**Models of Engagement: One-to-One and Group Sessions**

Every aspect of the training programme and this handbook, whether about the knowledge and skills required to be a mentor or if it has been about the attitude required to be an effective mentor, can be applied to both one-to-one and group sessions.

**The Differences between One-to-One and Group Work**

One-to-one sessions can seem daunting but the aim is for both the mentor and learner to contribute equally to the session. Some learners can really benefit from one-to-one interaction as the time is centred on their individual needs and interests. The mentor can lead the sessions but should ensure that they are not doing work **for** the learner.

Here are some examples of the challenges of **one-to-one exchanges**:

* Your learner seems uninterested in the topics you are discussing
* Your learner wants to bring their friends along to the sessions
* Your learner is more interested in talking about relationship problems etc., rather than what you have got planned
* Your learner is persistently late or does not show up for their session
* You haven’t got an appropriate place to meet in the school.

**Overcoming challenges of one-to-one work**

* Discuss your learner’s needs – It is very important that you know exactly what the learner wants from the sessions. Work together to agree on a list of priority areas to cover in your sessions and plan them in advance so that your learner can be prepared (i.e. ‘next week we will be looking at UCAS applications’)
* Agree clear Ground Rules at the beginning of your placement
* Discuss your reasons – talk openly to your learner about the mentoring scheme’s aims and how you expect the work you are doing together will support them. Encourage your learner to ask questions if they do not understand why you are covering a certain topic.
* Use icebreakers to get to know your learner initially but if you are still finding they are quiet in your sessions then chatting to them about ‘non-mentoring’ subjects can be a way to start the conversation flowing. Use the beginning of each session to ask about their week / talk about your week before you start on the actual content of the session.  Take a note of things they are doing during the week so you remember to ask them about it the following week!
* Be very flexible – be ready to change what you were planning if your learner asks you to.
* Keep trying different types of activities – games, creative work, listening and reading. Use pcs sometimes if possible?
* Regularly give feedback to your learner.  Praise anything they have done well (big or small) and identify areas that need further work/improvement
* Use your active listening skills!

Within group work the mentor will need to lead the group as a facilitator and you will need to ensure that each member of the group has an equal opportunity to participate. Group work can give mutual support to all participants but can also give more challenges.

Here are some examples of the challenges of **group exchanges**:

* A dominating member of the group taking over
* A reluctant member not taking part
* Members of the group not listening to each other and/or talking over each other
* Lack of group interaction and poor group dynamics
* Avoidance of disagreement or difficult issues
* Setting and achieving individual learning goals which link to those of the group itself.

**Overcoming challenges of group work**

* Set clearGround Rules for any group work you do
* Take a stress ball(or other soft object) and throw it around the group – people only speak when they’re holding the ball
* Try a range of group working methods and techniques to see which work best
* Arrange a session where you all use PCs
* Ask each learner to give a presentation on a subject of their choice and present to the group
* Introduce the idea of active listening encourage your group try and use this. Use some of the activities we’ve used in training.

**Group working methods**

The idea of working with a group of young people can be a daunting feat for some mentors. However here are some ideas of how you can get your learner’s to work together in different ways.

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| **Task-based** | The mentor sets a task for the group to research, divide the group into pairs or between individuals and they then report their findings to the rest of the group and discuss. (Variation: Divide the group into two teams to complete the same task in a limited amount of time.) |
| **Discussion method** | Mentor brings a topic to the attention of the group and the learners are encouraged to ask questions as well as contribute their experiences and knowledge. Learners are encouraged to input as much as possible. |
| **Seminar-style** | One learner is asked or volunteers to make a short presentation on a topic they have agreed to investigate during the week before your meeting. After their presentation other learners have to ask questions. Variation: two learners work together on the research and presentation. |

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| **Debate** | Express the topic in the form of a debate, e.g. ‘This House believes that going to university is a waste of time and money’. Three learners prepare the case for the motion and three for the case against. Hold a debate as the whole group. |
| **Pair work** | Divide the group into three pairs of A’s and B’s. A then has three minutes to persuade B to do something (e.g. convince B that university is their best option). Then they swap around and B had to convince A (e.g. to attend a university away from their home town to broaden their experience). |
| **Snowball** | Divide learners into two groups of three or three groups of two to work on a task, and then bring the groups together to pool their findings or for a general discussion. |
| **Goldfish bowl** | Invite two learners to act out a situation while the others observe. |
| **Priorities exercise** | Present learners with a list of options (e.g. types of university, features that they would want in their ideal university). Ask them to put the items in rank order individually. Then they form pairs to see if they can agree a top three list of desired features. Finally the groups comes together to agree a top three list (if they can). |
| **Triad role plays** | Two learners act as characters in a role play (e.g. admissions tutor and applicant) while the third acts as an observer. Then they swap around roles so that each has a turn as interviewer, interviewee and observer. |

The Learner Engagement Plan (section 4) is an excellent source of information and ideas for group working sessions. If you are having problems, talk to your university co-ordinator. **You may be a little nervous about running session but be yourself…your learners are probably more nervous than you!**