitors:

- Independent visitors need to be more open about who they are.
- Be able to opt out if they don't want it.
- Young people to make promo video.
- Relationship outside of social care are important.
- Being able to talk to someone is good.
- Should have experience of care or individually trained.
- Need to build a relationship with independent visitor before them becoming involved in their life.
- Match an independent visitor to the young person.
- I see my independent visitor like family.
- My independent visitor is like a guardian angel.
- Feel like it's because I was a troubled child that's why I got one.



Mentoring and befriending

You have been asked to design a new mentoring and befriending service. The aim of befriending and mentoring is to build relationships, and provide support to young people aged 16-25. Here are some questions for you to think about:

Befriender vs Mentor:

- Mentor is someone of a more professional capacity. A befriender can be anyone.
- Mentor: Experienced; Befriender: Friend, family, teacher, social services.
- Mentor would have specific role.
- Both mentor/ befriender: Someone kind and respectful.
- Mentor = Someone who has real life experience – care experienced/ mental health/ homelessness etc. Help with supporting things you're scared to do until you're ready to do it on your own.
- Befriender = Not specific role, just be there + listen. Don't need specific skills. They are a listening ear without the need for any background knowledge.
- Mentoring: Someone with lived care experience would be beneficial, offer advice & guidance.



Mentoring and befriending

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Who will be befrienders and mentors?

- Councillors/ business leaders/ officers/ sports people.
- Peer mentors.
- Befriender: Should be choice of young person.
- Must be qualified to be a mentor. Do not have someone only based on personal experiences. Experience doesn't = a course/ degree in mentoring.
- Qualities: friendly, kind/ caring, non-judgmental, professional, confidential (unless safeguarding is broken).
- Mentors: teachers, therapists, support workers.
- Care experienced young people to become befriender/ mentor.
- Could be a family member.



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Who will be befrienders and mentors?

- If possible they could be care experienced which means having some knowledge about this.
- Somebody over 18 but not somebody too old because we want somebody to relate to!
- Anyone passionate about children and young people.
- Young people + young adults with similar experiences;
- 'Befriender' doesn't give off positive vibes. Not keen on the term. Like term 'buddy'.
- A mentor has a focus to support you in life, education and/ or anything you need help in.



Mentoring and befriending

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What would they do with young people?

Mentor:

- Guide through your journey, helping you on the way.
- Could go on a walk; Get food/ drink; Walk around the shops.
- Helping with DIY in new housing opportunities that you might think you don't need help on.
- Helping with jobs or benefits.
- Help with life skills.
- Maintenance schemes.
- Activities; Life skills; Safe space to chat; Walks; Signpost to other services; Advice if they can; Advocate/ speak to social worker.
- Someone who listens.
- Confidence building.
- Encouragement; Taking my mind off things.
- "Teach me not to do things alone".
- Helping to integrate with community.



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What would they do with young people?

Mentor:

- Taking interest, asking me how my day has gone.
- Have meals + cooking. Convo over meal time.
- Let's go + do something fun + get a coffee.
- Proceed with promises made to the young child/person.
- Help explore emotions + talk about how you're feeling.
- Have fun + do fun activities such as playing games.
- Workshops.
- Teach us things by taking us places and giving us life experiences.
- Give advice, listen.



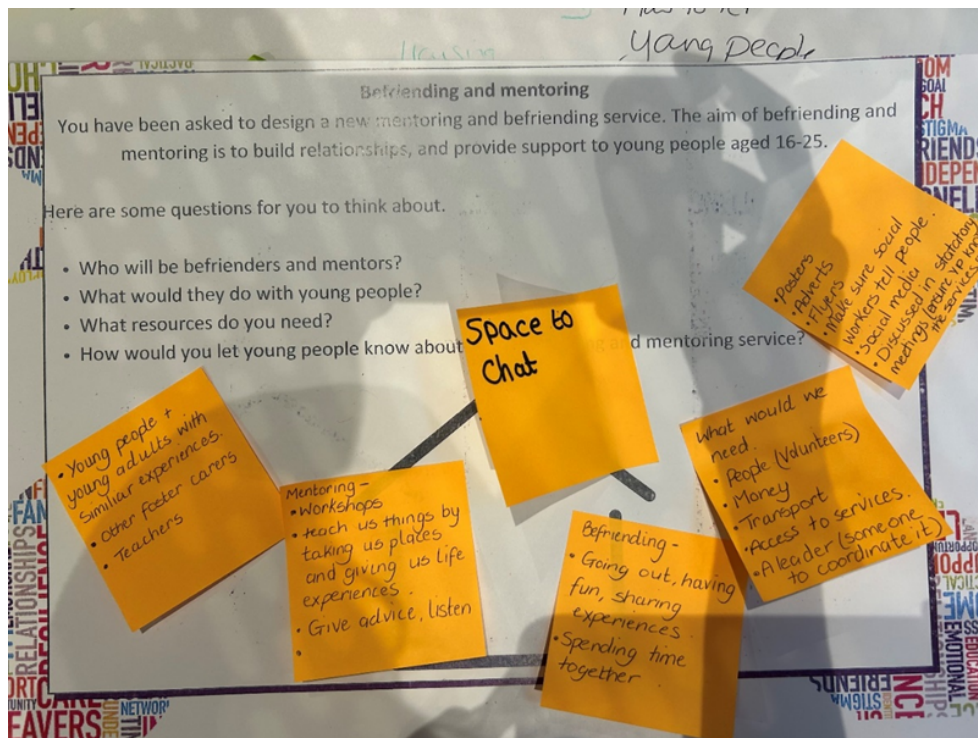
Mentoring and befriending

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What would they do with young people?

Befriending:

- Going out, having fun, sharing experiences.
- Spending time together.





Mentoring and befriending

You have been asked to design a new mentoring and befriending service. The aim of befriending and mentoring is to build relationships, and provide support to young people aged 16-25. Here are some questions for you to think about:

What resources do you need?

- Safe space, space to chat.
- People to assist; money/ finance support; banking from corporate parents.
- They might have to need transport money + knowledge about things the younger person or peer needs help with.
- Money to spend on visit.
- Funding; Peer support groups; Safe space; Help with travel; Access to tailored training.
- Transport; Money; People; Volunteers; Knowledge on certain things.
- Need training + understanding.
- A leader (someone to coordinate it).



Mentoring and befriending

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Other comments: Befriending

- Don't like the idea of it.
- Feels fake/ staged.
- One-sided.
- Forced.
- Are they actually your friend.
- Feels like counselling.
- Don't like the idea of it.
- Building the relationship and then goes behind your back to tell.
- Why have a befriender over an independent visitor?
- Feels like they will sack me off.
- Having to open up to someone else.



Mentoring and befriending

You have been asked to design a new mentoring and befriending service. The aim of befriending and mentoring is to build relationships, and provide support to young people aged 16-25. Here are some questions for you to think about:

How would you let young people know about your befriending and mentoring service?

- Social media TikTok/ Instagram/ Facebook/ Twitter.
- Adverts on TV.
- Social worker/ PA or foster carer.
- Learn about it in school/ assemblies.
- Posters/ Flyers.
- Housing provider (moving-in packs).
- Community centre.
- Discussed in statutory meetings (ensure YP know the services available).
- Letters/ postcards; Website; Welcome guide; Pledge.
- Campaigns.
- Drop-in sessions.
- Local noticeboards.
- Council newsletters.

Key messages for policy teams:



Children and young people don't always know about independent visitors or other services that can support them.



Barriers to getting an independent visitor have included social workers or other professionals not knowing or not promoting services to children and young people and decisions not being followed up.



Children and young people feel that there are lots of ways in which independent visitors, mentoring and befriending could be promoted better to children and young people.



Children and young people have said that there is a stigma to having an independent visitor and more needs to be done to explain who they are and how they can support them.



Children and young people are unsure about the term 'befriender' as they feel it sounds 'fake', 'forced' or 'staged'.



Children and young people think that care experienced people, older people, professional and councillors should be mentors.

Further information

Check out other [online session](#) dates for future sessions

Should you have any questions please do not hesitate to get in touch at: ANV@coramvoice.org.uk

