



Knowledge, Engagement, Respect

Karis Jordås, Secretary General of Mentor Sweden, reflects on how a bond between adult role models and vulnerable children can re-route lives away from drugs and violence...

Preventing young people between the ages of 13 and 17 from using drugs and getting involved with violence, and promoting their wellbeing and self-esteem, is the main focus of Mentor Sweden. Young people are encouraged to refrain from the misuse of drugs that can lead, in most cases, to violent behaviour and activity – the key is to recognise individuals within that target group who are heading towards self-destruction, enhance their self-awareness and, simultaneously, offer them alternative ways that will lead to a better and more purposeful life.

The mentoring programme matches young people with adult role models and engages them in a mentoring relationship that can last from six months up to an entire year.

Mentor Sweden currently cooperates with several schools in the Stockholm area, in Gothenburg and in Malmö, and in addition collaborates with several other communities around the country.

There are no set rules as to who can be a mentor with respect to profession, social status, ethnicity, etc – the only requirement being a clean criminal record. In addition to the excerpt of their police record and a thorough interview, an extended course gives information about how a mentor is expected to behave.

There are established rules, guidelines and a set of activities and assignments that the mentor and the mentee can work with during their time together. Examples include discussing dilemmas and how to cope with problems that may occur in a mentoring relationship, and provision of



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other practical information. Staff must provide mandatory tutoring and are expected to always be available for guidance if needed.

It is our belief and ambition that – by mentoring young people who are in need of guidance – confidence, motivation for study, and a sense of wellbeing can be improved.

The programme is under continuous development, with workshops and seminars arranged that deal with such issues as conflict management, communication, gender perspective, the cultural aspect, etc.

Three words apply in each and every aspect of the programme:

Knowledge

Each and every mentor comes into this programme with a 'backpack' of experiences, education and know-how that is vital for the mentoring relationship.

Engagement

Without engagement, this voluntary undertaking cannot be successful. The mentor's commitment is pivotal for the outcome of the relationship.



The mentoring programme matches young people with adult role models to help guide and motivate

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Respect

Mentors are expected to share the same view on humankind: to never underestimate or judge, and to always listen and be there for the mentee as an adult role model.

For such a global issue, there is never going to be one answer that will match all young people's problems, but through mentoring, youngsters have the chance for a positive and healthy future free from drug abuse.



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