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**“CREATING POSITIVE CHANGE
THROUGH COMMUNITY
LINKAGES”**

**MENTORING FOR YOUTH
JUSTICE
XLR8 MENTORING PROGRAM**

PAM MANSFIELD - 2008

CONTENTS

- INTRODUCTION
- AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW
- MENTORS RECRUITMENT,
SELECTION AND TRAINING
- DEMOGRAPHIC DATA OF MENTORS
AND YOUNG PEOPLE
- PERFORMANCE OF XLR8 AGAINST
NATIONAL BENCHMARKS FOR
EFFECTIVE MENTORING PROGRAMS

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



- The Juvenile Justice component of the XLR8 Mentoring Programme commenced in September 2004, targeting 12 – 21 year olds in targeted areas of the Southern and Eastern Metropolitan regions of the Department of Human Services.
- It was a three year pilot funded through the Department of Community Services, Community Support Fund.

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



TARGETS AGREED TO:

- 100 referrals over the three year pilot
- Maximum pool of 30 mentors at any time
- 60% of young people engaged in employment, training or education
- An external evaluation to be conducted by Success Works, to be submitted to DHS by 16th February 2007.

AN HISTORICAL OVERVIEW



The programme was challenged for the first twelve months to achieve an educational, training and employment focus, however, in the last two years has clearly performed due to the following:

- Increased professional accountability.
- Structured supervision of staff and mentors.
- Action plans for every young person and mentor.
- Clear program guidelines.
- Expanded mentor base with networks in the above areas.

DEMOGRAPHIC OF MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



XLR8 JUVENILE JUSTICE MENTORING

- 137 Referrals since October 2004
- 108 young people accepted involvement

XLR8 LEAVING CARE MENTORING

- 22 Referrals since December 2005
- 11 young people accepted involvement

DEMOGRAPHIC OF MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



- The peak ages are 17 and 18 year olds, which is consistent across the operational period of the program.
- The age group has come down slightly since 2004, which is consistent with the program's expansion to include young people on community-based orders in 2005.

DEMOGRAPHIC OF MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



- 40.8% of referrals have come from the Eastern region.
- 55.47% of referrals have come from the Southern region.
- 3.7% from other regions, or unknown.

DEMOGRAPHIC OF MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



- 27.7% of young people were on Parole at the time of referral.
- 21.8% of young people were in YTC at the time of referral.
- 54% of young people came from a custodial base.
- 44.5% of young people were on community-based orders at the time of referral.

DEMOGRAPHIC OF MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



- Over three years 76% of the young people who agreed to participate in XLR8 have been assisted to gain or supported to maintain education, employment or training including:

Several apprenticeships have been secured.

VCE and VCAL.

TAFE.

Un-skilled work.

Factories/shops.

Skilled work.

Short courses.

Hospitality. Personal Development courses

DEMOGRAPHIC OF MENTORS AND YOUNG PEOPLE



- 45 Current Mentors
- 28 Currently matched
- Ages between 23 – 80
- 22 Male Mentors
- 23 Female Mentors
- From a diverse range of backgrounds:
Students, Self-employed, Retirees, Home Duties and engaged in professional, semi-skilled and un-skilled employment

MENTOR RECRUITMENT TRAINING AND SELECTION



The selection process for Mentors is quite thorough

and involves six stages:

- Application form received.
- If the application is appropriate, the person is invited in for a first interview.
- Three referees are required.
- Attendance at twelve hours of training
- Second interview.
- Graduation Ceremony.

MENTOR RECRUITMENT TRAINING AND SELECTION



- Monthly Mentor Meetings are held, the purpose of which are to provide professional development, information and the opportunity to share individual mentoring experiences amongst the Mentors.
- Guest speakers address the group on a range of issues eg: substance abuse, legislation, self harm etc.

MENTOR RECRUITMENT TRAINING AND SELECTION



- Supervision is provided to Matched Mentors by the Project Workers with a contact meeting monthly and telephone support on a regular basis.
- This level of support, combined with the monthly meetings, has proven to be invaluable in the strong retention levels amongst the XLR8 Mentors and was acknowledged in the evaluation.

FINDINGS

Program Strengths:

- Stable, experienced staff team with significant expertise in working with young offenders, within both Government and Community Service Organisations, who also have experience in training volunteers and lecturing in the sector within TAFE and Higher Education.
- Staff who have experience in training and supporting volunteers, eg: Honorary Probation Officers, Big Brother/Sister etc.

FINDINGS

- Stable pool of mentors committed to the young people
 - mentor retention is very high;
 - mentors speak highly of XLR8 in terms of the level of training, support and supervision they receive;
 - regular contact is maintained with mentors who are not yet matched, and those not matched with a young person still attend monthly meetings and training sessions.

FINDINGS



- Some mentors are willing to contribute in other ways (eg involved in preparing and editing the bi-monthly XLR8 newsletter; facilitating workshops on being employment-ready). This definition of the role of mentors is an area that the program is hoping to expand in.
- More appropriate matches are now being made due to the increased mentor base, which provides a much more diverse cross section to select from.

FINDINGS



- The time taken to assess a young person's needs and establish a match with a mentor is approx three weeks (it often takes months in other mentoring programs). The speed with which a match can be made is partly due to the increased capacity, due to the increase in the mentor pool.
- Relationships between XLR8 staff and Regional DHS Youth Justice Staff are positive and professional.

FINDINGS

- Providing casework to the young person, (particularly in the early stages of engagement) in parallel with supporting the matching with a mentor is a critical factor in achieving successful outcomes.
- The Project Workers become quasi-case managers by default for those young people whose orders expire during their engagement with XLR8, who may still have unmet welfare needs such as homelessness, substance abuse etc.

FINDINGS

- JSS status as a Registered Training Organisation has enabled us to assess our mentor training against recognised core competencies; components of our training meet this and we are working towards extending this. In the process of undertaking this work it has been acknowledged that the training material the program has produced is of a very high professional standard.
- Engaging early with young people in custody has proven to be a factor in successfully maintaining a relationship with their mentor post-release.

FINDINGS



- XLR8 has expanded its connections with employment agencies and industry, through the recruitment of mentors, resulting in several young people securing an apprenticeship in the building industry. The program has also connected with other services and mentoring networks.
- XLR8 does not exclude any offence type, which makes it unique in comparison with some other youth services.

FINDINGS



Performance of XLR8 against the National Benchmarks for Effective Mentoring Programs

The following elements are recommended as a checklist for evaluating the effectiveness of mentoring programs:

A Statement of Purpose

A Program Plan

Policy and Procedures

Mentor Preparation

A Recruitment and Selection Process

A Mentor/Mentee Matching and Monitoring Strategy

Mentor/Mentee Support

A Closure Policy

Evaluation and Assessment

XLR8's performance registers at a very high standard.

POSITIVE FINDINGS



- Voluntary nature of the program.
- Training and support provided to Mentors.
- Support provided to young people, not only by Mentors but also Project Workers.
- Mentors provide community awareness to their networks about this particular client group.
- Young people linked into local networks.
- Positive role models and relationships for young people.

FINDINGS

- The programme has clearly performed in the past two years, reinforcing the need for it to be continued, to really evaluate the longitudinal benefits of mentoring for young offenders as a specific target group, addressing issues such as:
 - recidivism;
 - retention in employment, training and education;
 - longevity of mentoring relationships and attitudinal change for young offenders.