



How Mentors can work well with parents

Q: How do you engage with parents, so they welcome mentoring?

- Meet the parents and explain what mentoring is (don't leave it to caseworker)
- Be available to parents to call you if they need help
- Stress that a mentor is there to support and not replace
- Explain it's short-term i.e. just 6 months and they have them long-term
- Encourage them to support their young person
- Be a mediator
- Be different from their negative idea of professionals
- Say positive things about their young person
- Build up their belief in themselves as parents
- Communicate feedback regularly e.g. text – ask them how you can do it
- Ask them for their help i.e. let them know they are part of the team
- Ask them for their advice on how best to work with the young person
- Avoid being seen to take sides with them compared to the young person
- Make parents and young person aware when you meet each
- Help them and the young person avoid seeing each other as the enemy
- Show empathy for their situation
- Be honest that you don't have all the answers compared to them
- Get to know parents and foster parents
- Practically help parents where it directly helps the young person

Q: How do you help communication between parents and young people?

- Help them to choose to listen to each other
- Get them physically together
- Act as a mediator in the conversation
- Draw out of each what the key issues are
- Help the young person see where they deliberately block communication
- Help the young person see where the parents are coming from
- If parents won't communicate, provide feedback to them, so it at least goes one way
- Where parents are negative consistently, help the young person cope with it positively
- Write, phone, face to face or mentor carry a message
- Get both sides to write down what they want of each other, then meet up to discuss all things that are in agreement and those that are not.



Then act as facilitator with ground rules (no yelling, you can't leave, don't interrupt)

- Give some request to the young person that they need to ask the parent and see how they handle it

Q: How do you help parents set correct boundaries of rewards and punishments?

- Help them define a boundary, to ensure it is reasonable, by raising questions regarding the impact and reason for them
- Help them judge the appropriate size of a reward to the behaviour being rewarded – in proportion
- Help them see why the young person needs a reward
- Help the parents change where they need to
- Rewards don't only need to be gifts, so give praise, time, a hug – look at their love language
- Because we receive negative messages more readily than positive, help them major on the positives
- If they have to discipline, make it a praise sandwich
- Decide on why the boundary is needed
- Rewards can be something a parent won't do e.g. a curfew or supervision
- Help them give rewards at the right time
- Help them avoid punishments that negate rewards
- Boundaries must be consistent
- If two parents are involved, help them work from the same set of boundaries, to avoid confusion and to avoid one parent looking the hero and one the villain (the less strict one)
- If two parents are involved, help them communicate, to avoid manipulation by the young person