




Insider





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GLASGOW - UK COUNCIL OF THE YEAR 2015



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MCR PATHWAYS MENTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE



Alan Hume, City Parking Attendant, signed up to be an MCR Pathways mentor only a few months ago and has quickly become one of their most passionate ambassadors.

Alan meets an S4 pupil in Knightswood Secondary for one hour a week and can already see the difference it's making. Support from his managers at City Parking had a big impact on Alan's decision to get involved.

Alan said: "I first heard about MCR Pathways at an event at the City Chambers then again through my manager. I've been a volunteer Scout Leader for 21 years so I was really interested. When my manager received more information about the programme and the council's commitment and support for staff, he encouraged me to go along to an information session.

"I'm used to working with young people in a group setting and I get a lot of enjoyment out of it. But I was particularly interested in the opportunity of working one-on-one with someone. I wanted to be a positive influence in a young person's life and have that individual time to make a real difference.

"I thought I could be an example. I didn't do well in school and I wanted to help encourage others not to waste time like me and take advantage of the opportunities out there; maybe offering advice and a listening ear that's missing at home.

"I was matched with my mentee as we're both quite sporty and share a love of the outdoors. We actually started by talking about TV shows but then she opened up about being a Celtic fan and I'm a Rangers fan so we had a laugh about it.

"Our meetings are now really good with a lot of laughing. She's aware of the importance of getting support. Michael, the school's Co-ordinator, is very good at helping her with her subjects and



Talent Tasters that MCR organise with various businesses and organisations.

"My time is spent talking about her background, her issues in school and problems she's been having. She needs a calming influence as her home life can be chaotic and I think she needs someone to guide her in taking a more positive attitude. I've definitely seen a more open side to her already.

"Support from my manager was a big help in getting started because I felt I was being encouraged and supported. When I mentioned the coffee mornings and training that MCR also run, he was really accommodating.

"I've definitely grown in confidence and been surprised at how much I enjoy preparing for our meetings

and thinking about things I should tell her about, or help with at our next catch up. The best part is when you leave feeling you've helped somehow. It also helps you learn to view things from a young person's point of view.

"I'd definitely recommend mentoring - there's a sense of pride you take from it that I've not felt before. I'd encourage others to go along to an information session and find out more. Becoming a mentor has been life changing for me and I feel privileged to be involved in the programme. It's an amazing opportunity to help change someone's life."

Alan has enjoyed his mentoring so much that he applied for a post - and has been appointed - as an MCR Pathways Co-ordinator. He's now looking forward to his new role, and will continue to mentor at Knightswood Secondary.

More information

Visit [Connect](#).

TEN YEARS OF SUCCESS FOR MCR PATHWAYS



More than 1200 disadvantaged city pupils have already benefited from the innovative MCR Pathways and Young Glasgow Talent programme.

For 10 years, MCR Pathways has been striving to improve the educational outcomes, career opportunities and life chances of care experienced and disadvantaged young people in Glasgow. The aim is to make sure that these young people receive the same opportunities that every other young person gets.

Programme founder Iain MacRitchie said: "It's been an incredible decade for MCR Pathways. With the support of our partners and our growing army of mentors, we've supported over 1200 young people in the city. These are young people with incredible aspirations, who work hard to achieve a better future for themselves whilst often facing challenges that no young person should ever experience."



Iain MacRitchie

IN THE BEGINNING

From a chance meeting between MCR's Founder, Iain MacRitchie, and Donna Cunningham, Senior Manager at St Andrew's Secondary, a programme and vision was born in 2007.

The project began matching mentors with young people at St Andrew's, sending a powerful message that these young people were valued and that the school, and the wider community, were committed to investing time to support them.

Iain explained: "There's amazing potential and talent amongst our most disadvantaged young people.

But for many, that potential has yet to be discovered. Life experience has knocked the confidence out of some, locking away those seeds of aspiration and hope. What we found in St Andrew's was that talent and opportunity could be bridged

through relationship-focused mentoring.



LIAM'S STORY



One of the first young people MCR worked with at St Andrew's Secondary was Liam Murray. Liam encountered significant challenges at home.

Unsurprisingly Liam struggled to focus in school. When he started secondary school, he was academically four years behind his peers - a consequence of his home life, not a reflection of his ability.

Liam said: "Things were awful in every sense, home wise and school wise. I was completely disillusioned by school so I just sat back and let it all pass by. I had no idea what my future would hold."

After being matched with a mentor - Donna Cunningham - Liam's confidence and belief grew. With Donna's support and encouragement, Liam achieved good grades which allowed him to go to university where he graduated with a 2:1 honours degree in Building Surveying.

Liam now works for City Property and has become a mentor himself to inspire a young person faced with the similar challenges he faced.

Liam explained: "Being able to give back what I got, to have the ability to change someone's life for the better and allow them to find their potential and confidence, is just an incredible feeling that words can't describe. I'd definitely recommend others to get involved; it's really rewarding."

FEATURE

FIRST FIVE YEARS

The programme quickly grew and developed. After just five years, there was evidence to show that the programme was changing lives for many young people. Before MCR, just 4% of care experienced young people were staying on at school beyond fourth year. By the 2013 to 2014 academic year, with the support of a mentor, 67% were staying on at school – meaning that they could achieve more qualifications.

COUNCIL SUPPORT MAKES A DIFFERENCE

The council is working to improve the achievements and attainment for all pupils in the city and to improve the outcomes for disadvantaged young people. Our aim is for all our young people, regardless of their background or circumstances, to be offered the same opportunities and benefits.

Iain added: “Support from the council is enabling us to expand the programme.

At the beginning of 2017 Chief Executive Annemarie O'Donnell pledged the council's support, saying: “All our young people deserve the very best we can offer, regardless of their personal circumstances or background.

“I have set an ambitious target to engage up to 10% of our employees as MCR mentors. I know this vision will be realised as we have some amazing staff who will be keen to embrace this important role. Our workforce is very diverse. Staff have a wide range of skills and experiences that could be used to support and encourage a young person who is disadvantaged through circumstances that are not their fault. The rewards are plenty but it's also about staff development as well as the obvious benefits to the young person.”

Iain added: “The announcement was a landmark for MCR Pathways which saw staff of all ages, from all Services and ALEOs responding to the Chief Executive's call to



support the programme.”

Iain continued: “Over 1300 Glaswegians have now pledged their support to the programme; most have already been matched with a young person.

“Many organisations in the city have committed their support, whether through encouraging their staff to become mentors, or providing Talent Taster experiences to open up the world of further and higher education and employment - experiences that spark aspirations through inspiration.”

MENTORS MAKE A DIFFERENCE – COULD IT BE YOU?

Anyone can be a mentor. You just have to want to support and encourage a disadvantaged young person. MCR provides all of the training and support.

Building a positive relationship is based on listening, encouraging, being non-judgmental and simply turning up consistently for no other reason than you care. It's about realising the full potential of the young person and empowering them with the confidence and belief to make it happen.

Michelle Black, MCR Mentor and SVQ Advisor at Cordia said: “As a mentor, we have the opportunity to build up someone's skill set and confidence and the effect we can have on a person's life is priceless. At Cordia, we've incorporated MCR presentations into our annual staff

briefings where we brief staff on the Cordia Business Plan.

Our aim is to recruit around 300 Cordia staff to become mentors.”

Craig Menzies, MCR Mentor and Volunteer Manager, Glasgow Life said: “My young person has had a very tough time of it in the past year. However it always amazes me that he is so socially and emotionally aware of what is going on around him. He has really grown up in the past year and knows how his behaviour can affect other people. I've loved every minute of this experience.”

WHAT'S NEXT

Iain concluded: “We really value the council's commitment to the programme.

“We're working together to take the programme into all secondary schools by January 2018 – to allow us to help many more young people who need our support.

“We need more mentors; someone who can simply listen to and encourage a young person to develop and achieve their potential.”

More information

Could you give up just one hour a week (during school term time) to support a young person?

To find out more about the programme, view case studies from pupils and mentors, and learn about what support is available from your manager, visit [Connect](#).