EIF Trusted Relationships Summary Report

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1. Introduction

Successive reviews of the child protection system have suggested that children who experience abuse lack a designated adult to provide consistent support, or a 'trusted relationship'.

The Home Office and Early Intervention Foundation are working together to understand the most important features of building trusted relationships for vulnerable children and young people with public services, and to identify how to integrate these features within local early intervention systems. Using both research evidence and practice experience, this Project aims to answer:

- Which aspects of child-professional trusting relationships are key to improving young people's resilience and outcomes?
- How can more of these relationships be enabled in our existing public services?

The Home Office will use the recommendations of this Project to inform funding decisions for a new trusted relationships initiative between 2018 – 2020.

This summary reports the findings from telephone interviews carried out with 13 stakeholders from local government, the voluntary sector, the police and the NHS. Their main role was typically senior manager or leader with a few middle managers, operational managers and a practitioner.   The aim of the interviews was to explore and identify local practice on trusted relationships.

2. The role of a trusted relationship

2.1 What is a trusted relationship?

While the definition of trusted relationship between a practitioner and child varied according to the context there was agreement it related to:

- A professional 'two way' relationship where the roles and boundaries around these are clearly understood; and where a young person or child feels comfortable about talking openly within this context.
- To facilitate this the young person needs to be aware of the level of protection and confidentiality that is being provided and that there may be consequences if they say certain things to that professional.

It was acknowledged that careful management is required throughout the engagement to prevent a professional trusted relationship straying towards a personal trusted relationship. This is particularly needed as the relationship strengthens; and where the needs are complex as the contact may be prolonged and intensive. When defining the parameters, it was said that *'everything is on the table'* in a personal relationship whereas a professional relationship will have a clear role and remit which needs to be clearly communicated to the child or young person.

Depending on the context or the degree of vulnerability an emphasis was placed on the following when participants defined a trusted relationship:

- The ability of the practitioner to facilitate the relationship and create a safe environment to enable the child or young person to respond to what is going on for them.
- The practitioner will provide emotional support and be *'someone to talk to'* as the child or young person needs to be listened to, to be heard and encouraged.
- The time it may take to build the relationship and enable a vulnerable child or young person to get to know their worker and feel confident sharing information and working with them to support or address any identified needs.
- The level of control taken over some aspect of the interaction to assess or examine the child or young person for treatment or to provide information, advice or support.

2.2 Why is it important?

A trusted relationship was viewed as being fundamental to the successful delivery of a service which depends on the effective engagement of a vulnerable child or young person. It was therefore described as being key to a successful outcome for a child and a family as it will not be possible to *'achieve anything else if you don't'* build a trusted relationship. It was felt to be key to ensuring that children and young people are confident about discussing their concerns and disclosing issues, or providing a full and accurate account (in the case of the criminal justice system). This is needed to effectively understand and meet needs, achieve outcomes and prevent the escalation of problems and crises.

The degree of importance and implications of building a trusted relationship appeared to depend on the level of need and vulnerability of a child, or young person. For this reason, the need to build a trusted relationship with young people who may have been through the care system and been previously let down by adults was particularly emphasised for the implications it may have. In these circumstances it was said that a trusted relationship can help to reverse the damaging effects of these experiences and help to support the development of a child or young person. Without learning how to form a positive relationship there is a danger that a child may reach adulthood unable to trust anybody which could have a lasting impact on their lives.

2.3   When does it become a priority?

While the type of relationship may vary it was always felt to be important to build a trusted relationship at any stage across the continuum of need. At the universal end it is as important for a child to feel able to discuss a concern at school, for example, as it is for them to be able to talk through more complex needs and problems with a professional who is providing a service for them.

It was said that the earlier a trusted relationship can be established the better, as it may help to prevent problems developing and issues escalating. For this reason, it was viewed as a priority for universal services and Early Help teams where workers are taking on a lead professional or key worker role with individual children and young people. There was however a view expressed that it may be less appropriate for an organisation like the police to prioritise building a 'robust' trusted relationship as the nature of their engagement may make this harder.

While the importance of every child having access to a trusted adult or practitioner outside their family was stressed the resource implications would not permit this.   It was, however, suggested that it could be a priority (beyond the requirement to do this as part of a service being delivered) for:

- Secondary school children because they often need a trusted adult outside of their family to turn to; and particularly when they are reaching exam time and may be at risk of greater pressure and anxiety.
- Children who are identified as being at risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) or other behaviour issues to support them before their problems escalate and behaviour patterns become entrenched.

2.4   How does it improve resilience and outcomes?

The key to a professional trusted relationship is that it provides the time and opportunity for a young person to talk through their feelings and worries and to explore and uncover more hidden and deeper issues that may be bothering them. The process of discussing these issues can help them to realise that sometimes things go wrong which are not their fault and that there may be things they can do to resolve them.   By 'opening up' a professional can support and enable them to better feel better about their situation as well as to provide information, advice and guidance. The offer of support and acceptance can also have a beneficial impact on a child's own level of self-acceptance and self-confidence.

Depending on the context in which a trusted relationship is being built it was suggested that resilience and outcomes can be improved through:

- Encouraging a child or young person to persevere when they are struggling with something and give them a safe and non-judgemental space to challenge and explore things that they may be concerned about or not agree with.
- Exposing them to other options and an alternative perspective which can help to raise and broaden their aspirations and options.
- Enabling a child or young person to realise that issue they are dealing with is not okay and to raise their awareness about these risks associated with a particular action, or behaviour.
- Looked after children feeling less isolated once they understand that they can share a problem or concern and can ask other trusted people to help them overcome a difficulty.   It was said that, as they start to build trust in their relationships they become stronger and can mature and develop and potentially break away from some of the previous damaging behaviour. This helps to build their resilience and ability to cope and deal with change.
- A therapeutic relationship can teach children ways to regulate and manage their feelings and emotions which will hopefully help to prevent or reduce issues in the future or provide tools and techniques to employ to cope with them and become more resilient.

3.   Developing a trusted relationship

Participants' reflections on what is key to developing a trusted relationship inevitably varied according to the type of service they provided and the level of need they were working with. Their experiences ranged from an early help practitioner supporting children with a low level of need for a limited period to working with children with more complex issues who required much more regular contact over a longer duration. It was said that in every service there is some sort of trust that is established but it often tends to be time limited, fragmented and limited to office hours or a prescribed delivery model with limited opportunities for holistic approaches.

3.1   Key principles for creating a trusted relationship

A number of key principles were identified by participants for creating a successful trusted relationship:

- Time is critical to building a trusted relationship. While it was said that a relationship could be established very quickly it is likely to vary according to the nature and reason for the engagement, the skills of the practitioner and the complexity of the child's needs. A child who has been looked after or has more complex needs will take much longer to build rapport and earn their trust. This will have implications for the appropriate case load size and duration of contact.
- Practitioners need to be flexible about how they use their time. There may need to be a level of intensity at the start of the relationship to help build trust and a rapport and to demonstrate a commitment to the child. Once the relationship and trust has been built it may be possible to reduce the level of contacts if not the duration of time.
- Being available when young people need to speak to a practitioner without creating a dependency. This was felt to demonstrate the commitment of the practitioner and their concern for the child or young person.
- Consistency or continuity of care was also identified as a being one of the most important aspects of a trusted relationship.   Children want to see the same person as it takes time to build the trust and working with different professionals will require them to 'tell their story' and start again. Consistency was felt to be particularly important for children who have been let down in the past with their adult relationships.
- Professional reliability – the importance of the practitioner delivering on what they say they will and not letting young people down was also identified as being key to building a trusted relationship. This means being open and honest about the professional limitations of the relationship and never dodging an issue or making a promise even if it is one that can be kept.

    'A worker who communicates well with a child or young person is as honest with them as they possibly can be, does what they say they are going to do …..and understands the importance of that'.

- The quality of the relationship was also identified as being key to building the trust. A high quality relationship requires empathy, being non-judgemental, having good communication skills and actively listening to the young person. A practitioner also needs to convey a genuine interest in the child or young person. Professionals who can share a bit more of their life with the child may be helpful if the context is appropriate, and they recognise their limits.
- Context – The importance of working with a child in different contexts – covering school, home, clinical and social contexts - was also highlighted. This provides the opportunity to engage a child through different activities and as children will react and behave differently in different contexts it helps to build a more holistic understanding. It also helps for the child to associate the worker with different environments and teaches them that *'relationships can criss-cross all aspects of their life'.*

- Understanding the background and family context as far as is feasible prior to meeting the child or young person. Where appropriate, it may also be necessary to actively involve (i.e. more than seeking their consent) a parent of a younger child to encourage their initial engagement.
- It is easier to build a trusted relationship in circumstances where children and young people are voluntarily engaging with the service or committed and willing to engage.
- Ensure young people feel safe by explaining the boundaries and parameters of the service and the role and remit of the relationship. Over time there will be a need to review and navigate the boundaries 'it's like a dance and you learn to work to a waltz'.
- Being child and young person centred and focused by tailoring the work to the interests of the child using age appropriate activities. Communicate appropriately on their terms - be responsive to their needs and what they can manage. This means spending time with children and young people in environments they feel comfortable in, bearing in mind safeguarding issues, working on their agendas and at their pace to identify issues of concern and encourage and support them to come up with solutions to improve their lives.

3.2 Critical characteristics and skills needed

Despite the range of different sectors covered there was considerable agreement about the critical characteristics and skills needed to build a trusted relationship. While it was acknowledged that it is possible to develop the skills and competencies to build a trusted relationship it was recognised that some people are naturally more suited to being able to do this. The workers who were more successful at building a trusted relationship were more gifted at engaging and relating with young people. They were said to be able to naturally relate to children and communicate more simply and easily using terms and words that they understand. It was emphasised that it is not about being trendy and trying to be one of the mates but about being personable and friendly and being able to build the relationship within a professional boundary.

The attributes and characteristics that were commonly identified as being important included being warm, empathetic, approachable, having a sense of humour, being self-aware, being patient, a good listener, tolerant, non-judgemental, ability to challenge without getting people upset or causing aggression, being calm, tenacious, emotionally intelligent, resilient and genuinely committed to working with young people and in for the 'long haul'.

In terms of the competencies and skills that are needed and could be developed were an understanding of child development and attachment theories, safeguarding practices, communication skills, basic listening and counselling skills, being able to translate what they are saying and interpret additional non-verbal communication and body language, an understanding of different social and cultural contexts.

3.3 Recruiting and developing trusted practitioners

The recruitment process was designed to look for a number of the qualities and attributes identified in the previous section even if they did not appear to be specifically assessing an aptitude for building a trusted relationship. To varying degrees organisations employed techniques to help them to try to tease out whether applicants would be more or less suited to this type of work. Standard knowledge based questions had sometimes been replaced with questions which explored behavioural responses to particular scenarios. Some teams involved children in the recruitment process or offered scenarios or role-playing activities or introduced practice tasks to help explore how a candidate would handle a particular situation. It was said that involving children in the process was a very helpful way to assess these qualities. One organisation had just developed a new competency framework which focused on the values a practitioner needed to have, such as, emotional awareness.

Once appointed practitioners were offered a wide range of workforce development opportunities. These were tailored to the nature of the service although local authority employees accessed a wide range of training options open to all staff. Specific courses that were identified as being critical to building a trusted relationship included all aspects of safeguarding, child development and attachment theories, children's social care legislation, counselling skills and coaching skills. Approaches to developing staff which included peer learning, action learning sets to encourage staff to reflect on their practice and coaching, buddying, mentoring and shadowing were all thought to be particularly helpful for equipping workers with the support they needed to develop trusted relationships. In one organisation they attempted to equip workers with a tool box of approaches and techniques they could use to build relationships. These included learning about Solution Focus approaches, Signs of Safety, Restorative Practice and Option 2 (a short but intensive way of working with families). Their workforce development programme was intended to give workers a framework and a consistency of language and approach as well as bolstering their confidence to work with families.

The other key component to supporting the development of trusted relationships was providing a high quality supervision programme and a senior management team who were supportive and recognised the value of the work teams were engaged in. Supervision needs to be provided for frontline practitioners to enable them to step back and reflect on their practice, managing and supporting any transference they experience.

3.4   Challenges to developing trusted relationships

A number of challenges were identified as potentially hindering the development or making it harder to build a trusted relationship. As will be seen these revolved around difficulties building and maintaining a trusted relationship.

Difficulties building the relationship

- Children who have not had trusted figures in their early lives may find it much harder to build a trusted relationship because they do not know how to trust an adult and cannot generalise the trust they have for their parents to other authority figures such as doctors and teachers. In these circumstances it can be very challenging for a practitioner to hold the relationship with the young person and manage their expectations about the relationship.
- Services are not working collaboratively sharing information supporting each other and conveying a consistent message for families. This can result in young people having to repeat their story to different professionals and serves to undermine the trust they have in them.
- Resistance of the children or families to engage – Services that required children or families to engage either voluntarily or as part of a statutory service sometimes experienced difficulty trying to build a trusted relationship.
- Practitioner lacks confidence and skill to build the relationship. This may be more of an issue for professionals working at the universal end of the continuum.
- Information sharing – there may be challenges accessing all the information about a young person and particularly health records as this may be felt to break their confidentiality. This will undermine the quality of the trusted relationship because the practitioner will lack understanding about the needs of the child.

Difficulties maintaining the trust

- A TR with an adult can be transformative but it can also be easily damaged if a child discloses something that requires a referral to social care as this may result in breaking the trust with the practitioner and stepping up the case.
- It can be very hard communicating with young people with complex needs, or those on the autistic spectrum or with ADHD and struggle with their concentration.

- A lack of contact time to build a trusted relationship either as a result of the nature of the service, or due to a large case load. Conversely, having too much time and losing focus can result in a young person becoming over reliant on the practitioner. There is a need to equip the young person with the resilience to manage their own situation.
- Drift – a lack of clarity about the structure and plan for providing the service and maintaining the trusted relationship.
- The increasingly bureaucratic processes that practitioners have to operate within makes it much harder to build trust as there are so many procedures in place limiting the flexibility they have to develop and tailor their approach to building a relationship.
- Services may not be available when young people need them as they are structured around the needs of practitioners and often operate between 9 to 5 Monday to Friday.
- There is a tension between being a great worker engaging a young person and achieving outcomes and meeting the organisational and administrative requirements of the job.
- Navigating the professional boundaries and safeguarding principles – It may become harder over time to protect the boundaries of the relationship as a young person becomes more attached. They have developed a safeguarding culture and there is a fear that people may be overstepping a professional boundary by being overly familiar or too accessible or when children are distressed they just need a hug and this can be misinterpreted and can put professionals off wanting to have a trusted relationship with a child because they are fearful of the ramifications of that relationship.
- A lack of continuity either due to staff absence or turnover. It may be possible to maintain the relationship and provide continuity when people leave their job but this depends on how the service is organised and communicated to the young person so as to manage their expectations.

4. Building more trusted relationships

This final section considers participants' suggestions and recommendations for enabling the development of trusted relationships in Early Intervention services.

4.1 Applying the learning to Early Intervention

The ease with which participants could apply the learning from their experience and service to early intervention depended on the complexity of need that they were working with and degree of transferable learning. Their reflections were concerned with the organisation of services, changing the culture, equipping the workforce and the approach taken:

The organisation and delivery of services

There was considerable discussion about the need to reflect on the way services are organised and delivered in order that the infrastructure is created to be able to support the needs of children and young people more effectively. Their suggestions were concerned with:

- Streamlining services and developing a more integrated approach employing a key or lead worker model to work with the whole family and reduce the duplication of services and professionals and address information sharing barriers. It was emphasised that this would help to manage the sequencing and coordination of services so that a child is not bombarded with professionals and services at the same time.
- Providing different delivery options - The physical organisation of services and the need for more easily accessible child or young person friendly services located in the community such as community hub. Alongside the more tailored personalised local provision it was recommended that there should be online support from a trusted agency to complement and provide back up when this is not available.
- Changing working practices to ensure practitioners can work flexibly and be available at times when children and young people need them during the day, out of hours and at the weekend. This will help to maintain the relationship and demonstrate the commitment of the professional to the child or young person. In an ideal world, a manager reflected that they would want to provide a 24 hours service but there is a need for other structures and services to support and be able respond to this.
- Exploring how to provide continuity of care when a worker is off sick or not available. Suggestions included experimenting with team structures or buddying approaches to provide support for children when their trusted practitioner is not available.

Change the culture

- Change the culture and build an understanding amongst staff of the importance of a trusted relationship and how to sustain those relationships. Ensure that managers are championing and promoting the importance of building trusted relationships as being central to the aims of the service.
- Promote the importance of having a trusted relationship by setting up a campaign to encourage young people to tell you about who the person was who played this relationship in their lives.
- Consider the way the service is promoted as it may be more helpful to not be seen as part of statutory services if parents need to consent for their child to engage in a programme or work with a practitioner.
- Recruit and develop practitioners with the values and commitment to work with children and build a trusted relationship.
- Support practitioners to feel confident about developing a trusted relationship as not all professionals may see this as part of their role.

- Embed the importance of a trusted relationship in recruitment processes and workforce development and look for evidence to demonstrate this during appraisals and reviews (e.g. asking children and young people to provide feedback).

Equipping and skilling the workforce

Reflect on the range of skills that people need to have to equip them to build a trusted relationship. Develop a tool box of techniques for working with children of different ages and with different needs that will enable practitioners to make progress and show families how they can do this which helps to build relationships. Suggestions included:

- A basic grasp of Cognitive Behavioural Therapy to support young people to think about how they might change their behaviour
- Training in a standardised approach to coaching and mentoring, basic counselling skills and a key worker system in order that practitioners can coordinate and manage any other organisations that are also working with a young person and take on the lead professional role.
- Use motivational interviewing, solution focused therapy and strengths based approaches and unconditional acceptance to help enable, motivate and encourage children and young people to tackle their issues and build their confidence by recognising and helping them achieve solutions.
- Employ Signs of Safety as a framework, restorative practice and Option 2 which can provide a framework to work with the child or young person and help to support the development of the relationship and to encourage and engage the child or young person.

The Approach

- It may be helpful to develop different approaches and models for developing a trusted relationship based on the duration of contact a practitioner will have with a child. A practitioner building a relationship during a brief encounter may require a different approach to those working over a longer and during more sessions.
- It will help if the relationship with the professional is engaged with voluntarily rather than as a referral to the service where the young person may perceive they have done something wrong. It was suggested that the voluntary sector may find it easier to build the engagement with a young person because there may be less of a stigma attached to their service.
- Identify the practitioner who is most appropriate to build the trusted relationship with the child or young person.
- Build an accurate profile of a young person prior to meeting them. Ensure that there are systems and processes which enable information to be shared about the needs of the child and family context.
- Engage with young people on their terms - drawing on the principles of good youth work – finding different places and ways to build a contact with a young person outside of the formal structure of most services.   Tailor the approach to needs and requirements of young people and think creatively about how to use more informal groups to build relationships outside of office hours. For example, it was suggested that the offer of community and sporting activities or the offer of a 'supper club' could be used to support the development of the relationship outside of office hours.
- Be clear about the role and remit of the service and the boundaries of the professional relationship. Depending on the nature of the service it may be appropriate to develop an action plan or contract with them that has a clear purpose, sets out the commitments from both sides and agrees outcomes that can be reviewed and measured.
- Ensure there is consistency of practitioner practice to maintain the trusted relationship.
- Provide good quality supervision to enable workers to manage the boundaries of the relationship with the child or young person and avoid creating a dependency.
- Developing sustainable approaches where the workforce understand that their role is to support families to solve their own issues.

4.3   Developing a Trusted Relationships Initiative

At the end of the interview participants were asked how they would invest six million pounds for a national programme to build trusted relationships for vulnerable children to reduce long-term negative outcomes including abuse and neglect, CSA and CSE. In general, a stronger case was made for investing the resource to build the capacity for developing a trusted relationship and adapt the infrastructure and organisation of services rather than introducing new interventions with time limited funding. It was also said that six million pounds for a new national initiative or intervention might not stretch very far. Suggestions included a range of the following options:

- Consult children and young people to explore their views about what would work *'a method or a strategy that might work with one will be a complete disaster with the next'* and it may be difficult to identify what works best for developing a trusted relationship.
- Clarifying what best practice and providing the evidence of which approaches are least expensive and have the most impact and those that are most expensive and have the least impact. Roll out the research evidence at national and regional conferences to team leaders and those that can actually use the evidence to make a difference to their day to day work.
- Pilot and trial approaches and tools for streamlining practices, reducing the 'bureaucracy' and supporting the development of a trusted relationship. Examples included evaluating strengths based approaches and a key worker model to assess their impact; exploring the role of digital solutions and platforms and the use of technology that allows video calls and piloting a new simplified case recording system. It was hoped that this would provide enough information for professionals/services to work and develop relationships with children and families and also satisfy inspection criteria.
- Invest in making system changes and making services that already exist more effective and collaborative.   This included recognising the value of the youth service and the voluntary sector and their contribution to developing trusted relationships.
- Invest in building the culture and equipping professionals to feel confident about developing trusted relationships through training, supporting and coaching for frontline practitioners. Suggestions included a workforce shadowing programme with some kind of accreditation attached to it.
- Use peer educators, community champions and parent ambassadors to help educate and support professionals to build a trusted relationship.
- Develop best practice recruitment principles to help recruit the 'right people' who are suited to developing a trusted relationship.
- Return to the recommendations from the Lord Laming Review and use these to inform the further development and implementation of a multi needs assessment, lead or key worker key principles.

4.3.1   Interventions

As part of the discussion we specifically explored participants' recommendations and suggestions for interventions that help to equip practitioners to build and sustain trusted relationships. A range of interventions and services were mentioned as either being helpful to employ in their entirety or to draw on the learning and approach to support and build a trusted relationship with children and young people including:

- West London Zone provides additional support for children and young people via children's centres, schools and employment agencies. The work is coordinated by a Link Worker who works closely with children and young people to help them make use of the opportunities on offer. They link children into the local interventions and services. Each child can have between 1 to 3 interventions during the 2 years they work with the programme.   The link worker builds the

trusted relationship through their one to one and group engagement and monitors the child's development.

- Use Family Support Panels for young people and families affected by gang and child exploitation – Representatives from six or seven agencies have a 50 minute session with the gang member and their family. The discussion is recorded and they discuss their feelings and agree a plan and joint action. The sharing of information and working in partnership ensures the trusted professional will be able to understand the needs of the young person and their family context. Building a good level of knowledge about the young person prior to meeting them also helps to build a trusted relationship with them.
- Similarly a Family Group Conference can provide a useful process and intervention to support mentoring and help the development of a trusted relationship.
- Multi Systemic Therapy helps to create a strong relationship between the practitioner and the young person and is helpful with those who are identified as being most at risk. It was felt that the time and the intensity of the intervention (rather than the prescribed manualised approach) through having a small case load and the capacity to be available when needed that was critical to building a trusted relationship.
- YeS Project Talent Match
- CAT Zero, to support NEET young people into being in EET. It employs the principles of restorative practice (which enables young people to see the implications of their action, assess how they are feeling and develop empathy); uses elements of restorative practice within family group conferencing (to engage with the wider family to understand the wider context for the individual and see how to support the individual after Cat Zero); and uses outcomes based accountability as a framework to work with a young person; and a multi needs assessment to open up the conversation and understand what is working well and what needs to change; and a lead key worker who establishes the relationship and builds the trust and works in partnership with other services. The actual intervention consists of 12 weeks intensive individual and group work engaging in a range of activities. At the end of the 12 weeks the 16 to 19 age group are invited to sail on the team yacht for 8 to 10 days as this provides an opportunity for them to put the learning from the programme into practice and take them away from their home environment. They invest considerable time recruiting and engaging young people on to the programme and emphasise the important principle of providing support to work 'with' rather than doing 'to' young people.
- Kooth.com – an online counselling service which is available until late in the evening.
- Triangle is a service that works with young children based in Brighton and was suggested as a good example of how to communicate very effectively with children and young people using therapeutic techniques.
- The Children and Young People Domestic Abuse Recovery Toolkit is a programme for children affected by domestic abuse. It is an eight week group intervention for children and practitioners can use the learning from this to inform their practice and build trusted relationships.
- Banardos approach to CSE service works with children or young people based on their needs in their home or another environment they feel comfortable in. They start from a position of asking the children how they want to be communicated and supported and where best to deliver the service.
- An Innovation Pilot called Lifelong links – which is part of an American Model called Family Finding which is Family Group Conferencing with two extra stages. It is aimed at looked after children and helps to build networks for them to support them into adulthood and beyond – finding a range of people who are willing to make a commitment to support them.
- Counselling and other talking therapy techniques with children suffering from traumas. These can be particularly helpful for use with children who have suffered particular traumas (abuse, domestic violence and bereavement) as they can create a trusted forum children can talk about their feelings and their anxieties.

4.3.2 Mentoring and befriending

We specifically explored views about the role of mentoring and befriending although some participants had already suggested that there may be learning from mentoring approaches to help support the development of a trusted relationship. Participants had variable levels of awareness about mentoring and befriending schemes in their local area. There were reports of very positive examples of mentoring approaches being used in specific situations to address specific needs or problems children were experiencing. There were however, concerns about the apparent variation in their quality and lack of measures or a framework to judge their efficacy. Inevitably comparisons were drawn between voluntary programmes and funded programmes which were often targeted at those with more complex needs. The voluntary nature of many of the programmes was praised for encouraging engagement and for employing very committed volunteers and young people to be mentors. To be effective, it was emphasised that they need to be built on a robust training programme, good supervision and a clear framework and plan otherwise there is a risk that these approaches could 'drift' and a fail to achieve their goals.

Mentoring was said to be a very helpful way to develop a relationship as long as the match between the mentor and young person is a good fit and the process is clearly managed and supervised to ensure there is not an over reliance on the mentoring relationship by working alongside other services and step-down processes. It was also emphasised that there will need to be a range or a '*suite*' of mentoring activities or approaches to reflect cultural diversity and be age appropriate as there is not '*one homogenous way'*. There may also be more challenges mentoring younger children as parents are likely to need to be more involved in the process.

The examples of where mentoring was believed to be providing added value included:

- For those who do not have a positive adult relationship, young people who are isolated and do not have social networks around them, or those living in rural areas.
- To compliment other more tailored support being offered to a family.
- With black boys, gang members or to support young people who are NEET
- To address health and emotional wellbeing issues and build resilience (e.g. Porchlight and CAMHs provision, Head Start Programme in Middlesbrough and Duke of Edinburgh Scheme) and provide support with alcohol and substance misuse.
- Young people who have been looked after (e.g. The Virtual School, the Fairbridge Programme offered by The Princes Trust). Mentoring might have a specific role to play when a number of foster placements have broken down and children are struggling to come to terms with this. Coaching and mentoring can help them through setting short term targets which can help them achieve success and show them how to plan their way out of a difficult situation.
- A community engagement and multi-agency approach from New Orleans called the NOLA for life programme. It is a mentoring initiative that tries to establish trust through establishing a 'call to action' which involves the young person and agencies collectively developing a plan for the next two years.
- Safe families for children is a volunteering service where volunteer families work with families who are struggling. Families who volunteer provide tips and ideas through role modelling how they interact with their children which makes it a 'powerful intervention'. Volunteer programmes have an advantage because children and families don't have to comply and are not concerned that their child will be taken away or subject to a child protection plan.