Speed Mentoring in Teaching and Learning: Young people with experience of the care system mentor social work students.

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**Abstract**

The value of listening and talking to young people with experience of the care system has been recognised as a vital and positive contribution to social work students’ learning. A model of co-production was used to develop a series of speed mentoring events whereby social work students placed in local authority children and family settings were mentored by young people with experience of the care system. This tentative review of this small scale project shares the authors critical reflections on the value and reliability of this model, for evaluating the outcomes of co-productive mentoring relationships between young people and social work students. The reversal of the power dynamic between student and service user contributed to the unsettling of assumptions about each other and empathy for each other’s role. The student authors reflect on learning about the child’s experience that have influenced their practice. The mentor authors welcomed the opportunity to participate in the development of 'young people friendly' social workers. Suggestions are made as to how this model could be developed to contribute to a more systematic approach to the role of service users in mentoring, advising and contributing to the supervision process of students and social workers.

198

**Introduction**

This small scale mentoring project was a co-production between a local authority and a university and was funded by a university teaching and learning innovation grant. The co-producers included young people, the children's rights officer, the placement co-ordinator and three university lecturers. Permission to undertake this project and publish the report was agreed by the University and the local authority. The Children's Rights Officer supported and safeguarded the young people throughout the project with the assistance of a care leaver who was undertaking a council apprenticeship. The young people who wished to, could enroll on a City and Guilds Active Citizenship programme (IPAC) that would provide recognition of their role as a mentor . The views reported here are those of the authors. The authors represent the different stakeholders involved as a co-productive project should have a co-productive review (SCIE, 2013) in order to co-produce knowledge. The authors include two social work students and two adult young people with experience of the care system. All the authors have agreed to the publication of the article.

Background to Participation by Children and Young People

The rights of children living away from home or receiving social care are emphasised in the Children Act 1989 and the Adoption and Children Act 2002. The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child include the requirement for children to be consulted and to express their views, wishes and feelings in relation to decisions about them. The Children’s Commissioner was established by the Children Act 2004 and the 2014 Children and Families Act specified her primary function as ‘promoting and protecting the rights of children in England’ and advising the Secretary of State. Indeed, serious case reviews and other enquiries into child abuse repeatedly find that the children involved have not been talked or listened to and this remains an important element of social work practice (Ferguson, 2011; Coventry LSCB, 2014). Benefits of participation by young people include their contribution to the development of child centred services and the upholding of their rights to a voice as citizens (Sinclair, 2004).

User knowledge is now classified by the Social Care Institute of Excellence (Pawson, Boaz, Grayson, Long, & Barnes, 2003) as a resource in developing evidenced based practice, as users possess vital knowledge and experience. Service user involvement is a core requirement in social work education (DOH, 2002; HCPC, 2012). However, while it is recognised that involvement on an equal basis can model social work principles of equality, empowerment and meaningful partnership there is only a small amount of evidence for the effectiveness of service user involvement on improved outcomes for students (Wallcraft, Fleischmann & Schofield, 2012). Robinson and Webber (2012) recently found no studies that evaluated the outcome for practice and impact on service users and carers. This project emerged as part of a current strategy to develop a range of user led innovations that move away from service users telling their own stories, to users being co-producers and leaders in teaching, learning and research (Author, 2008; Sadd, 2011).

Child and family social workers need to use empathy to build relationships with children, in order to understand their world in the context of their identity, family, culture and community and discuss critical decisions with them (Munro, 2011; Archard and Skivenes, 2010). However Luckock et al (2007, p.197) found that it was possible to graduate as a social worker without ‘necessarily having any experience of or being assessed in direct practice and communication with children.’ This project utilises a co-productive approach that encourages a rights’ view of young people. This perspective views young people as ‘*competent and autonomous’* where as a child development framework focuses on stages that can view them ‘*as immature and dependent’* (Barnes 2012, p.14).

Participation is a key concept in social work and essentially refers to service users’ differing levels of involvement in decision making in planning for their own lives and the development of suitable services. Finding appropriate models and means of achieving this can be a challenge in both education and practice. Arnstein offered a foundation model with her ladder of citizen participation (1969). This was adapted by Hart (1992) to identify and encourage societal levels of participation for young people. Shier (2001; 2006) moved to a less linear model removing the lower levels of participation and instead focussed on pathways that can be developed between organisations and young people. Shier (2010) refers to a continuum of ‘participation spaces’, extending from power held by adults in organising and dominating spaces, that young people are invited into, through to spaces shared with young people and adults or spaces organised by and for young people.

Co-production encourages a reciprocal approach between people who use services and professionals. SCIE (2013,p.9) defines three levels of co-production in adult social care. A descriptive level involves limited co-production when the style of service delivery cannot be challenged. An intermediate approach goes some way to recognising a mutually respectful relationship where for example service users are involved in interviewing and educating professionals. A transformative approach fully embraces equality and ‘everyone has assets to bring to the process’ avoiding a ‘them and us’ culture.

One could argue this project provides an intermediate approach to co-production with ‘instrumental benefits’ that simply draws on the use of young people’s expertise in order to contribute to effective, efficient services (SCIE 2013,p.18). However we would argue that our intention is to provide ‘intrinsic benefits’ that ‘foster trust and communication between service users and providers’ (Griffiths and Foley, 2009,p.6) and offer young people opportunities to be trained and supported in their mentor role, to ‘learn new skills and gain experience, enjoyment, develop self-confidence….and to feel valued and empowered’ (Wright, Turner, Clay & Mills, 2006, p.16). Social capital and self efficacy are promoted through building relationships, resilience, wellbeing and aspirations of the mentors (Gilligan, 2000; DFE, 2010). It reflects Percy-Smith’s (2006,p.168) social learning model described as a ‘communicative action space’ that is ‘characterised by flexibility, mutual respect and reciprocity in relationships between young people and adults where power is constantly renegotiated.

By taking a *‘whole systems approach’,* Wright et al. (2006) consider the need for an effective participatory organisational culture, with structures and practitioners that enable and sustain young people’s participation through continual review. However there are inherent complexities and resistance from workers and organisations committed to existing delivery models for services that pose a real challenge (Hill, 2006; Wyness, 2009). The need for organisational cultures to actively support and engage staff at all levels in this process is the only way for this change to begin and be sustainable.

Thomas (2007) argues there is a need for different participatory models to address service development and the needs of young people. This inspired the development of our model, which although small scale, tentatively begins to address both. By using principles of co-production and working alongside young people within ‘a communicative action space’ the aim was to work towards a small-scale systems approach to developing child centred social work practice across the placement and university.

**Young People’s Involvement in Educating Student Social Workers and the Speed Mentoring Model**

While there is limited research on the effectiveness of service user involvement in social work education there are examples of creative approaches that extend beyond the traditional classroom setting and challenge the traditional notions of expertise requiring an identity that must include achieving adulthood and becoming professionally qualified. For example the ‘Who Cares Trust’ offers student social workers an ‘Ask our experts’ on line service where questions can be posted asking about how to understand, communicate and involve young people in direct work (<http://www.thewhocarestrust.org.uk/pages/ask-our-experts.html>.

Lincoln University has two projects, one where young care-leavers write and record letters to social work students about what they want social workers to know. Student feedback identified a strong commitment to be inclusive (Wallcraft et al. 2012). Secondly they provide ‘surgeries’ ‘where students meet service users and carers on a one to one basis to discuss key issues in practice and academic work’ (Wallcroft et al., 2012,p.16). Through this process students are encouraged to recognise the expertise of service users and carers as an important source of knowledge. Involvement in aspects of supervision of student social workers is an important development (Wallcroft et al,, 2012; Pawson et al., 2003). Lambley and Marrable (2013) identified very few examples of how service users may contribute to workers supervision. Contributing to the learning process by offering guidance and advice that can be drawn upon by the student and practice educator during supervision offers opportunities to develop a more co-productive approach to practice education. Instead it broadens the practice curriculum away from a focus on assessment requirements for service user feedback and observation of practice. However such co-productive relationships would require a change in organisational culture in practice and university settings. Payment, training and provision of suitable support are required. Consideration needs to be given to essential education and work commitments for young people.

This co-production model was designed by the young people and involved a combination of mentoring and speed dating models. The use of mentoring can support a humanistic approach to professional development through experiential learning (Lee, 2007). The traditional use of learning cycles such as Kolb (1984) allow the mentee to bring an experience from practice, be it a situation or problem to solve, and through reflection, apply this to enhance their knowledge, skills and value base (Kolb, 1984). Mentoring is offered to adults in the educational or work setting for personal development and leadership skills including adult peer mentoring for social work students (Topping et al, 1998). Megginson et al (2007,p.5) define mentoring as ‘help by one person to another in making significant transitions in knowledge, work or thinking’. This reflects the needs of social work students, on placement, during a period of transition to qualified worker. The mentoring process can provide a space with dialogue, and through this, reflection on action (Schon, 1991).

The ‘speed’ element evolved from speed dating, an activity that began in 1998 in Los Angeles and provided multiple seven minute romantic dates in one event. Since this time, its use has been extended to the academy, health and social work to promote interdisciplinarity and funding collaborations, assist isolated researchers, match supervisors to students and link universities to the commercial world. Most important here, is the use to improve classroom dynamics and active learning (Muurlink and Matas, 2011; Laprise, 2012). Murphy (2005) advocates an imaginative use of ‘speed dating’ to promote the forming of new groups using getting to know you exercises, to facilitate listening skills, and to teach students the ability to express their views to others and to build knowledge. Maidment and Crisp (2007) applied speed dating in the classroom to explore study skills and the experience and impact of placement for social work students. The novelty of the ‘speed dating’ metaphor caught the imagination of the students and facilitators and although the speed of the encounter is not suitable for many situations the experience of being in a group could be explored with the students.

The combination model of speed mentoring has been developed for adults with a range of purposes including assisting junior medics to find a suitable senior mentor (Cook et al, 2010) and offering advice or opportunities for employment. It allows more dynamic movement and activity and can be less confronting as a result. In fact, one of the reasons for developing this model was for the mentors to time limit giving advice. The process promotes a variety of opinions and responses from the mentors in an efficient use of time and space.

Educational activities such as speed mentoring can be one form of challenging traditional views of pedagogy based on the transfer of knowledge from the tutor, as expert, to the student. It can contribute to the development of social work practice by reconstructing what we mean by ‘partnership’ within a model of co-production. Author (2011, p.173) found ‘leveller’ activities involving students, service users and lecturers in co-produced learning activities, using music and percussive activities achieved ‘more satisfying and effective learning relationships’ and contributed to the development of critical reflection, team work and participatory leadership. They provide examples of learner-centred models consistent with Freire’s dialogic learning, a conversation based on respect and humility, with the mentor and mentee working together so reducing the power inequalities (Freire, 1972). The aim being to provide a number of perspectives that will contribute to the student’s development of informed practice. Freire identifies this as praxis.

Within the framework of a reversed power dynamic the young person as mentor helps the student by offering different perspectives and solutions. For the student, learning is active and involves risk taking that can challenge inbuilt assumptions and values. This can potentially lead to transformational learning, challenging the student’s current view of the world (Mezirow, 2000; Fook & Gardner, 2007). Within the group process of speed mentoring, there evolves the potential for meetings to take place between mentor and mentee that would have been unlikely to occur in the current context of limited co-production. Muurlink et al (2011,p.760) suggest this adds ‘randomness to group formation’ that could promote creative ideas. Burgess and Laurance (2007) explore the need for creativity in social work and identify story telling, problem solving and service user involvement as promoting creativity and as a counter balance to outcome focused and technical rational approaches to social work practice.

**Project Design**

This model of co-production (SCIE, 2013) used a strengths based approach to promote social capital by developing supportive relationships across organisations and the local community. The aims were bifold for the young people and the students. For young people it was to encourage them to attend the university, to become involved in sharing experiences, mutual problem solving, peer collaboration, enhancing communication and team working skills. For the students it was to gain experience in being mentored, and enhance the development of their competence in communicating with young people.

A project team training day was provided and during this session an inspirational comment by one of the young people suggested the process could be similar to speed dating. Volunteer social work lecturers and the children’s rights officer acted as mentees, asking for help with a range of scenarios including a young person who runs away, beginning life story work, helping a young person move between foster homes, and a child who will not talk or is very angry. The project group decided the structure of the model outlined in Box 1.

Table 1 here

Three young men and seven young women aged 15 – 24 from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds with experience of being looked after became mentors. Three young women including two of the authors provided continuity by attending all three sessions. In session one there were six mentors, session two nine mentors and session three four mentors. Flexibility was required as the mentors had other regular commitments.

Six students, three women and three men from diverse ethnic and cultural backgrounds, took part. Commitment was high and only one student missed one session. Student social workers’ participation was voluntary but strongly encouraged as an innovative addition to the placement learning opportunities. The students were prepared and brought questions and ideas they wanted help with in their work with young people. They would not use any specific information that would lead to breaking confidentiality.

At the end of each session students, mentors and project group members completed written and verbal reviews of the sessions. Students were reminded of the need to ensure any new ideas were discussed and agreed in supervision with their practice educator. At the beginning of session 2 and 3 students were encouraged to feedback to mentors if they had assisted in any way with the development of their practice with young people. In the final session mentors, students and the project group undertook a dialogical review of the project.

**Post Project Report**

The themes identified from the authors’ critical reflections relate to the two key stages identified by Fook and Gardner (2007,p.7). Stage one of this model focuses on unsettling assumptions of the participants. Stage two concentrates on ‘changed thinking’ and the impact for practice.

# Stage 1 Unsettling and Examining Assumptions

Creating Foundations for co-production and the learning environment

Co-design of a project can lead to more transformative models of co-production (Needham 2009,p.6) so relocating the power and control to be shared with service users. It can be a ‘form of citizenship in practice’. The Children’s Rights Officer identified that group members were impressed that a trusting relationship was built with the adults in the project.

*It worked, especially the way the mentoring project was set up. Everything was casual, it wasn’t like school, it was equal, it was 50/50, everything was done mutually and we could do what we want….. There wasn’t that you have to do it. (mentor)*

Wright et al. (2006,p.13) identify barriers to full participation that include some young people’s negative experiences of the care system. Institutional culture can see young people only as vulnerable and with expectations that they ‘are going to ask for terribly wrong things or say the wrong thing’.We did not want to re-enact a traditional social worker/service user or teacher/child relationship in this project.

The complexity of some situations meant offering meaningful advice in such a short time can be intense and challenging but it can also provide a defined external boundary for the interaction that was welcomed by mentors and students.

*And when you’re moving around it is the fun element, especially when you’ve got the bell going after 7 minutes. But a lot of us found that seven minutes wasn’t really enough to give enough advice. But it’s sort of good that it was capped otherwise it would just be going on forever and then it will just get boring as well. (mentor)*

Expectations of the mentoring process

The two students highlighted the importance of reversing the power dynamic with young people as mentors. The sharing of experiences contributed to challenging their pre-conceived expectations of the relationship, so deconstructing any assumed labels and recognising the multiple identities each young person holds eg being able to advise aswell as use services.

*I feel that I gained more than I expected. The mentors were extremely helpful and had a vast amount of information that I found useful for each of my cases. I thought the model structure was good, both students and mentors were able to express their experiences and each individual student was able to get mentored by each group. (student)*

*What it’s about is reflecting and thinking about a case in a different way. And doing it with someone who has experience of being assessed or supported by a social worker. (student)*

One mentor did feel apprehensive but she wanted to make a difference and offer her expertise. She assumed the social work students would not be interested and thought that they may have been forced to attend but instead:

*When we were giving information they were genuinely listening and genuinely taking it on board’. It was very informal, I like that I could be myself. (mentor)*

Stepping in each others shoes

The ability for the two mentors and two students to empathise with each other’s role was an outstanding feature of their reflections. Trevithick (2012,p.194) defines empathy as ‘trying to understand, as carefully and as sensitively as possible, the nature of another person’s experience, their own unique point of view and what meaning this carries for that individual’. For example both students reflected on the importance of young peoples’ experiences with previous social workers and how these may impact on the relationship with the current social worker. Empathic thinking appears to have been enhanced as the students considered the impact social workers have on the life course of children through to adolescence, adulthood and beyond. This is important learning at a time when social workers are constantly reminded to think about the past, present and future impact of the decisions they make for children:

*I think the fact that the decisions that you make as a social worker have a very long-lasting impact on families and children, and carry through for very many years afterwards. And you have to be aware of that. Because, in a sense, you are getting a service user perspective, but almost way down the line. (student)*

Both mentors were thoughtful and empathic, seeing social workers as everyday people undertaking a hard job, struggling with difficult and complex decisions but also genuinely caring:

*We got to see how hard it was to solve some of the issues that they (social workers) face. In some cases you couldn’t always give an answer. So you understand how it must be for a social worker in that position too. (mentor)*

*Sometimes they wanted to say yes to certain young people but they can’t; it’s not within their power. You don’t see that; you just see social worker, social worker, social worker.* *Trying to control your life. That’s how you see it as a child. (mentor)*

**Stage 2 Change in thinking and impact for Practice**

Feedback to mentors on changes to practice

Both mentors emphasised their wish to contribute to ‘young people friendly’ and ‘kinder’ social workers, reflecting the findings of Beresford et al (2006) on the vital personal qualities of a social worker. Receiving feedback from the students about the impact on their practice was an important aspect of developing this co-production model and is reflected in other writing by young people who participate in service development (Millar, 2007).

*They did actually learn something so that made us feel better. Especially when they told us in the feedback, that our advice did actually help….. to just know that we are doing something right, that we are actually helping. (mentor)*

They thought early intervention by working with student social workers was important:

*So they haven’t got that cockiness, confidence that proper social workers have, that they’re still a bit unsure and they still need a bit of advice. (mentor)*

Communication with young people

Both mentors raised awareness of how young people can feel intimidated by social workers. Once trust had been established between them and the social worker they felt respected and part of a positive relationship. One student identified links with the exchange model of assessment where the worker has expertise in the process of problem solving, however the service user and the people involved with them are also expert’s in their own problems (Smale et al, 2000).

A common theme was how to communicate with children and young people that didn’t want to really communicate with the social worker. However the personal style and demeanour of the social worker is central and the advice given to them was:

*Just be cool trying to build up trust….let it show that you are just a human. (mentor)*

*Tactful ways, and a young-person-friendly way, not … my manager said this… dah, dah, dah. And (the mentee) said that helped. (mentor)*

*Some social workers seem like they’re just miserable, just cheer up a bit. Just don’t be all formal, just let things be as they are. Just talking, just being yourself. Don’t be patronising. (mentor)*

*Your experiences are going to help you help that young person….but little things like how you handled your Mobile phone bill. Real life experiences that you’ve had. If you’ve got interesting experiences, like, ‘I climbed the Himalayas’. (mentor)*

The mentors reflected on how they encouraged students to consider the child’s point of view and that sometimes it’s not just a ‘kid being bad’. Instead they helped students to look beyond this assumption to their history, relationships and social context and recognise there might be other reasons for their behaviour. There were some situations where the mentors had no answers or offered a range of views. The student learnt that in this co-productive power interchange, there is not a perfect solution or a ‘one fits all’ answer or approach so avoiding technicist assumptions:

*One of the things that I brought up with my mentoring session was this young girl that I couldn’t get a hold of, she wasn’t engaging, she was running away…. I got a chance to think about different ways that I might be able to make contact with her or engage her. And so the people that were giving me advice, I remember them being a little bit split, because one of them was saying, “Well, she needs to be challenged……..and the other one was saying, “You need to try and gain her trust and build her trust. (student).*

Learning identified by students was the need to bring oneself back to what is the child’s experience and how they perceive the world and to consciously strive to be more child-centred and child-focused. Taking time to listen and learn also means paying attention to the relationship that is established between the worker and the service user (Ruch et al, 2010). The recognition was that in practice this could be actually very difficult to maintain.

*It’s very easy to get lost in everything else that’s going on including the adults’ needs and especially if it’s a young child.* (student)

The students highlighted the importance of an environment where co-production can take place. When power can be readily interchanged, with social workers being allowed to have the space to listen to, reflect and act on the stories that young people tell them.

*I learnt about different parenting styles, how best to approach education as a positive thing, how to help children integrate into school, how to talk to children who have been physically abused at home and help them open up, how to be diplomatic when dealing with a young mother to be [in relation to smoking]. I need to gain alot of trust before the young person will feel like opening up to you as the social worker. (student)*

Challenging the status quo

Less successful in challenging assumptions was the integration of the model into the context and environment of children and family social work and the students’ placement. Service user’s involvement and feedback to students is a major part of social work education within the University but this seemed to get little direct attention in day-to-day practice education. We made an initial assumption this would not be the case despite evidence of the need for a whole systems approach to establish both mentoring and co-production models to embed change (Wright et al., 2006).

*This can be due to bureaucracy, which at times pursues ends that do not connect directly to the wellbeing of service users and can be hostile to the delivery of good social work. (student)*

Students identified a disjuncture between young peoples’ participation as good practice in their education and the hesitance of workers in placement to the idea of the project. They identified a gap between their learning from the project and how this linked to the placement and practice educators’ role.

*I talked to some social workers about it and I remember they were quite reticent about it. And, again, I think that links in to the complete power shift for social work students. (student)*

Practice educators were briefed in writing but difficulties in arranging face to face meetings to explain the model meant their role in discussing the learning from mentoring in supervision and translating this into practice was restricted. This led to a lack of evidence of learning from the project in the work-based evidence produced for the final placement report.

*But it would be amazing to be able to then take that advice back into the supervisory relationship between the student social worker and the practice assessor. (Student)*

**Discussion and Conclusion**

Although a small scale review reflecting only the authors’ views it provides a thought-provoking example of co-production as a model in social work education to promote child centred practice. It integrates a children’s rights perspective with the dialogic, learner centred, principles of Freire (1972) promoting action and reflection for praxis. Both the young people and students made assumptions about each other. However the negotiation of a different power relationship through mentoring unsettled and challenged these values and beliefs so the student learnt more than expected and the young person realised the students were willing to learn. Percy-Smith (2006,p.171) considers the impact on professionals of a ‘dialogical and interactive approach’ with young people that ‘required them to identify and challenge their taken for granted assumptions and underpinning value base’. The student’s acknowledged the uncertainty and the lasting impact day-to-day decisions by social workers have on children’s lives, even when involved for a short period of time:

*A lot of the decisions that social workers make, it’s actually not about a right or wrong answer, it’s almost kind of choosing between two lesser evils. (student)*

The feedback from the students about the impact on their practice was beneficial to the mentors and provided important information for the project team. SCIE (2013,p.6) guidance advises of the need for continual review to ensure co-production is making a real difference.. In the future this feedback loop could be formalised to encapsulate and build on the mentors self efficacy and for a full project evaluation of the impact on student’s practice.

The mentoring model could be refined to deepen and capture the learning for the student. This model encourages the application of abstract concepts of equality, power, values and partnership to social work practice. The preparation needed for the students could be enhanced through a pre-session to focus on specific ethical dilemmas, practice issues and their assumptions and expectations of the mentoring sessions. It could not only include student feedback to young people on changes to their practice but also include specific feedback to students on their communication skills and how they present and engage with the mentors. This evidence, alongside reflections on their own values and learning from the process and impact on their practice could be discussed with their practice educator and included in the placement report. For example significant theoretical frameworks relating to identity and the life course that are taught in the academy can be reflected upon in supervision and integrated to further develop the student’s capabilities. Lefevre (2013,p.1) identifies capabilities under three domains for communicating with children. ‘Knowing‘ is the underpinning knowledge and understanding of children, ‘doing’ involves suitable skills and ‘being’ encompasses awareness and use of self and professional values. The development of social workers using these domains is documented through to qualifying point and beyond. The pedagogical approaches used with this mentoring model can enhance and integrate aspects of the ‘knowing’, ‘doing’ and ‘being’ capabilities into the practice curriculum.

However the organisational culture including preparation and engagement of practice educators and teams needs to be enabled in a more systematic way in order to challenge the status quo. Garrett (2006,p.7) undertook a small-scale evaluation of expert adult patients mentoring staff in the NHS. She found mentees developed increased empathy for the frustrations patients with long-term conditions endured and recognised the need to empower patients to make informed decisions. However the need for strategic planning, resourcing and ‘buy-in from all levels and divisions’ in the NHS was required for the project to be sustainable.

One student suggested the mentoring model could be used with practitioners and managers alongside case discussion groups, supervision, team meetings or consultation sessions.

*I think it could really, really help the care system. (mentor)*

*It would be great to have young people as a sounding board for consultation on a case. From a systemic point of view there could be a mentoring team offering different perspectives. (student)*

While further research on the student experience has been undertaken (Author unpublished), for this project to have a wider impact on practice then the effectiveness needs to be rigorously evaluated. Learning from this project review is limited to the particular reported experiences of the authors during the first year of this pilot and it is not possible to generalise from the information provided. When the Robinson and Webber (2012) four level hierarchyevaluation framework is applied, students’ and service users’ modified perceptions are reflected but the higher level behavioural, and organisational changes and benefits to service users are not. However this co-production model of mentoring could be utilised alongside other models of service user involvement discussed earlier, to inform a more systematic approach to the roles service users could undertake with students and social workers to enhance social work practice.

**Table 1: The Model**

Aim: To enable the team to fully support, safeguard and help the mentors and students in their role and to achieving the aims of the project.

|  |
| --- |
| * Three x 2 hour group mentoring events to take place early on, midway and near the end of the placement.
 |
| * As a corporate parent the local authority will provide a suitable member of staff to attend, support and supervise all sessions and be responsible for safe travel to and from the event for all young people.
 |
| * Sessions to take place early evening or in school holidays
 |
| * Provide food and drink.
 |
| * Payment of high street vouchers
 |
| * Attendance certificates
 |
| * The young people mentored students for seven to ten minutes in pairs. This offered support to each other, avoided the interaction becoming too intense and the possibility of running out of advice to give. Facilitators from the project team attend for support.
 |
| * The student moved on ensuring they have had the opportunity to meet all the mentors thereby receiving different viewpoints.
 |
| * The student chose to ask the same question or a different question to the mentors.
 |
| * A working together agreement outlined expectations that young people did not have to share their personal story, that if the mentor and student new each other personally or professionally they would not work together, that mentors and students can ask for help at any time or take a break, and to consider differing views about physical distance, space and touch.
 |
| * The whole group was then reconvened with a facilitated discussion of the key learning from the students and feedback from the mentors takes place.
 |
| * All decisions about working with a young person and their family must be agreed between the student and their practice educator. The student will get some new ideas to discuss with them!
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6511

190 Abstract