

MCR PATHWAYS SECONDARY SCHOOL PILOT – SESSION 2023-24

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report sets out the rationale for and planning relating to a pilot of the MCR Pathways Programme in three Argyll and Bute secondary schools in school session 2023-24.
- 1.2 The report also outlines key aspects of finance, governance, partnership working and data sharing associated with the pilot of the programme.
- 1.3 The report, further, describes the anticipated benefits of the programme for young people, Argyll and Bute Council and Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities within the council.
- 1.4 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
1. Endorse the engagement and planning between MCR Pathways and Argyll and Bute Council Education Service to establish the vision and implementation plan for the MCR Pathways Programme.
 2. Note both the potential input to the programme of members of the Argyll and Bute community, and the anticipated positive outcomes for young people, the council and the wider Argyll and Bute community.

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2.0 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Founded in 2007, MCR Pathways is a third-sector, national mentoring programme for young people, engaged with 19 separate local authorities.
- 2.2 The charity was established to support young people who have experienced disadvantage – particularly those young people who are care-experienced – and, through mentoring, help them to reach their full potential during their time in education and beyond, through school-based mentoring.
- 2.3 MCR Pathways' vision is that every care-experienced young person, or those who have experienced disadvantage, has equity of access and opportunity in educational outcomes, career development and life chances.
- 2.4 Evaluation of the impact of the MCR Pathways programme in other local authorities has demonstrated its substantially positive influence on the pathways and life chances of vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.
- 2.5 The Education Service in Argyll and Bute is planning the introduction of the MCR Pathways mentoring programme in the local authority, initially as a one-year pilot in three secondary schools – Oban High School, Hermitage Academy and Dunoon Grammar School.

3.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 3.1 It is recommended that the Community Services Committee:
- (a) Endorse the engagement and planning between MCR Pathways and Argyll and Bute Council Education Service to establish the vision and implementation plan for the MCR Pathways Programme.

- (b) Note both the potential input to the programme of members of Argyll and Bute community, and the anticipated positive outcomes for young people, the Council and the wider Argyll and Bute community.

4.0 DETAIL

Rationale and Methodology

- 4.1 The MCR Pathways programme involves close partnership between MCR Pathways, Education, the local community and young people and their families.
- 4.2 From S3 onwards, every young person identified for the programme is partnered with an adult mentor who has the specific profile best matched to that young person's needs. The mentor-young person relationship builds understanding and trust through weekly meetings of around an hour, with the aim of developing young people's confidence, motivation, commitment and resilience.
- 4.3 Mentors seek to use their life experiences, contacts and interpersonal skills to support and inspire young people in realising their skills and potential, and in moving successfully into their positive destination of choice.
- 4.4 "Taster Sessions" will also be provided for young people in the mentoring programme, allowing them to spend time in workplace or further/higher education settings related to their aspirations and interests, thus supporting young people in preparing for entry into a positive destination post-school.
- 4.5 For pupils in S1 and S2 who are identified as likely to benefit from a mentor post-S3, a programme of group work is run by MCR Pathways in schools, focusing on the development of the attributes and capacities mentioned above, and preparing them to extract maximum benefit from mentoring.
- 4.6 MCR Pathways also work with vulnerable and disadvantaged children in primary schools, contributing to the Enhanced Transition into secondary education which such young people require.

Key Individuals, Recruitment and Funding

- 4.7 MCR Mentors are adult volunteers who can come from any area of the community and any walk of life. Mentors are recruited by MCR Pathways, who would also appoint a Programme Manager and Mentor Services Co-ordinator for Argyll and Bute to lead on the recruitment, coordination and allocation of mentors.
- 4.8 Mentors will be recruited from within the council, in all service areas and at all levels, as well as across all other council partners, areas of employment and sections of society within Argyll and Bute. Each mentor is allocated to each young person through careful consideration of the characteristics and situation of both parties.

- 4.9 The local authority has responsibility for the recruitment of the School Pathways Co-ordinator role within the MCR Pathways framework. Such an appointment is required in each participating school. The School Co-ordinator works directly with young people and mentors, ensuring the framework of meetings between young people and mentors is functioning and that relationships are developing appropriately. The School Co-ordinator also facilitates and leads “Taster Sessions”, the S1 and S2 group work and primary-secondary transition aspects of the MCR Pathways programme.
- 4.10 As well as fulfilling the above roles, the School Co-ordinator also becomes an integral and trusted contributor to the progress and development of young people within the programme in their specific school.
- 4.11 The annual cost to the local authority for each Pathways Co-ordinator, including on-costs, is around £34,000. Schools are being asked to contribute to the funding through their Pupil Equity Funding. A request has been made to earmark council funds to supplement schools’ contributions in order to ensure the viability of the project.
- 4.12 It is anticipated that recruitment of the three MCR Pathways Co-ordinators required for the pilot will be completed by the summer break.

Partnership, Data Sharing and Governance

- 4.13 A Partnership Agreement between MCR Pathways and Argyll and Bute Council will set out leadership and development responsibilities, the undertakings expected by both MCR Pathways and the Council, and the framework for commencing the programme and achieving key milestones.
- 4.14 A Data Sharing Agreement will also inform the council-MCR partnership, detailing the key information systems and data to which MCR Pathways will require access.
- 4.15 MCR Pathways operates on the expectation that, after a three year period of operation within an authority, the MCR Pathways model will become a core funded and internally governed programme within the local authority.

Benefits and Positive Outcomes from the MCR Pathways Programme

Young People

- 4.16 The MCR Pathways programme will support our most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people to understand and develop their talent and capacities, and therefore their confidence and resilience, through their relationships and interactions with trained, committed mentors and a range of personalised taster experiences. Such benefits will also extend to S1 and S2 pupils through group work activities, and to pupils in primary schools, through enhanced transition work.

- 4.17 It is anticipated the programme will lead to measurable increases in participating young people's engagement with education, in their emotional wellbeing and in their attainment and achievement, leading to sustained, positive destinations post-school.

Mentors

- 4.18 MCR Pathways can evidence the positive impact of mentoring a young person on participating adults. Mentoring has been shown to increase the morale of participants, is felt by participants to be a valuable way of engaging positively and making a difference to their community, and contributes significantly to personal development.

Argyll and Bute Council

- 4.19 Through engagement and partnership in the MCR Pathways programme, the council will be increasing the capacities, skills and life chances of its most vulnerable young citizens, supporting them to be positive and valuable contributors to Argyll and Bute's and Scotland's society and economy.
- 4.20 Recruitment as mentors will impact positively on the morale, emotional wellbeing and personal development of council staff, and those working for other local employers whose services are central to the life and community of Argyll and Bute.
- 4.21 Increasing the level and impact of volunteering in the community is a key objective and performance indicator in national and local Community Learning and Development Planning. Partnership with MCR Pathways offers a relevant, coherent and productive means of meeting that objective and demonstrating the positive impact volunteering has in our communities.

Corporate Parenting Duties and Responsibilities

- 4.22 The MCR Pathways initiative brings a further partner to our Corporate Parenting duties and responsibilities. Recruitment of mentors can extend into our Corporate Parenting partner agencies, and such mentors, and their Co-ordinators in each school, will contribute greatly to our understanding of, and actions to ensure, bespoke, multi-agency planning around each vulnerable young person.

5.0 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 The MCR Pathways programme will provide a further coherent and proven means of improving the life chances of our most vulnerable and disadvantaged young people.
- 5.2 The programme will also encourage and facilitate positive engagement and participation of the community in furthering social justice in Argyll and Bute.
- 5.3 The Education Service will work with MCR Pathways to plan, implement and embed the programme in the three pilot schools and their communities, and will closely monitor the impact of the programme in terms of positive outcomes and

benefits for our young people and our communities. Decisions can then be made on the possible expansion of the programme to other secondary schools.

6.0 IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 Policy – This report links directly to Outcome 3 in the Argyll and Bute Single Outcome Agreement (Education Skills and Training Maximises Opportunities for All).
- 6.2 Financial – Argyll and Bute Council funding will supplement schools' own funding contribution to the MCR Pathways programme.
- 6.3 Legal – None
- 6.4 HR – None
- 6.5 Fairer Scotland Duty:
 - 6.5.1 Equalities - protected characteristics – All work relating to the MCR Pathways Programme seeks to address inequity young people's access to education, employment and training. The programme explicitly targets young people whose protected characteristics constitute barriers to their fulfilling of their potential.
 - 6.5.2 Socio-economic Duty – The work of MCR Pathways actively seeks to develop skills for life and work in young people to create a fulfilled and appropriately skilled workforce to contribute to the society and economy of Argyll and Bute and the wider nation.
 - 6.5.3 Islands – None
- 6.6. Climate Change – None
- 6.7 Risk – Failure to support young people into positive destinations will impact on the life chances of young people across the Local Authority area and may result in outward migration of young people. A reduction in the number of young people securing positive destinations post-school risks reputational damage to the local authority, and detracts from its appeal as a place to live and work.
- 6.8 Customer Service – None

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