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## 1. What is Starfish?

Starfish is a Salvation Army mentoring programme designed to work with children and young people in schools.

The aim of Starfish is to make a difference to young people, one by one. This is inspired by the story of the man who – one by one – throws stranded starfish back into the sea. Challenged on what difference it can possibly make to the thousands of beached starfish around him, he replies, ‘It made a difference to that one!’

Starfish believes in the potential of one. Every young person has unique skills, talents and ability, but not always the opportunity to let them flourish. Starfish is about setting that straight and releasing young people to express who they are in full. It aims to provide opportunities for young people to be supported, to develop positive personal and relational life skills, a healthy emotional wellbeing and to reach their potential.

Young people do best when they experience strong, positive relationships in all parts of their lives, and time spent with caring adults outside of the home and classroom can have a profound impact on how young people see themselves and the world around them.

## 2. Who benefits?

Young people who benefit from mentoring come from all walks of life, and Starfish is an inclusive programme open to all young people in need of support.

Working within a school’s student wellbeing support, Starfish provides committed and trusted adults to work with young people who need Early Help without which they would be at risk of not meeting their full potential. Their identified needs may relate to their health, educational or social development.

The target age group is 9 to 16 years and this support is through one-to-one mentoring.

Mentoring is focused on the young person and their identified needs. The young person is always ‘front and centre’ in mentoring, even in a multi-agency approach of support for that child. The purpose of mentoring is to ensure that a journey of change for the young person is maintained through a wholesome and positive relationship to the benefit of the young person concerned.

### 3. What is the cost to school?

Starfish is offered to schools by The Salvation Army free of charge.

### 4. How long does Starfish mentoring last?

The length of the mentoring programme for any individual mentee can be discussed and agreed independently by each Starfish programme and the schools they are working with, but it is recommended to be no less than eight sessions. Factors to take into consideration will be the commitment of the mentors, the school termly cycle and timetable, and the needs of the mentee. If the agreed number of sessions is too short it becomes difficult to see any measurable outcomes (not that there aren't any benefits, of course), particularly with the Outcomes Star. However, young people or schools may feel uncertain about committing to a longer period of time.

Individual Starfish programmes may decide to keep this flexible and discuss each referral with the school individually or may choose to offer the school an eight/ten/twelve-week programme as standard. It would be remiss to accept young people on to a short-term mentoring if it is clear from the outset that any intervention with that young person will need to be longer-term. Taking on a young person who needs more long-term support than can realistically be offered by Starfish could potentially do more harm than good. So it should be clear from the outset of the need, commitment and expectations of all parties involved.

### 5. How are mentees matched with mentors?

The Starfish Co-ordinator will match the mentee and mentor using the general guidelines:

- Where possible to keep to same gender mentoring.
- Considering the needs of the mentee and which mentor has the best experience to support the young person.
- Considering matching the interests/experiences of mentor and young person.

It is acknowledged that in a local community, it is possible that mentors may already know the young person, be friendly with the family, or perhaps have their own children in the same school/class as the mentee. These things may not be helpful in establishing a professional relationship of trust between mentor and mentee and will be avoided unless there is a very good reason why this will be a positive intervention.

## 6. How does the referral process work?

Young people are referred to Starfish via their school. The school will have contacted the parent/carer to obtain permission for the mentoring.

### The referral process is as follows:

- School completes and sends in a referral form to the Starfish Co-ordinator.
- The referral form is a highly confidential document and is not to be shared beyond the Starfish Co-ordinator / mentor.
- The Starfish Co-ordinator calls or meets the member of school staff to discuss the referral in more detail and to consider whether Starfish is able to support this person.
- The Starfish Co-ordinator assesses the referral and matches the young person with a mentor.
- The Starfish Co-ordinator contacts the mentor to give a brief overview of the referral and ask if the mentor is happy to proceed.
- The Starfish Co-ordinator informs the member of school staff of the mentor that has been allocated and to arrange a start date.

- On the agreed start date the mentor goes into school to be introduced to the mentee by the member of school staff.
- Mentoring programme begins.

It is recommended that the mentor has an orientation to the school building before they begin mentoring there for the first time. This enables the mentor to become familiar with the setting, to find the room they will be working in, and where to access school staff such as the Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL).

## 7. How many students would a mentor be able to work with each week? How regularly would they come into school?

The Starfish mentoring programme is built around one-to-one mentoring sessions that last between 30 and 60 minutes and are ideally on a weekly basis. The availability of the mentor will determine how many young people they can work with a week.

## 8. What is Outcomes Star / My Mind Star?

The Outcomes Star (developed by Triangle<sup>1</sup>) is a family of evidence-based tools for supporting and measuring change when working with people of all ages. It is an integral part of Starfish mentoring, bringing richness and depth to the programme.

The Outcomes Star provides a unique and innovative way to demonstrate impact and measure change, designed to be used in collaboration with young people in an objective and fully integrated way. It is underpinned by three values – empowerment, collaboration and integration – and it places importance on the young person’s perspective and priorities, using a person-centred approach. The Outcomes Star Journey of Change identifies five main stages that people can go through on the journey to begin and sustain positive change.

There are many different versions of the Outcomes Star. The one used in the Starfish programme is My Mind Star.<sup>2</sup>

My Mind Star is designed to be used with young people who are experiencing poor mental health, including low mood, stress, anxiety, anger, sleeplessness or self-harming, or who have a diagnosed mental health condition. It is intended for use in early intervention services that aim to prevent the onset or development of a mental health condition wherever possible and to fill the gap in mental health services before one is diagnosed.

My Mind Star looks at how the young person is doing within seven different areas: feelings and emotions, healthy lifestyle, where I live, friendships and relationships, school, how you use your time and self-esteem.

In the initial mentoring sessions a My Mind Star reading is agreed for each of the seven areas and then in the following weeks a mentor will work alongside the mentee towards their agreed targets/goals. The Star reading will be repeated towards the end of mentoring and a comparison of the first and last Star will give a clear picture of the outcomes for that young person and how far they have travelled.

Mentors will have received in depth training on using My Mind Star and the five-stage Journey of Change so they are fully equipped with knowledge and skills to use it effectively throughout Starfish mentoring.

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<sup>1</sup> [www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)

<sup>2</sup> My Mind Star™©Triangle Consulting Social Enterprise Ltd

## 9. What happens in a mentoring session?

All Starfish sessions, regardless of age group, have the same goal in mind: To be a fun, engaging and safe environment for young people to receive positive support.

Mentoring, of course, involves chatting with and listening to the mentee. Whilst some young people can chat away happily for hours on end, for many talking is best achieved via activities.

Mentoring sessions should also be an opportunity for each young person to be working towards their agreed targets/goals, based on the Outcomes Star five-stage Journey of Change and those outcomes as indicated on the referral form. This means that all activities need to serve a purpose, even if it is to have fun and build relationship.

Mentoring is always young person focused, not driven exclusively by targets or outcomes. Mentors will look to include the activities that interest and inspire the mentee and will help the mentee to build natural relationships, confidence and positive mental health.

It is important to find a suitable venue that lends itself to mentoring. This will need to be discussed with each referring school.

## 10. How are mentoring sessions structured? How concrete is the 'agenda' for the sessions?

The Starfish model is flexible and can be tailored to the individual. The aim of Starfish is about helping young people to meet their potential, so the 'agenda' is about identifying where the mentee needs help and then working alongside them to support them in that area.

In the early weeks, there will be age appropriate activities that will enable the mentee and mentor to get to know each other and start building a relationship.

Depending on the mentee, their needs, how they are feeling that day and allowances in the venue, the session activities can vary and will of course need to be flexible. As a guide, however, a typical Starfish session would be structured as follows.

- Mentor and mentee meet up.
- Initial catch up and chat about their week.
- Mentor brings a short planned 'icebreaker' activity for them to do together.
- Chat/activity potentially focused on the targeted outcome or in response to a particular issue they have had that week.
- Plan what to do in the next session.

## **11. Do mentors meet all safeguarding requirements?**

Yes, absolutely. Starfish has been developed in partnership with The Salvation Army's Territorial Safeguarding Department to help facilitate the safe practice of one-to-one mentoring with young people.

All volunteer Starfish mentors will go through The Salvation Army volunteer recruitment process which includes gaining references, enhanced background checks and completing the Safeguarding Essentials training.

All mentors will have an up-to-date background check: Enhanced DBS (England/Wales), PVG (Scotland), Access NI (Northern Ireland) and Garda Check (Republic of Ireland).

Schools have their own safeguarding policies and designated safeguarding leads and Starfish expect the school will take the lead on any safeguarding concerns that may be raised by Starfish mentors. Starfish will follow the school's safeguarding policy.

In the event of a disclosure or any safeguarding concerns, it is the role of the Starfish mentor to inform the school's Designated Safeguarding Lead (DSL) as soon after the concern is highlighted as possible, as per the school's safeguarding policy. This will include accurately logging the concern and any action taken.

The Starfish Co-ordinator will inform The Salvation Army central safeguarding team that in a Starfish mentoring session a concern/disclosure was raised and that it has been passed to the school who are following their safeguarding procedures.

Each Starfish programme will also have a risk assessment that can be shared with the school if required.

## **12. Are the Outcomes Star readings shared with school?**

The young person's Star readings can be shared with the end of engagement/term reports for the school if required. This will be a 'beginning' and an 'end' Star - a diagram - which will show the young person's journey of change, but will not report on the conversation, additional notes or action plan that goes with it. The young person is made aware from the outset that the Star diagram may be shared with the school.

The Star reading/diagram is not sent to parent/carers.



### **13. What training have the mentors had and how experienced are they?**

There is a robust process of recruitment to ensure that only the most appropriate people are able to take on the role of mentor. The recruitment is led by the Starfish Co-ordinator and is supported by The Salvation Army's volunteer recruitment process.

Mentors will vary in their level of mentoring experience but all mentors will have attended a comprehensive Starfish mentoring training programme which includes Mentoring Skills; Mentoring in a School Environment; Outcomes Star; Equality, Diversity and Inclusion; Data Protection and Safeguarding Essentials.

The Co-ordinator will meet regularly with mentors for supervision and support is offered throughout. Starfish is committed to the personal development of the mentors and will offer additional training as the mentors require.



### **14. What feedback will be given to the school so that we can work with mentors to ensure the programme is successful?**

The role of the Starfish Co-ordinator is to regularly meet with the school to ensure all parties are happy with Starfish and there can be ongoing informal dialogue between all four parties: the school, Co-ordinator, mentor and mentee.

The mentor will complete a mid-point review half way through the programme, and an exit report at the end of mentoring.

### **15. What is the difference between a Starfish mentor and Starfish Co-ordinator?**

The Starfish Co-ordinator is the primary point of contact for Starfish and is the person who will set up and run the local Starfish programme. This person will facilitate the partnerships with schools, co-ordinate the referrals, the recruiting and support of mentors, and the relationships between the mentor and mentee. The Starfish Co-ordinator may also do some mentoring as well.

The mentor works alongside the mentee in school for an agreed number of sessions, supported by the Co-ordinator throughout.

## **16. What information do Starfish Co-ordinators need from the school?**

- Name(s) of the members of staff that mentors should contact and how best to get in touch with them.
- Requirement of the school for visitors coming on to site, eg mentor's background check, proof of ID.
- Will the school be able to facilitate an orientation visit for mentors who have not been inside the school before?
- How the mentor will gain access, eg entrance, signing-in and signing-out procedure?
- Where will the mentoring take place? What rooms are available in school, or is the mentor able to take the young person out of school for the session?
- How long the school would like each mentoring session to be, to best fit around the school timetable.
- When the mentoring will take place. If/how the mentee will be excused from lessons to attend mentoring.
- Confirmation that the school is obtaining parental permission.
- Consent for taking the young person off site if this is planned.
- The best way to contact the mentee if required (age appropriate).

- Who to contact in school in the event of any safeguarding concern or any other information that the mentor feels the school should be aware of.

## **17. What information do Starfish Co-ordinators share with the school initially?**

- Number and availability of mentors and how many young people can be mentored.
- The length of the mentoring programme being offered – or this can be agreed together.
- Name(s) of the mentor(s) along with confirmation of their safeguarding training and background check.
- How Starfish reports back to the school on the progress of mentoring (eg mid-point review).
- Safeguarding policy and risk assessments as required by the school.
- How the mentors will be identified, eg Starfish clothing/ ID badges.

## 18. Is there data from the pilot that can be shared?

**Here is some of the feedback from the pilot from the young people, parents and teachers:**

- ‘Starfish is extremely supportive and nurturing to vulnerable children.’ (Teacher)
- ‘Starfish is an effective targeted programme, that flexibly fits into the school programme without any further demands from the school.’ (Teacher)
- ‘The children have blossomed in confidence throughout their time in the mentoring programme and are now ready for the transition to secondary school. They have acquired the necessary skills for this move and can confidently explain their emotions and how they can deal with their anxiety. After seeing the confidence these children have gained through the mentoring programme, I would confidently recommend this programme to any school.’ (Teacher)
- ‘Mentoring has helped me overcome my emotions and make me feel better about my situation. Outcomes Star helped me to understand my weak points and prioritise them to help me grow mentally.’ (Mentee)
- ‘The time you (the mentor) were having with my daughter, allowed me to almost have a little bit taken off. Her behaviour

improved immeasurably and her mental health improved and the family became a family again rather than a battleground.’ (Parent)

**Here is a snapshot of some of the results:**

- 100% of teachers said they would want Starfish to continue in their schools.
- 92% of mentees said that mentoring had helped to increase their confidence.
- 96% of mentees said that mentoring had helped them get on better at school.
- From the Distance Travelled Report that enables us to see what change has taken place for each mentee between two Stars completed at different points in time:
  - 93% of mentees made progress in at least two outcome areas.
  - 71% mentees made progress in the area of feelings and emotions.
  - 64% mentees made progress in the area of self-esteem.
  - Primary school boys: 100% mentees made progress in two areas: friends and relationships and how you use your time.

- Secondary school boys: 67% mentees made progress in feelings and emotions.
- Primary school girls: 75% mentees made progress in two areas: self-esteem and feelings and emotions.
- Secondary school girls: 100% mentees made progress in the area of self-esteem.

## **19. Are you able to put me in touch with any schools that you have worked with previously to discuss how this has worked for them and how this could work for us?**

We currently have Starfish running in over 12 schools across UK (primary and secondary). If you would like to chat with one of these schools, please ask your Starfish Co-ordinator.

## **20. What are the next steps if we are interested?**

If you are interested then that is great news – just get in touch with your local Starfish Co-ordinator and start the conversation.



# Starfish

Frequently Asked Questions



Children  
& Youth

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