

MENTORING NEWS SUMMER 2011

- *School's Out for Summer...*
- *Girls' Friendships*
- *Fight for Funding*
- *On the Run!*
- *Facebook Dangers*
- *Police Act on Cyber Bullying*
- *Diary Dates*

SCHOOL'S OUT FOR SUMMER...

It is hard to believe that the school year is over and, for GCSE pupils, it ended nervously some time ago and the nerves will no doubt return with the impending results.

Here at *My Voice London*, it is one of our favourite times of year. No, not because we get to enjoy to our summer break (which, admittedly, we are!) but because it is the time when we get the feedback about all the fantastic work our mentors have been doing over the past year.

Teachers and pupils let us know what progress has been made.

Although we all know mentoring *works*, it still is very heart warming to read comments from young people like these:

- "I have become more independent and confident in myself"
- "I like the fact that I can let all my insecurity and fear out"
- "Haven't lost my temper as much and stayed more calm"
- "I have learnt to be more respectful to teachers and my parents"

That is just a small sample. Mentoring makes such a difference to people's lives. Thanks to all the hard work you have been doing, week after week; we are now seeing the results. A huge 'thank you' goes to everyone, including



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those who are waiting patiently in the wings to be matched. We hope you all have a relaxing summer - you deserve it.

During the summer, the *My Voice London* team are still working, albeit with a skeleton staff. So if you need to get in touch with the mentoring team, email is the best route because these are checked daily.

GIRLS' FRIENDSHIPS

Many teachers are sadly unaware of how the precariousness of young girls' friendships can have a negative effect on their progress at school.

That is the conclusion of a study by Professor Rosalyn George, professor of education and director of the Centre for Identities and Social Justice at Goldsmiths College, London.

According to *The Guardian* newspaper, Prof. George discovered that manipulative girls are not only capable of making other girls' lives a misery, but can dupe teachers as well.

The leaders of friendship groups can be bright, socially skilled and charismatic. Teachers want to share these girls' popularity and they acclaim their

excellent work to the Head and do not see that the leader may be marginalizing her peers and that the teacher may be reinforcing that.

"I found that some schools are more concerned with girls understanding the layout of the school than with social arrangements," says Prof. George. "Teachers need to be aware that, if girls are unhappy, this can stop them learning."

The fact is that girls' lives are dominated by friendships, so teaching them to negotiate them can make all the difference. As mentors, understanding the dynamics of friendship groups among girls can help us support mentees during what can be a very challenging period.

If you need more information on this, please contact a member of the mentoring team.

FIGHT FOR FUNDING

As we all know only too well, the current economic climate threatens



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sources of funding for many charities, including our own.

We are, however, very happy to report that our fundraising efforts to date are bringing in results. My Voice London has been identified by London Charities as a good example of how a small organisation under threat can turn its fortunes around with the right strategies, hard work and a committed team.

We are delighted that funding from the community has already reached over £4,000, and 25% of that was from one primary school alone! The pupils at Holy Trinity Primary School have raised a phenomenal amount of over £1,000 for us. It is so encouraging to know that children are putting so much effort in to supporting other children.

As wonderful as this is though, we cannot afford to rest on our laurels. We do need to continue raising funds in order to sustain this vital work in the years to come. With cuts in public sector funding we need to ensure that there are a range of alternative sources of income in order for us to continue providing support for the most vulnerable children in south London.

There are many fundraising ideas on our website, like coffee mornings, bake sales, sponsored silences, so if you, or any of your family or friends would like to get involved in fundraising for My Voice London just visit the site for inspiration. You may also have other ideas for fundraising events and activities. We would love to hear from you. Everything helps!

ON THE RUN!

If you are keen to help, and are female, (sorry to exclude you on this occasion gentlemen!) we would like to invite you to join us in running the Adidas Women's 5K challenge taking place on Sunday 11th September in Hyde Park. It is quite acceptable to *walk* around the course, (as we anticipate doing!) and it promises to be a fun day out. If you are interested, please contact Victoria on 020 8545 2131 or email victoria@myvoicelondon.org.uk. More information can also be found at www.womenschallenge.co.uk/home

FACEBOOK DANGERS

The use of social networking sites continues to increase hugely and, with the fast-growing number of young people having photo or video phones, many seem oblivious to the dangers to which they could be exposing themselves.

Increasing numbers of girls have been persuaded by their boyfriends to share sexually provocative photographs, only to discover when the relationship breaks down (or even before then) that the photos have been circulated humiliatingly to a much wider audience, often the whole school.

It is important that young people understand that, even if they are comfortable with the person receiving the image, they never know for sure where else it might end up. Digital images are very easy to copy and forward. Even if a young person trusts their friend, an image can be accidentally forwarded or seen by others with access to the friend's phone.

It is not unusual for such images to find their way to other people's mobiles and even web pages, where they can be seen

by anyone, copied, searched for and redistributed, perhaps forever.

There are other legal risks. Creating, transmitting and even possessing an explicit image of a minor can be considered child pornography.

POLICE ACT ON CYBER BULLYING

Further, these images can be used as another form of cyber bullying.

The police are so concerned about cyber bullying that, in Thames Valley, they are working with schools to combat the threat by informing the perpetrators of the potential consequences. The scheme, involves the police investigating the claims of cyber bullying, reported by schools or parents, then sending a message out on *Facebook* if the content is believed to be inappropriate. The bully's parents will also get a letter from the police.

The police hope that, by sending a warning, students will be made aware that they could be



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prosecuted if the bullying does not cease.

Meanwhile, ConnectSafely.org has come up with a number of tips for young people: *"Do not respond, do not retaliate. Talk to a trusted adult and save the evidence. Be a friend, not a bystander. Do not forward mean messages and let bullies know their actions are not cool."*

TALK TO US

Remember, if you would like further information on any aspect of mentoring please call us. If you feel you are not making progress or would just like to have a chat or get some fresh ideas, **we are all here to help - anytime**.

We have also put together some useful packs covering different issues you may encounter, so please just ask. We can also always suggest some strategies to get mentees more involved.

In the meanwhile, thanks again for all your hard work over the past year.

We know you are making a real and positive difference to the lives of young people.

On behalf of My Voice London and all of these young people, thank you. ☺

DIARY DATES

Term starts:

Monday 5th September 2011

Network meetings for the next academic year (subject to change):

Wednesday 19th October 2011

Thursday 8th December 2011

Wednesday 8th February 2012

Thursday 22nd March 2012

Wednesday 30th May 2012

Thursday 12th July 2012