

# Report NPC Experience USW Students 2020

*An addition to Near Peer Coaches Report 2021*

## Abstract

This report was written as an addition to the Near Peer Coaches Report 2021 to explore the feedback data from the University of South Wales students who attended the Coaching and Mentoring Training and Practise ran by Elevate. The students self-selected themselves based on their own interest in taking part in the training and volunteering as a coach for high school pupils at risk of underachievement.

The USW students reported they valued the training and practise. They would appreciate slightly more time on practise and more guidance on working with a silent coachee. They felt they improved listening and conversational skills and became more aware of their current skills. They increased their understanding of working with young people and reported a few insights in terms of supporting pupils using coaching and mentoring techniques. Non-judgemental approach, attentive listening, building trusting relationships and empowerment were the main themes. These are described in the discussion section.

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## 1. Introduction

As mentioned in the Near Peer Coaches Report 2021, coaching shows to be an effective tool for increasing mental wellbeing of high school students. Students gained valuable skills which they could use both inside and outside of the school environment. They felt they could communicate better, knowing how to listen attentively and ask open questions. They felt more empowered to approach others and felt more confident offering help. Some of the students felt they could cope better with stress. They knew how to set goals and find ways to achieve them. Other students reported greater self-awareness, improved self-reflection skills and increased levels of empathy towards others. Most of the students were able to transfer their experience and gained skills into day-to-day life.

In this report, we analysed data from university students who volunteered as coaches for high school pupils. They used life coaching instead of near peer coaching as they visited the pupils externally, only for a few couple of hours a week. The outcome of this analysis is described in the discussion section below.

## 2. Method

University students attended the Coaching and Mentoring training at the University of South Wales. They were self-selected based on their interest in volunteering as a coach for high school students in a local school.

During the Coaching and Mentoring training, they first learnt about coaching in general to gain a better understanding of what does it mean to be a coach and what kind of responsibilities this role involves. They discussed this topic first amongst themselves and then with the professional coach in order to address different expectations and questions about the programme.

### 2.1 Training

The training itself included different interactive workshops based on the core elements of coaching: rapport building, listening skills, questioning skills, and building trust. In the first part of the training, the pupils learnt about five different levels of listening

(interrupting, hijacking, advising, attentive and active listening), followed by techniques about summarising, clarifying, and reflecting. They practised these skills in groups of four and reflected upon the experience together with the professional coach.

Other important skill the university students learnt about was self-awareness and self-reflection. The group had 5 minutes to reflect upon what they noticed about themselves during their practise. They learnt techniques how to effectively reflect before, during and after coaching session, based on the article of Clutterbuck and Murphy (2018).

The second part of the training included workshops based on questioning techniques and TGROW model. The students learnt about different types of questions (open, closed, leading, probing, judgemental, hypothetical, and reflective) and they practised using these questions between themselves. Then, they learnt about a specific coaching technique called GROW which gave the students a structure which would help them during their coaching sessions.

Lastly, the students received more information about the coaching process from the beginning till the end. They learnt how to explain the coaching relationship to their coachee, how to set the rules and boundaries and address different expectations. They also discussed the common issues they might encounter during their coaching practise. There was enough space for questions to make sure all participants understood the role of a coach and the use of all the different techniques they learnt.

The students practised everything throughout the whole training. By the end of the training, they had another round of reciprocal coaching sessions lasting 20 minutes each with 5 minutes of learning feedback.

## 2.2 Qualitative Measures

To gain a better understanding on how this coaching training and practise helped the trained coaches, a qualitative questionnaire was administered at the end of the coaching practise (see Appendix 1). The analysed questions are summarised below:

- „Any comments about the training and support you received? “

- „What did you find most valuable about the coaching and mentoring experience? What did you learn about yourself? “
- „How can you use the skills learned, in other areas of your work, education, career, volunteering? “
- „How has the experience helped you gain a better understanding about the young people you worked with? “
- „What did you not like about the voluntary activity? And how would you solve this? “
- „Any other comments about the experience that could help to improve it? “

### 3. Results

Thematic analysis was performed to identify the key benefits of the Coaching and Mentoring Programme for the coaches. Data were first organised and typed into one coherent document (see Appendix 1). Following this stage, the qualitative data were re-read several times according to the suggestions of Bogdan and Biklen (2007) and then grouped into basic themes and labelled with code words in ATLAS for each analysed question. Broader code groups were created and organised into three main thematic networks. The results are displayed below.

#### 3.1. Training and trainer evaluation

Figure 1 – thematic network – Training and trainer evaluation



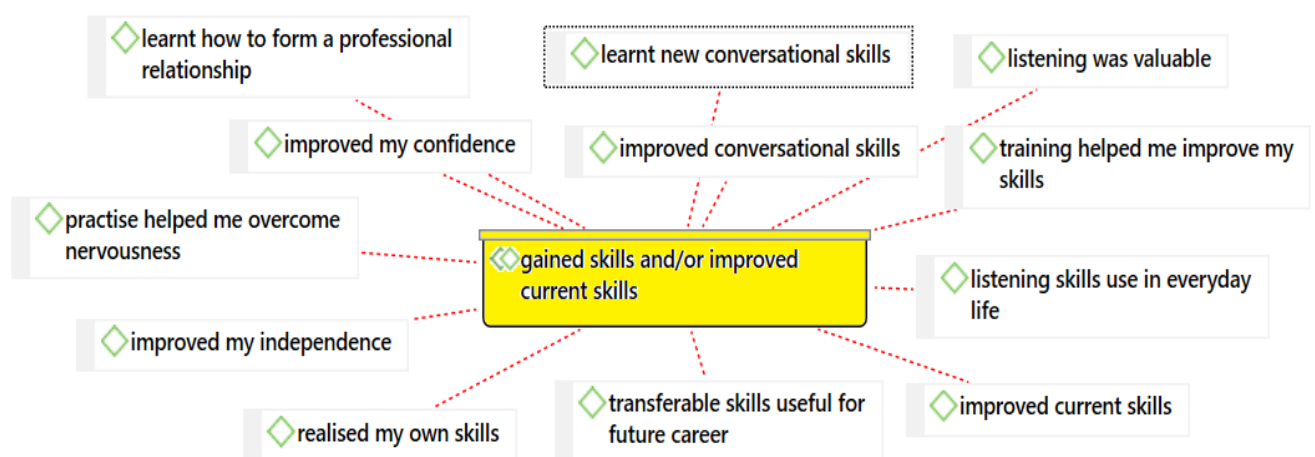
The students evaluated their experience and reported that they found the **training** to be good, useful, helpful, insightful and that they learnt a lot from it (*“The training was an incredible learning experience ...I learnt a lot ... Made me well prepared for the coaching ... The training was very helpful and insightful ... The training and support I received was excellent ... I really liked the training, it was very useful.”*).

The students also appreciated the **trainer**. They mentioned that the trainer was supportive and helpful (*“Kantz was always very helpful with advice and support ... Starting from the first day to now, our supervisor Kantz has always helped us and made himself available for any queries and assistance we may require.”*).

Coaching **practise** was also a valued part of the training (*“During the first practise coaching sessions I was a little nervous but as I kept practising and getting used to the structure, I came to really enjoy it.”*). Some students reported that they would appreciate even **more practise** during the training to practise the acquired skills (*“More guided/monitored practise would help with using the GROW model and the listening skills ... I feel as though I needed more practise in knowing how to set goals with clients when in sessions.”*). Some of them felt they needed more practise and guidance on how to work with a **silent coachee** (*“I think in training it would be best to give some advice on how to tackle first session if the coachee doesn’t speak at all or say very little.”*).

### 3.2. Gained skills and/or improved current skills

Figure 2 – thematic network – Gained skills and/or improved current skills



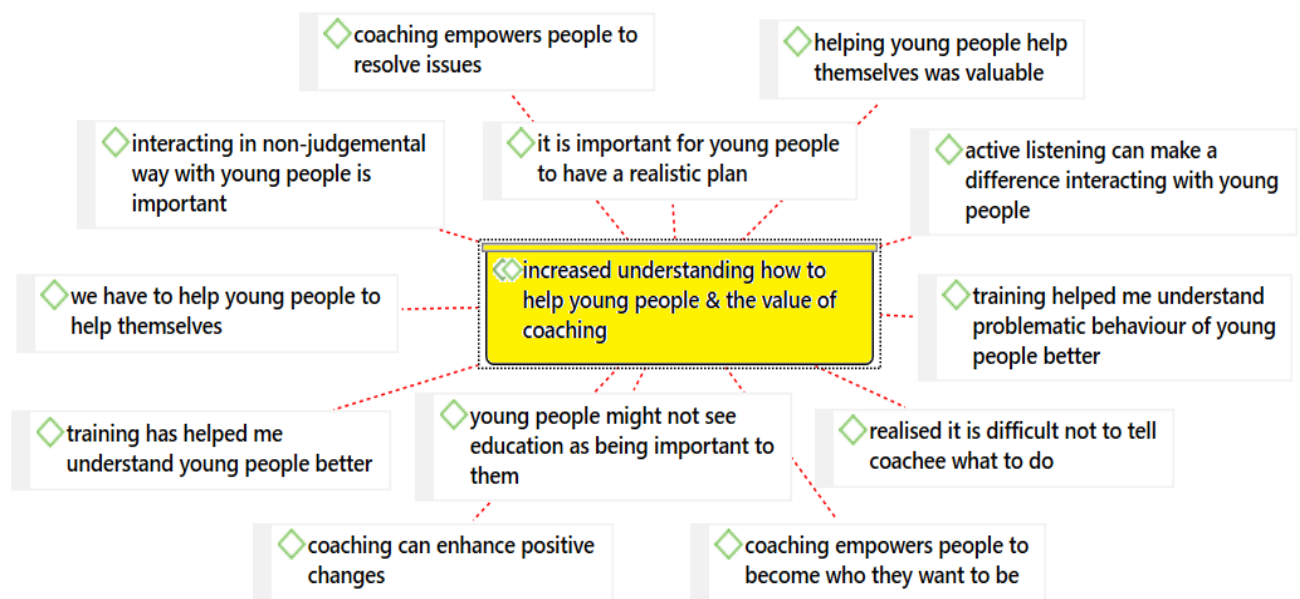
Second important theme which emerged from the data was about gained skills and/or improving current skills which the students had already acquired in the past. Many of them reported **improved confidence, listening and conversational skills** (*„Learning new conversational skills, the coaching experience has helped improve my confidence and independence as I feel though I can converse better with people ... I can use these listening skills in everyday life with an awareness to when I hijack or interrupt ... I think the most valuable thing was listening to young people and trying to help them help themselves, I learnt that I need to do more experiences like this to build my skill set.”*).

The students felt that the Coaching and Mentoring training and practise helped them **learn new skills and realise the skills they already had** (*“I was able to gain new skills as well as improving on current skills, I learnt how much I enjoyed coaching/mentoring and that these were places where I had to improve myself on and knowing what skills I already had ... I really liked the training; it was very useful, and I learnt a lot of new skills in training ... It helped me improve my skills.”*).

Most of the students also reported they appreciated the **skills** they learnt to be **transferable**, they felt they could use them in their future careers and day-to-day life (*“The coaching experience is really a step ahead for me in terms of career ...I can use these skills in my future career ... I have recently been offered a job as a mental health support worker. I feel the skills I have learnt with Elevate will be very valuable because it will help me allow the people, I will be supporting make their own decisions for themselves. I have also applied the skills I have learnt whilst carrying out interviews for psychological experiments and found the skills very transferable. These skills will also be helpful when talking with colleagues, friends, and family.”*).

### 3.3. Increased understanding how to help young people & the value of coaching

Figure 3 – thematic network – Increased understanding how to help young people & the value of coaching



Third theme included an increased awareness and understanding of how to help and work with young people effectively. The students learnt about the challenges specific to working with young people and gained insights into what coaching and mentoring techniques could bring to overcome these challenges:

- **Interacting in non-judgemental way with young people is important**

*(„It helped me understand that young people aren’t seen to be much different to ourselves and that putting our hearts to listen to them can make a difference for the young person, sometimes all they needed was someone to talk to them in a non/judgemental way.”)*

- **We should help young people to help themselves**

*(“The experience helped me to understand that not always does a child have IQ problems or being a troublesome in class/home making at risk at educational underachievement/disengagement. There is always a story behind every students going through this problem. We just have to help to help themselves motivate that they have the skills, support and courage to fulfil it.”)*

- **Coaching and mentoring empowers young people**

*(“Being able to coach in real life was a great experience as it has allowed me to see that people have the power to resolve the issues they want to resolve and become who they want to be with awareness and encouragement ... The experience has made me realised that with the right engagement of young people such as coaching/mentoring like this, they become*



*motivated about their strength and enhance a lot of positive changes for themselves for the better ... This experience has allowed me to see that young people who are at risk of underachievement/disengagement have the potential to do well and get what they want in life if they remove barriers. For example, beliefs that don't serve them, low confidence, and anger issues. I feel that every young person should have the experience of having one-to-one coaching because it is so valuable to have someone help you to organise your life in a way that serves you. Young people are not given much autonomy and decisions and I feel this can hold them back when they transition into a young adult where suddenly they are given lots of choices and freedom. Because of this it's important for them to have a realistic plan that helps them get what they want")*

- **Active listening can make a difference interacting with young people**

*("I found that a lot of the time the children I worked with just wanted to talk and be properly listened to, it also seemed as if they did not see education as being important for them ... There is always a story behind every students going through this problem ... Sometimes it is difficult not to come out as telling the coachee what to do ... I think the most valuable thing was listening to young people and trying to help them help themselves")*

## 4. Discussion

As addition to the Near Peer Coaches Report 2021, this report explored the feedback data from USW university students who attended the Coaching and Mentoring Training and Practise programme organised by Elevate. Three main themes emerged from the data.

First theme was about evaluating the trainer, training and coaching practise itself. Students found the training useful, they learnt a lot from the training and valued the advice and support from the trainer. They also appreciated the coaching practise a lot, mentioning they would increase the amount of practise time and get some more guidance on how to work with a silent coachee.

In the second theme, the students highlighted the skills they have acquired, improved or realised within themselves. Many of them became more aware of the skills they already had and were able to improve them. These skills were especially listening and conversational skills. Through practise and new techniques, the students reported not only improved skills, but more importantly, improved levels of confidence and independence. They found the skills to be transferable and felt they could use them in their day-to-day life and also in their future career.

The last but very important theme included insights and increased understanding and awareness of working with young people. The students identified some important strategies they felt were important to effectively support young people:

### 1) Importance of interacting with young people in a non-judgemental way

Realising that using non-judgemental approach can make a big difference in creating trusting relationships with young people was one of the main insights the USW students pointed out. According to the research from Debognies, Schailleé, Haudenhuyse and Theeboom (2019), non-judgemental approach is one of the fundamental themes in building relationships that hold the potential to instigate personal development for young people in disadvantaged situations.

In a literature search made by Goicolea et al. (2018), they identified ten conditions, from the perspective of young people, which make youth mental health services more accessible; non-judgemental approach was one of them, along with, for example, respect,

privacy, trust, easiness to contact, collaboration with schools, etc. Research by Spencer, Gowdy, Drew and Rhodes (2019) support this by saying that having mentors being non-judgmental, trustworthy, and dedicated appeared to facilitate positive relationship development.

2) Importance of helping young people find the skills and motivation to help themselves

Another insight reported by USW students was about the importance of helping young people to help themselves, not sorting things out for them but rather helping them to find the skills and ways to resolve issues independently. Research by Sandu (2021) states that relationships of young people with professional helpers have the potential to help them face multiple disadvantages. Thematic analysis of semi-structured interviews revealed that relationships helped young people feel more positive about themselves, disrupted their maladaptive patterns of thinking and fostered a sense of agency in themselves.

Lynch, Moorhead, Long and Hawthorne-Steele (2021) adds that young people might be often reluctant seeking help due to multiple factors and therefore researchers, practitioners and policy makers should prioritize the role of helping relationships in the provision of meaningful mental health care for young people.

3) Active listening can make a difference, there is always a story behind every student going through a problem

Third insight highlighted the role of active listening. The students felt that it is important to listen actively to what the pupils have to say. They felt that there is a story behind every pupil's problem and that active listening enabled the young person to share more. Kawamichi et al. (2015) in their research on the impact of perceiving active listening found that active listening appears to activate the reward system in the brain and causes positive emotional reappraisal processes. In other words, when young pupils are actively listened to by someone else, they are more likely to experience positive emotions and feel better and therefore they might feel more motivation in terms of sharing their stories and finding hope and solutions to their problems.

Billington (2018) considered views of three teenage males on the topic of missing education in a narrative inquiry methodology and states that we should move away from the current systems of preconceived ideas about how best support pupils and instead, work to facilitate opportunities for the development of rapport between pupils and key adults; empower pupils to communicate their views effectively and to contribute within joint problem-solving processes.

#### 4) Coaching and mentoring empowers young people

The last insight which the USW students shared in their feedback was about coaching and mentoring techniques having the impact of empowering young people to become motivated in trying to resolve their problems. One of the students said: *„The experience has made me realise that with the right engagement of young people such as coaching/mentoring like this, they become motivated about their strength and enhance a lot of positive changes for themselves for the better “.*

Novosadova (p. 160, 2015) in her research on empowering young people through non-formal learning activities states: *„The added value of coaching in the context of non-formal learning and youth work is linked to building up young people’s self-confidence, their ability to work effectively in a team and their sense of responsibility. According to the Youth in Action programme guide, coaching is about partnering with young people in a thought-provoking and creative process that inspires them to maximise their personal potential. Coaching honours young people as the experts and believes that every young person is creative, resourceful and whole. A coach should discover, clarify and align with what young people want to achieve, encourage young people’s self-discovery, elicit young people-generated solutions and strategies and hold young people responsible and accountable. Coaching has been used to support young people in the EU youth programmes, demonstrating that coaching and non-formal learning can support young people in many different ways.“*

## 5. Conclusion

To conclude, USW university students valued the Coaching and Mentoring training and practise programme organised by Elevate. They acquired and/or improved listening and conversational skills. Students felt more confident and independent working with young people and became more aware of their own skills set. They reported that coaching had the power to empower young people to enhance positive changes for themselves. Important aspects of this process were attentive listening and non-judgemental approach which students highlighted the most. According to the research, attentive listening and non-judgemental approach have the potential to help young people to build functional and trusting relationships which maximise personal potential and instigate personal development in disadvantaged situations (Debognies, Schailleé, Haudenhuyse & Theeboom, 2019; Novosadova, 2015; Kawamichi et al., 2015).

More research is needed in terms of mapping out the specific aspects of coaching and mentoring process which are needed to empower young people to enhance positive changes for themselves.

## 6. References

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## 7. Appendix 1 – Qualitative data - NPC Experience USW Students 2020

### **Any comments about the training and support you received?**

- The training was very helpful and insightful, I had learnt a lot from it and it helped me improve my skills
- Starting from the first day to now, our supervisor Kantz has always helped us and made himself available for any queries and assistance we may require, the training was an incredible learning experience
- More guided/monitored practise would help with using the GROW model and the listening skills
- Made me well prepared for the coaching
- The training and support I received was excellent, Kantz was always very helpful with advice, and support
- I really liked the training; it was very useful, and I learnt a lot of new skills in training

### **What did you find most valuable about the coaching and mentoring experience? What did you learn about yourself?**

- I was able to gain new skills as well as improving on current skills, I learnt how much I enjoyed coaching/mentoring and that these were places where I had to improve myself on and knowing what skills I already had
- I learned how to form a professional relationship with pupils, in addition to the elements and principles of coaching
- Learning new conversational skills, the coaching experience has helped improve my confidence and independence as I feel though I can converse better with people
- Sometimes it is difficult not to come out as telling the coachee what to do, especially when they give the impression that they have tried all the best that they could possibly think of doing to help their situation
- I found the training very valuable, during the first practise coaching sessions I was a little nervous but as I kept practising and getting used to the structure, I came to really enjoy it, also being able to coach in real life was a great experience as it has allowed me to see that people have the power to resolve the issues they want to resolve and become who they want to be with awareness and encouragement
- I think the most valuable thing was listening to young people and trying to help them help themselves, I learnt that I need to do more experiences like this to build my skill set

### **How can you use the skills learned, in other areas of your work, education, career, volunteering?**

- I can use the skills in other volunteering and my career

- As a psychology student who plans to pursue a career in psychotherapy this experience will help me to understand the client's problems and overcome it; these skills will also help me in any future placements I take
- I can use these listening skills in everyday life with an awareness to when I hijack or interrupt; also, I never wanted to work with children but since this placement it is now an option I will consider for a future career
- The coaching experience is really a step ahead for me in terms of career, now I have added the skill of youth coaching or mentorship to my CV which is well desirable for any philanthropic engagement on young people or job that I would want to improve myself in
- I have recently been offered a job as a mental health support worker. I feel the skills I have learnt with Elevate will be very valuable because it will help me allow the people, I will be supporting make their own decisions for themselves. I have also applied the skills I have learnt whilst carrying out interviews for psychological experiments and found the skills very transferable. These skills will also be helpful when talking with colleagues, friends, and family.
- I can use these skills in my future career, I want to become an Educational Psychologist and this experience would be very beneficial to mention in the personal statement

**How has the experience helped you gain a better understanding about the young people you worked with?**

- It helped me understand that young people aren't seen to be much different to ourselves and that putting our hearts to listen to them can make a difference for the young person, sometimes all they needed was someone to talk to them in a non/judgemental way
- The experience helped me to understand that not always does a child have IQ problems or being a troublesome in class/home making at risk at educational underachievement/disengagement. There is always a story behind every students going through this problem. We just have to help to help themselves motivate that they have the skills, support and courage to fulfil it.
- I found that a lot of the time the children I worked with just wanted to talk and be properly listened to, it also seemed as if they did not see education as being important for them
- The experience has made me realised that with the right engagement of young people such as coaching/mentoring like this, they become motivated about their strength and enhance a lot of positive changes for themselves for the better
- This experience has allowed me to see that young people who are at risk of underachievement/disengagement have the potential to do well and get what they want in life if they remove barriers. For example, beliefs that don't serve them, low confidence, and anger issues. I feel that every young person should have the experience of having one-to-one coaching because it is so valuable to have someone help you to organise your life in a way that serves you. Young people are not given



much autonomy and decisions and I feel this can hold them back when they transition into a young adult where suddenly they are given lots of choices and freedom.

Because of this it's important for them to have a realistic plan that helps them get what they want. Otherwise, they will just float through life helping someone

- I think it did. I was very afraid to work with young people but after this experience I am confident that I will be able to work with young people in the future

**What did you not like about the voluntary activity? And how would you solve this?**

- I liked everything
- I feel as though I needed more practise in knowing how to set goals with clients when in sessions
- In all I think the activity was worthwhile and I would encourage anyone who would like to engage in such volunteer work to do so
- I think in training it would be best to give some advice on how to tackle first session if the coachee doesn't speak at all or say very little

**Any other comments about the experience that could help to improve it?**

- More of such volunteer work should be encouraged and more schools should be involved to help wider number of young people
- The training was very good however all of us were adults and we talked to each other in practise sessions – the students talked much less in my first session, and I found it very hard to make them talk