



Grandmentors help care leavers with education, training or employment opportunities and to live independently

CASE STUDY 2 | Islington and Hounslow | Social care

Older mentors aid care leavers

PROJECT

Grandmentors

PURPOSE

To support care leavers to access education, training or employment and live independently through mentoring by older people

FUNDING

£50,000 a year for each project in Islington and Hounslow, jointly funded by the local authorities and the Jecda Foundation

BACKGROUND

Care leavers are more likely to end up not in education, training or employment and can struggle to build secure and happy lives. Grandmentors was the brainchild of welfare reform minister Lord Freud, who approached Volunteering Matters with the concept. The charity started the programme in Freud's home borough of Islington, funded by his family foundation. The scheme has provided mentors for 116 care leavers since 2009, with 60 currently being mentored.

ACTION

The project officer for each Grandmentors scheme is co-located with the borough's leaving care team, which refers young people aged 16 to 24 to the project. Project officers begin by meeting care leavers and their social workers to find out what the young person wants to gain.

They use this information to match the young person to the most suitable mentor. "A lot of these young people don't have an older person they can talk to and one of the reasons they're in care is because they don't have close family members," says the charity's London regional manager, Verna Chung.

"Mentors have an opportunity to share valuable life skills and experience, and mentees can use this wisdom and guidance to make choices that will improve their life and career prospects."

Mentors are over 50 and from a range of career backgrounds. They receive two days' training before being matched with a young person. They are introduced by the project officer

at an initial meeting but all subsequent meetings are one-to-ones.

Mentors provide a range of support. This could involve helping with tasks such as shopping for healthy food, opening a bank account or researching and applying for jobs or courses, as well as providing confidential emotional support.

Meetings generally continue for between six and 12 months, often coming to a natural end such as when a young person starts college.

OUTCOME

An internal evaluation of the programme looked at the results of 28 mentoring relationships between 2014 and 2015. Before taking part in the programme, 71 per cent of the 28 young people were not in education, employment or training, but afterwards 81 per cent were in education, training or work. Three quarters felt less stressed and 58 per cent felt more positive about the future.