

APPROVED PROVIDER STANDARD

Guidance Notes for schools and colleges

PLEASE READ THESE NOTES CAREFULLY BEFORE STARTING TO FILL IN YOUR APPLICATION FORM. THEY CONTAIN IMPORTANT INFORMATION THAT WILL HELP YOUR APPLICATION TO BE SUCCESSFUL.

A NATIONAL STANDARD FOR MENTORING AND BEFRIENDING

The last ten years has seen a major growth in the use of mentoring and befriending as a vehicle for social change. The present Government has itself recognised their importance as a means of achieving its own policy objectives; for raising educational attainment; tackling crime and anti-social behaviour; addressing isolation in the community; and promoting active citizenship.

Against this background, mentoring in schools is now considered to be an important part of the strategy to raise motivation and achievement and to assist social inclusion. In recent years there has been a major focus on mentoring projects involving mentors from the business, community and voluntary sectors to support pupils. In addition, peer mentoring has demonstrated how effectively it can support pupils and develop their own skills and self-confidence as mentors and mentees.

The Approved Provider Standard (APS) is a national benchmark for organisations running mentoring and befriending projects. Designed for use with projects of any size, it provides a realistic and credible basis for assessing core practice. The assessment framework is focused on the key management and operational areas that underpin the effectiveness of any mentoring or befriending project: the aims and structure; client referral and assessment processes; recruitment, selection and training of volunteers; monitoring and evaluation. Projects achieving the APS will be operating to a nationally approved standard that gives Government ministers, project organisers, and many thousands of volunteers, a reliable and objective benchmark of safe and effective practice.

Accreditation lasts for three years, at which time projects are required to seek re-accreditation.

The Standard is promoted and administered by the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (MBF) on behalf of the Government through the Active Communities Directorate of the Home Office and Department for Education and Skills (DfES). Mentoring and befriending projects dependent on Government funding will be required in future to demonstrate a commitment to the Approved Provider Standard.

ELIGIBILITY OF SCHOOL/COLLEGE MENTORING OR BEFRIENDING PROGRAMMES FOR THE APPROVED PROVIDER STANDARD

Before preparing an application for APS we recommend that you check your programme's eligibility for the standard against the following criteria:

- Mentoring and befriending activity can cover any pupil or student group at primary/secondary school and/or college.
- Mentoring or befriending is carried out on a one-to-one basis (group support can be included provided that individual support is the predominant activity)
- All participants in the mentoring or befriending programme are involved on a voluntary basis – any payments should only be made to cover necessary expenses.
- Programmes can involve business/community mentoring (where volunteers come to the school/college to support pupils or students) and peer mentoring/buddying (where pupils or students support each other).

(Mentoring or befriending programmes where members of staff, including learning mentors, directly support pupils or students are not eligible).

- The programme has been operating for a minimum of one academic year so that it can demonstrate that all its appropriate procedures are in place.
- The programme is able to provide supporting documentary evidence (with "live" examples) which also demonstrates that all appropriate procedures are in place.

If you are in any doubt about the eligibility of your particular programme for APS, please contact the MBF before you begin your application (tel. 0161 787 8600 or email: info@mandbf.org.uk).

USING THE GUIDANCE NOTES

The MBF has produced these guidance notes to help you complete the application form. The notes explain the reasons why we require certain details from you. They also indicate the kind of information we need for each section of the application form and provide examples of appropriate evidence.

The application form and guidance notes are divided into three main sections;

- a) Application and contact details
- b) Facts about your school/college (organisation)
- c) Project information

To help you cross-reference between the documents, the order and numbering of the questions are the same in the application form and guidance notes.

RETURNING THE COMPLETED FORM

Completed forms should be returned to the Mentoring and Befriending Foundation at the address shown below. Additional copies of the application pack can be obtained from this address.

Mentoring and Befriending Foundation
FREEPOST
NWW338IA
Manchester
M30 IAX

Please note that the APS assessment process is completely free of charge. Applications are treated in the strictest confidence.

If you would like the MBF to return your APS application/evidence portfolio to you after the assessment has been completed, please tick the relevant box on the application form.

NB: The Mentoring and Befriending Foundation is not liable for loss of applications due to mail errors. You are advised to take a copy of your application form and supporting evidence before posting. You may wish to send your application by recorded mail to ensure safe delivery to the MBF office.

THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

In devising the assessment process we have balanced the importance of producing a Standard that is credible and worthwhile with the need for something generic which can be realistically applied to any form of one-to-one, volunteer mentoring or befriending, as well as to the variety of organisations involved.

We have identified five key areas that form the basis of the assessment.

1. Project aims and structure
2. Client group
3. Recruitment and selection of volunteers
4. Volunteer preparation and training
5. Monitoring and evaluation

Please make your responses to each of the questions as full and comprehensive as possible. Where supporting evidence is a requirement in your response to a particular question, this is clearly indicated in the guidance notes. The evidence is used to provide confirmation that the processes and procedures described in the narrative are being applied in practice. It also helps to build a more complete picture that will enhance and add to your written response. Supporting evidence should be cross-referenced with your narrative answers to assist the assessment process. Please note that you may be able to use the same evidence to support narrative answers for more than one of the APS questions.

The Standard is not designed to assess totally new projects, i.e. those that have not been through a full operational cycle. However, a 'Working Towards' status has been introduced that enables projects to formally commit to the Standard a full twelve months prior to submitting their APS applications. New projects are, therefore, able to use the principles underpinning the APS as a framework for development, before submitting their full applications at a later date. During this twelve month period the MBF will be pleased to assist with any aspect of application preparation. If this option would be appropriate to your situation, please contact the MBF to register for 'Working Towards' status.

Although the APS assessment process is primarily a 'desk-top' exercise, we may need to contact or visit you to clarify certain issues. In some instances, following initial assessment of your application, we will offer an interim conditional approval with award of the full Standard subject to the satisfactory resolution of certain issues or evidence requirements.

If you have any queries about any aspect of the assessment process, please contact the MBF on 0161 787 8600 or email: info@mandbf.org.uk.

Section A - APPLICATION AND CONTACT DETAILS

This section of the form asks for basic information concerning your application. We also need to know how to contact you if we have any queries and to keep you informed. Please give us as many ways to get in touch with you as possible. We may also need to visit you to ask more questions or look at how your project works.

1. Name of the school or college (organisation)

Please give the name of the school/college responsible for running your mentoring or befriending project.

2. Contact address

Please provide the address of your school/college together with a telephone contact number or email address.

3. Person to be contacted

Please give the name and contact details of a person with whom your application can be discussed and any queries addressed. This should be someone involved in the submission of your application and with some knowledge of the project that you wish to register for the Approved Provider Standard. Usually this would be the scheme co-ordinator.

4. Declaration

This section needs to be signed by two people with the authority to commit your school or college to undertaking the Approved Provider process. Typically, this would include a sign-off from the Headteacher, College Principal or member of the senior management team with line management responsibility for the programme.

For Office Use Only

Do not complete the box at the bottom of the page headed "For Office Use Only". We will use this to allocate a number to your application and record the date it was received. This will help us to keep you informed and track the progress of your application.

Section B - FACTS ABOUT YOUR SCHOOL/COLLEGE (ORGANISATION)

We need to know what kind of a school/college you are as a context against which to review your application and the evidence that you provide.

1. What type of school or college (organisation) are you?

Please indicate under what provision the school/college operates, the age range of pupils educated at the school and any specialist status currently applicable.

2. Main activities and the work that you do.

Please provide the following information:

- the number of staff and pupils or students at the school/college
- the geographical area in which the school/college operates
- a brief overview of the local social and economic context

3. Has your school/college achieved any other Quality Standards?

Please tell us if your school/college has achieved or is working towards any other quality standards. We would like to know the name of the award and the awarding body, the date that the award was made and when it will be reviewed.

Please note that it is not necessary to have achieved other awards in order to qualify for the Approved Provider Standard.

Section C – PROJECT INFORMATION

This section of the application form asks you to provide details of specific aspects of your mentoring or befriending project. Please make your responses to the questions as comprehensive as possible, providing supporting evidence where this is requested.

You should include **'live' evidence** wherever possible (i.e. used rather than blank documentation), providing confirmation that the processes or procedures described in your narrative are being applied in practice. Issues of confidentiality can be protected by deleting/obscuring individual details/identity.

If you wish to submit more than one project for assessment against the Standard, you need to complete this section of the application form separately for each of the projects.

Project Aims and Structure

1. What is your mentoring or befriending project called?

Please give us the name of the project you are submitting for assessment against the Standard. Please note that the name you provide here will appear on the APS accreditation certificate.

2. What is the purpose of your project?

Please provide a brief history of your project, explaining how it came into being and why you felt it was needed. Your response should demonstrate that the project has a clear rationale for its existence. Please also indicate the length of time that the project has been in operation and identify any significant changes or developments that have been made since it was introduced.

Your response to this question should also include a list of aims that defines the purpose of the project and what you are trying to achieve. For example, you may have defined your aims in terms of improving personal behaviour, developing skills or enhancing educational motivation and achievement. Your aims and objectives should be specific and measurable and it should be clear who will be benefiting from the project.

It would be expected that the aims of the project should link directly to your overall student support framework and to the school's development/improvement plan. Therefore, your response should explain how your project contributes and adds value to the wider initiative. In our assessment we will also be looking for an indication of how you measure the success of your project in terms of achieving your aims and objectives.

Please provide as supporting evidence any documentation (or relevant section/s) which describe your project's aims and objectives and its linkage to the school/college development/ improvement plan.

3. What organisational and management structure is in place to support your project?

Please tell us how your project is organised. Who is responsible for co-ordinating your mentoring or befriending activity on a day-to-day basis? Who is the senior manager with overall responsibility for the programme, if this is not the same person, and explain how the school/college leadership team or equivalent steering group supports the project.

If the project is delivered in partnership with an external agency, such as a business education partnership, please outline the division of responsibilities and how the relationship operates.

Your response should demonstrate that there is an appropriate structure in place and sufficient resources to achieve the aims of the project, taking into account its nature and size. The roles and responsibilities of those involved in running the project should be clearly outlined. Please indicate what time is allocated to the project co-ordinator to carry out their responsibilities, what finance is available to support the project and what physical resources are available such as meeting rooms, administrative support etc.

Please also supply information on the numbers of mentors/befrienders and mentees/befriendees currently engaged in the project.

Examples of appropriate evidence include a school/college organisational chart, co-ordinator's job description, management or steering group meeting agenda/minutes and project budget.

4. What support mechanisms are in place to ensure that staff overseeing the project are operating effectively?

Please tell us how you ensure that members of staff overseeing the project are operating effectively. Do those involved in running the project have a clear understanding of their roles and responsibilities and are they assessed against these? Are regular meetings held between line managers and project staff to review progress? Is a staff appraisal procedure operating?

Your response should demonstrate that an appropriate review system is in place for supporting and monitoring the work of staff overseeing the project. Evidence should be provided which shows that project co-ordinators have the necessary experience/background and have received appropriate training to carry out their roles successfully. You should also describe any arrangements aimed at providing further development opportunities for project staff, including internal/external training or attending networking events involving practitioners from related fields.

Examples of appropriate evidence include details about how the project co-ordinator was appointed to their role (career history), records of training/network events attended, minutes of internal review meetings, notes of individual appraisal sessions.

Please note that this question is concerned with the support that is provided for project staff employed by your school/college. It is not necessary to include here details of any assistance given to volunteers or staff from external organisations.

Mentee/Befriender Client Group

5. To whom does your project provide services?

Please give details describing the characteristics of the mentees/befriendees supported by your project.

6. How are your mentees/befriended identified and referred to you for support?

On what basis are individual pupils identified to take part in your project as mentees or befriended? What referral/eligibility criteria are used? These criteria should be consistent with the aims of your project and with good equal opportunities practice. The project should be open to any pupil or student regardless of their ethnicity, disability or gender provided they meet the criteria identified for the target group. Individuals participating in the project should do so on a voluntary basis.

How is information about the project communicated to relevant school/college staff and what process is used for promoting the project and for selecting and referring pupils onto the scheme? Who is involved in this process?

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of guidelines to school/college staff (including relevant criteria), explanatory leaflets/information sheets and documentation relating to how potential pupils or students have been identified for mentoring or befriending support.

7. How are mentees/befriended made aware of what the project involves?

Please describe how pupils or students are made aware of what they can expect from their involvement in the project. The assessment will look for evidence that the school/college ensures participating pupils/students have access to all relevant information about the project. As a minimum we would expect this process to cover:

- The purpose of the project and how it will operate
- The nature of the mentoring or befriending relationship and what benefits pupils/students can expect from it
- How confidentiality is fundamental to the relationship
- The support available to the pupil/student and what to do if any problems arise

This process could involve 'briefings' to groups of pupils/students and also at an individual level involving a teacher/tutor and the project co-ordinator. Some schools/colleges may require their mentees/befriended to sign up to a "contract" which confirms what commitments the pupils/students have agreed to. Your response should also indicate, where appropriate, how parents are informed of the project and how parental consent is secured.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of briefing/information materials, records of individual and group briefings, letters to parents, pupil/student "contracts".

Recruitment and Selection of Volunteer Mentors or Befrienders

8. How do you recruit your volunteers?

Mentoring and befriending projects should have clear criteria with regard to the qualities, experience and characteristics of the individuals they wish to attract. These should be consistent with the aims of the scheme and the roles required of the volunteers within it. Equal opportunities principles should be applied to recruitment practices.

For projects which involve community volunteers as mentors (for example from business, other organisations and volunteer agencies) your response should indicate who is responsible for their recruitment. Is this carried out by the school/college or by another agency such as a business education partnership? What are your sources of recruitment?

Do you use any recruitment criteria for mentors or befrienders? Are there particular qualities, experience or backgrounds you require of your volunteers to help them support your pupils/students? How are appropriate volunteers identified for your project?

Your response should demonstrate that an appropriate and robust recruitment and selection process is in place that includes:

- Promotional literature that is clear, accessible and appeals to a diverse audience
- Assessment against person specification to determine suitability for role
- Background checks e.g. use of references, CRB checks, where appropriate
- Processes for dealing with applicants that are found to be unsuitable e.g. probationary period, satisfactory completion of initial training.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of recruitment/promotional literature, person specification for volunteer role, equal opportunities statement, volunteer application forms or equivalent and notes from volunteer interview/assessment processes.

For projects which involve pupils/students as peer mentors or befrienders your response should indicate how you identify and select appropriate pupils/students for the role. Who is involved in the process? Are there particular qualities and attributes you require of your peer mentors or befrienders?

Please also explain how the project is introduced to potential mentors or befrienders and how pupils apply to become mentors or befrienders.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of information material for pupils, a pupil specification for the mentor role, application forms or equivalent, notes from

volunteer interview/assessment processes and any documentation which indicates which pupils have been accepted as mentors or befrienders.

9. What screening procedures and personal protection arrangements do you operate?

Ensuring the safety of participants lies at the heart of the Approved Provider Standard. Projects must ensure that the safety of both parties in the relationship is protected through the adoption and application of appropriate arrangements on matters such as personal protection or confidentiality. For example, all projects dealing with young people or vulnerable adults must provide evidence of the use of CRB checks. CRB disclosure should be backed up with other screening processes, including a structured interview/assessment process, effective recruitment and training of staff and procedures for anyone to raise concerns about an individual.

In addition, all projects have a 'duty of care' towards the people they work with and to protect them from harm. A risk assessment should therefore be carried out to decide whether clients are at risk if volunteers are not screened.

For projects which involve **volunteers from the community as mentors or befrienders**, please outline what arrangements are in place for the following:

- Screening of volunteers, including CRB checks
- Ensuring the health & safety of all participants and relevant insurance is in place
- Dealing with complaints
- Ensuring mentee/mentor or befriender/befriendee confidentiality
- Ensuring the secure use of technology e.g. in e-mentoring schemes
- Ensuring good equal opportunities practice
- Ensuring parental, family or third party consent

Your response should indicate whether the school or another agency is responsible for these arrangements.

Examples of appropriate evidence include details of registration with the Criminal Records Bureau/confirmation of police checks, copies of insurance documentation, parental consent forms and copies of policies/procedures relating to the points listed above. Please note that you should include copies of 'live' documentation that can demonstrate evidence of implementation.

For projects which involve **pupils as peer mentors or befrienders**, the same arrangements and examples of evidence as outlined above would also apply for peer mentoring/befriending projects except that formal screening (CRB) of volunteers would not be appropriate. However, your response should indicate what arrangements are in place to confirm that volunteer mentors satisfy your expectations in terms of their records of behaviour and reliability.

10. What process is used for matching mentors and mentees or befrienders and befriendees?

There should be a consistent process for identifying the client's needs and comparing them with the characteristics of volunteer mentors or befrienders. This process should aim to make the best use of the attributes, experience and interests that the mentor or befriender has to offer, as well as being responsive to the befriendees/mentees needs and stated preferences.

The process may include the use of questionnaires, a structured interview process or group meetings to see how befrienders/mentors and befriendees/mentees interact. Whatever process for matching is chosen, it is also essential to have arrangements in place for dealing with relationships that turn out to be unsuitable.

Please outline the process you use for matching befrienders/mentors and befriendees/mentees.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of background information about participants, guidelines outlining matching procedures, records of face-to-face contacts and interviews, records of matching decisions.

Volunteer Mentor or Befriender Preparation, Training and Support

11. How do you prepare volunteers so that they can offer effective support?

Please describe the process you use for preparing mentors or befrienders so that they are aware of the demands of the task and can offer mentees or befriendees good quality support. Your response should demonstrate that the process used is relevant and appropriate to the role required of mentors or befrienders in your particular project. However, as a minimum, initial training should include:

- Information on the background and purpose of the project
- Input relating to the mentee/befriendee client group
- Input on the nature of the mentoring or befriending relationship, including roles/responsibilities, skills used, boundaries of the relationship
- Information on the operation of the project, including policies/procedures, meetings' schedules and support available.

Mentor or befriender preparation and training may be something that is delivered for you by an external organisation. If this is the case, please indicate how you monitor and evaluate what is being provided on your behalf. This process should give you the confidence that the training is meeting the needs of your mentors and preparing them effectively for the roles required of them within the project.

For projects involving community mentors or befrienders, your response should explain how volunteers are given relevant background information about the school/college such as key contact numbers, timetables and holidays, evacuation

procedures, educational terms relating to academic progression, national curriculum/course targets etc.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of training session timetables, briefing materials, relevant sections of training programmes, support materials/handouts, mentor/befriender handbook/guidelines and attendee evaluation/feedback.

12. How do you provide on-going support for volunteer mentors or befrienders?

The role of a mentor or befriender can be a demanding one and it may also be a new experience not only for the majority of adults undertaking it, but also for the pupils/students who may be new to mentoring or befriending. Volunteers may need guidance and positive feedback to help them develop confidently into their role.

Regular contact by the project co-ordinator can be helpful in identifying and resolving difficulties at an early stage. Participants may require advice on the conduct of their relationship or need assistance in dealing with particular issues. Opportunities to meet with other volunteers can be a useful way of sharing practice and offering support. In some instances, it may be appropriate for projects to offer further specialist training, leading to some form of formal accreditation.

Your response should show how you provide on-going support for befriendees/mentees and befrienders/mentors and track that meetings are continuing to take place. This would include activities such as telephone/email contacts, networking opportunities, review meetings with the project co-ordinator, celebration events or further training opportunities.

Examples of appropriate evidence include records of contact between the co-ordinator and participants, notes from review meetings, records of meetings between befrienders/mentors and befriendees/mentees (such as a diary) and newsletters.

Monitoring and Evaluation

13. How do you monitor the progress of relationships and determine whether they are successful?

Every project should have a process in place for monitoring the progress of relationships and to determine whether they are functioning successfully and achieving the goals identified for them. The complexity of these processes may vary considerably between projects depending on the context in which the project is operating, the nature of the befriended/mentee group and the purpose of the relationship and what it is intended to achieve.

Most relationships will operate within a clearly defined time frame. Procedures will have been established setting out the parameters and frequency of meetings. A process and documentation will be in place for recording what is discussed and agreed at these meetings. Mentors/befrienders and mentees/befriendees will usually have agreed a basis for assessing progress that will guide the content of their sessions and provide a benchmark for measuring what has been achieved at the end of the mentoring process. Methods used for assessing progress may take the form of action planning, meetings where objectives are reviewed, individual target or goal setting linked to measurable improvements, participants own reported perceptions of change and input from third parties, such as teachers/tutors and parents.

Please describe how you monitor progress and determine the success of individual relationships. Some of the processes you describe here may also contribute to other aspects of the project. For example, meetings between the project co-ordinator and the befriender/mentor not only provide a means of reviewing progress but may also be used as an opportunity for offering further support to the individuals involved. Information about individual relationships obtained as part of the monitoring or assessment process can also be analysed and used to contribute to the overall project evaluation (see question 14).

School/college mentoring or befriending projects can involve a wide range of indicators to reflect individual progress. Below are some examples and sources:

- Attendance and punctuality (school records)
- Behaviour (frequency of detentions/on report, parental contact)
- Coursework and exams (grades/marks achieved; meeting assignment deadlines)
- Confidence and self-esteem (teacher interviews, reports)
- Motivation (class/homework performance)
- Continuing to Further/Higher Education (college visits, interviews , placement offers)

Other appropriate evidence would include feedback (such as questionnaires) from befrienders/mentors and befriendees/mentees about their experiences and the effectiveness of the project.

14.How do you evaluate the effectiveness of your mentoring or befriending project?

To what extent are the overall aims of your project being achieved? What is working well and what can be improved? All projects need an evaluation process in place that enables them to assess the effectiveness of the service that is provided. They should also seek to continually improve their methods of operation in order to achieve better results.

Please describe what methods are used to evaluate your project. This may take the form of informal and/or formal period reviews between the project co-ordinator, line manager and/or senior management team. Your response should explain how improvements are identified and who has responsibility for implementing them. The inclusion of your project within the school/college's overall development/improvement plan would confirm its status and support.

Examples of appropriate evidence include copies of project review meetings, annual reports (for example to school governors), development plans, Ofsted/ALI reports.