

*The young person's name has been changed to preserve anonymity and is referred to as Ben throughout.*

A referral was made for Ben to have a mentor due to him experiencing anxiety, having difficulties with peer interactions, and having limited social opportunities. At the time of referral, academically Ben was significantly behind his peers and was placed in a class with a lower age group to support him in boosting his academic levels.

Prior to the initial match meeting between Ben and his mentor, Ben and I decided that it would be a good idea for him to bring some of his favourite books with him to show to his mentor, as these had been useful when I was starting to get to know him and I felt that they might help to break the ice when he was due to meet his mentor. This worked, and Ben was talkative during his match meeting with his mentor and continued to talk to her as she dropped him off home!

The relationship between Ben and his mentor has continued to develop. They now meet regularly, with Ben feeling comfortable for his mentor to pick him up from either home or school. Through their relationship, his mentor has focused on encouraging Ben to try different things such as visiting the library, going to The Bolton Museum, and trying out a boxing session at BLGC. Together, they have written a 'Top 10 Things To Do' list of things that Ben would like to try, and he has also recently said that he would like to try attending Youth Club sessions again. These are all massive steps for Ben to be taking towards building his confidence and widening his experiences, and he is able to do this through the support and security that his relationship with his mentor provides.

At a recent Education meeting, Ben's social worker gave feedback that when she saw Ben at her latest statutory visit, he was the most talkative she had ever known him to be. Ben's carer also shared that he has started to play out with other young people who live on his street; this is something he had not been confident to do before. It was identified at this meeting that the mentor was well-placed to be able to support Ben to develop his skills in holding reciprocal conversations, as well as providing him with a safe space to explore his emotions, both of which will stand him in good stead for his transition to secondary school.

Along with the feedback from those around him, it is also positive to see that Ben is able to identify that mentoring is beneficial to him; during my first catch up with him following being matched with his mentor, Ben told me *"mentoring helps me a lot and I like going out and doing nice things."*

Ben has come such a long way already, from my initial visit where he was extremely nervous and reluctant to speak to me, to now engaging well with his mentor and allowing her to take him out of his comfort zone.

The ongoing plan is for his mentor to continue to encourage to support Ben in widening his experiences by trying new things, along with continuing to have conversations about his transition to secondary school to support him with any worries he has. She will also be able to support him to acquire skills such as telling the time and practicing his reading through informal opportunities that arise during the time they spend together.