



Welcome to our quarterly publication, sharing news about Gloucestershire Mentoring Programme. In this edition, we're thrilled to be sharing breaking news about the Programme's future. And we're featuring stories about some of our young people, to show how we're making a difference.

Year 3 Funding and the Future

Good news! We've just heard our funder, CHK Foundation, has agreed to fund a third year of Programme delivery. This includes money to develop the Programme in line with our Five Year Strategy, a plan that will see us expanding our provision, extending our mentoring offer to boys and young men, and taking steps to ensure GMP continues into the future. We've got a bit of fine tuning to do over the coming months and look forward to sharing more detail in September, when we'll be about to start year three. For now, we'd like to say a big 'thank you' to Jane Darlington and her trustees at CHK. Their innovative approach has opened up a new way of working, and their investment is already making a difference.

Making a Difference

Sophia Thomas is GMP Programme Manager at WAM – she is supported by her line manager, Ali Kirkwood. Here, they share some of their thoughts about the Programme and the difference it's making. Sophia says, "Before joining WAM I was an Adult Support Worker in the community then a Family Support Worker in HMP Leyhill. And I'd seen first-hand how early interventions like mentoring can help people improve their resilience and life outcomes. So, I was excited to get on board with the Programme! It's definitely making a difference – Beth's Story, featured in this Update, is one of many examples we've seen, and I'd like to tell you about another, Tamara, who also wasn't attending school: "Tamara had stopped going to school because she'd experienced bullying and had difficult relationships with peers. Her mentor helped her learn about building positive relationships with others and prepared her for returning to school. And WAM worked with her social worker, mum and school to gradually build her attendance back up. She's now being home schooled and enjoying new relationships, including friendships." Overall, the Programme is now supporting 180 girls and young women. A further 52 have begun their support journey and are waiting to be matched with a suitable mentor.



Beth's Story



Beth is 16 years old and a GMP mentee. She's being supported by We All Matter (WAM) Youth and has been on the Programme for the past year.

She came on board as someone who'd experienced plenty of challenges: home life has been complicated with her parents going through a divorce and having mental health struggles; and she's been involved in substance misuse, which led to contact with drug dealers and poor choices that put her at risk. As a result, she was dealing with all kinds of feelings, including anxiety and anger.

Beth reflects, "I felt stuck – I didn't know what to do. I was so annoyed my parents were splitting up, and so annoyed they were spending more time looking after my brother. And I think I convinced myself the world was against me. Eventually, there were days when I couldn't bring myself to go to school; sometimes I didn't even get out of bed – I just couldn't face it."

Through counselling, it was decided Beth would go back to school and start afresh.

"I was feeling positive about going back to school but still really anxious", she recalls. "I fell in with the wrong crowd on day one, and felt like I had to act and look a certain way to keep my new friends. So, I stopped eating properly and was really tired all the time.

"My mum and the teachers kept saying I needed someone to talk to, but I'd tried therapy before and it just didn't fit. Also, the counselling was so expensive!"

With prompting from her teachers, Beth started to attend a WAM wellness group at school. She says, "I really enjoyed going along to WAM's group at lunchtime and got to know the workers quite well. I suppose I started to trust them a bit more – so when they suggested mentoring and how it could be on my terms, I decided to give it a go.

"I really enjoy having someone to talk to that listens to me. I can trust my mentor and I know she won't tell anyone what I've been saying, unless I'm in some kind of danger.

"Having a mentor has helped me work through some big things in my life, to talk it all through and understand my emotions. It's helped me to be myself more and look after my health. I'm so grateful to WAM and my mentor for listening to me when I needed a voice."

Beth's parents and teachers have told WAM about the many positive changes she's been able to make in her life since receiving a mentor.

Beth says, "My mentor is helping me make better decisions. I've worked through my issues with self esteem and I've found some new friends that take me as I am. I'm much happier now."

How you can help

We are always on the hunt for new mentors – life experience is all you need and we'll provide training and support. If you know anyone who might be interested, please ask them to give us a call on 01453 756745, signpost them to our website: gloucestershirementoringprogramme.co.uk or social media @GlosMentoring

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