

The Village Nursery & OOSC is a 50 place, private nursery with a staff team of 20. We believe knowledgeable, well trained staff deliver the best outcomes for children. We want new staff to successfully build confidence and competence; we want experienced staff to have opportunities to develop professionally; and we want to foster a shared ethos and consistent ways of working. Our response to help achieve these goals has been to introduce a 6 month mentoring programme where experienced staff support new staff with improving their practice, partly through a series of factsheets on key agreed early years areas.

Aim: By August 2020, establish a mentoring system to effectively build confidence and competence in new staff, offer experienced staff development opportunities and foster a shared ethos across the staff team

Innovation to date

Experienced staff were offered the opportunity to become mentors. Together, we agreed 6 areas of early years practice which we felt were



central to our ethos and then developed each area into a factsheet. The factsheets included practical tasks alongside information on relevant legislation, literature and outlined our approach to best practice. Mentors were matched to mentees, meeting outwith regular hours to go through the factsheets and discuss general practice. They also worked together in playrooms, with mentors helping mentees apply new knowledge thus building understanding and experience.

Supporting Evidence

Participants were asked to evaluate their confidence and knowledge on a scale of 1 to 10 before and after the programme. Results for each participant are shown on the right.



- 6 experienced staff have become mentors
- 5 new staff have completed the programme
- 3 staff currently participating in the programme

I have gained skills to support and develop staff practice

My mentor gave me lots of good advice to put into practice

The practical learning & reflective conversations have been invaluable

This is a fantastic tool for new members of staff

Comments from mentors and mentees

Summary of Learning

- Creating our own programme meant we could tailor it, fostering our own ethos and approach to childcare and learning
- Valuing mentors' and mentees' participation is important –both financially and by providing meeting time outwith regular hours
- Mentors need support too – we created times where mentors and managers came together to discuss their experiences.
- Creating our resource took time but both process and outcome were beneficial - the programme will be used for years to come

Next Steps

- Use participants' evaluations to 'fine tune' our programme
- Explore ways to continue mentoring relationships where this supports mentees' on-going professional development.
- Use the programme flexibly - both for new practitioners and those wishing to strengthen particular areas of practice.
- Collaborate with settings keen to introduce similar programmes

Key Achievements to date

