Five Key Principles for Learning Mentor Practice

The CWDC training modules introduces Learning Mentors and practitioners to the principles for working with children and young people and to some of the theories that underpin personal growth and development.

It is important for all those who provide support and guidance to have an overview of these ideas. Equally essential is to reflect on how these ideas impact on your practice with young people and your communication with families, colleagues and other professionals.

You will find all the training modules on the CWDC website. The Five Key Principles and theories contained in the modules are:

- Applying a person centred approach
- Using Maslow Hierarchy’s to understand children and young peoples’ basic needs
- Understanding how contexts and environments impact on personal development
- Identifying the hidden aspects of behaviour
- Recognising the different stages of motivation

Person-centred practice
The CWDC handbook gives a practical and useful summary of what the person-centred approach means in practice:

- Working in a way that is focused on the child or young person holistically rather than on individual elements
- Focusing on child or young person-identified priorities, desires, needs and wishes rather than just on service or agency priorities and targets
- Working in a way that focuses on the child’s or young person’s rights, choices and decisions rather than solely on practitioners’ aims
- Focusing on the child’s or young person’s strengths and capabilities and using these as resources to meet needs, wherever possible
- Using approaches that empower and enhance competence and promote and enhance the child or young person’s ability to function well
- Giving the child choice and the right to make decisions, at all levels of intervention

CWDC Module One
Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs

Maslow’s theory is contained in his pyramid of essential human needs. It helps Learning Mentors to consider the various needs children and young people have in order to become active learners, to develop socially and emotionally and to have the confidence and resilience to participate fully in school life and beyond. Maslow’s model provides the rationale for mentoring support and the strategies Learning Mentors use, such as breakfast clubs, workshops on anti-bullying, projects which encourage collaboration and social skills, circle times, creative and sports clubs and providing opportunities for listening and to be heard.

CWDC Module Two

Understanding the Contexts that influence Personal Development

The eco systemic view extends the holistic approach by examining the different contextual influences which surround a child or young person. It explains that people cannot be seen in isolation, they belong to a series of subsystems which interact with each other, such as the family, peers, school and community. Each of these systems influences the child and in turn they influence their systems. This model gives Learning Mentors a framework for understanding how different environments impact on a young person’s perceptions and understanding, their behaviour and emotions. It is a useful model when engaging parents, carers and those involved with the child.

CWDC Module Two

Understanding Hidden and Observable Behaviours

The Learning Mentor Functional Map lists the duties of a learning mentor and includes “identifying barriers to learning”. The Ice Berg model in the CWDC handbook supports this function by defining the difference between the observable aspects of behaviour and the hidden, underlying aspects that motivate and sustains behaviour. It is these internalised aspects, such as fear, anxiety, lacking motivation and confidence that Learning Mentors identify and address through their one to one and group interventions.

CWDC Module Two

Motivation – The role of the Learning Mentor

It is no longer acceptable to blame the young person for being unmotivated; there are many influencing factors that cause this. Motivation is the central part of the professional role of the Learning Mentor. Prochaska and DiClemente’s stages of motivation is a useful model for thinking about the state of readiness a young person is in to make choices and changes in their lives. The “wheel of change” reflects the stages a person may go through, from pre awareness, making
decisions and taking action. It implies that Learning Mentors need to adapt their approach at each stage. This is a useful tool for assessing and reviewing a young person’s progress in their attitude to learning and participation.

CWDC Module Two

CWDC Training Modules
This document only list key principles underpinning learning mentor practice. The CWDC Module Handbooks contain a wider range of theories and approaches are essential reading for all those proving support and guidance. There are five level 3/4 handbooks, a supporting book with Additional Reading and two role specific modules. Although they are called induction materials they are invaluable for all stages of professional development, supporting National Occupational Standards and further qualifications which ask for evidence of understanding the key principles and ideas underpin the Learning Mentor role.

Generic modules and additional reading can be accessed at:


The Role Specific modules can be accessed at:

http://www.cwdcouncil.org.uk/ldss/induction/cwdc-induction-training/cwdc-ind