



Equalities Committee

7 April 2016

**Report from Mildred Phillips
HR Director**

**Report Title: Progress report on the Let's Talk Collaborative
Mentoring programme**

1.0 Summary

The Let's Talk Collaborative Mentoring programme was approved by CMT in December 2015 and launched in January 2016. It aims to promote and facilitate regular dialogue between senior managers and staff as a means of empowering junior staff members, fostering good cross-organisational working relationships, developing a greater understanding of diversity from differing perspectives and improving the sense of belonging to One Council.

2.0 Recommendations

The Equalities Committee is asked to note the first quarterly progress update and staff feedback on the programme.

3.0 Detail

- 3.1** As of 24 March 2016, 49 staff members participated in one or more of the following initiatives: shadowing the Chief Executive or a Senior Manager, hosting back to floor days, attending a reverse mentoring circle with the Chief Executive. Some staff members took part in all of the above listed activities.
- 3.2** The representation across the different departments was fairly even, although the Resources department was slightly over-represented compared to the rest of the departments, partly because some of the staff members participated in more than one of the above activities. Staff from Brent Housing Partnership and The Living Room also took part in some of the Let's Talk initiatives.
- 3.3** In terms of the grade profile of participants, 19 (39 per cent) were between PO1 and PO4, 15 (31 per cent) were below PO1, 13 (27 per cent) were between PO5 and PO8 and the remaining two were at Hay 4 and 5, respectively.
- 3.4** 32 out of the 49 employees (65 per cent) who took part in the Let's Talk Collaborative Mentoring programme were women, which is reflective of the gender profile of the workforce.
- 3.5** Of those who have declared their ethnicity profile (39 participants), 28 staff (72 per cent) were from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Groups (BAME excluding the White - Other category). Overall, BAME staff were much more likely to take part in two or more of the Let's Talk initiatives compared to the rest of the participants.

- 3.6** In total 15 participants (31 per cent) completed our feedback form available in **Appendix 1**.
- 3.7** The detailed feedback is available in **Appendix 2**. Overall, respondents' feedback was very positive, with few of them making some useful suggestions on how we could further improve the Let's Talk activities. All respondents stated that they would register for other initiatives in the Let's Talk Collaborative Mentoring programme (Q 4) and that they would recommend the programme to their colleagues (Q 5).
- 3.8** Senior Managers involved in the programme were also encouraged to share their feedback on the Let's Talk activities. Their feedback is available in **Appendix 3**.
- 4.0** The Equality team will continue to provide Equalities Committee with quarterly updates on the Let's Talk Collaborative Mentoring programme.

Contact Officers:

Mildred Phillips, HR Director

Andreyana Ivanova, Head of Equality

Appendix 1: Collaborative Mentoring Programme evaluation form

Collaborative Mentoring Programme evaluation form



Thank you for participating in the Collaborative Mentoring Programme. To help us to further improve and develop the programme, we would really appreciate your feedback.

Name of participant (optional):

Department:

Service:

I am: Officer / Manager / Agency worker (* please delete as appropriate)

Activity: Shadowing / Back to floor day / Reverse mentoring circle (* please delete as appropriate)

Name of the senior manager involved:

Date / month when activity took place:

1. What did you learn from the session and how will you make use of this learning?

2. What did you enjoy most about the session and what did you least enjoy?

3. Do you have any other comments or suggestions for improvement?

4. Will you register for other initiatives in the programme? Yes / No (* please delete as appropriate)

5. Will you recommend the programme to your colleagues? Yes / No (* please delete as appropriate)

You can also complete the evaluation form [online](#) if you prefer.

Thank you for taking time to complete this form. Your feedback is much appreciated!

Please email your completed form to letstalk@brent.gov.uk or post it to **Andreyana Ivanova, Brent Civic Centre, 8th floor.**

Appendix 2: Feedback from staff members

Collaborative Mentoring Programme evaluation form



Summary of staff feedback

1. What did you learn from the session and how will you make use of this learning?

Reverse mentoring circle with the Chief Executive

The session was a great opportunity to discuss issues affecting staff and hear different perspectives. The points that resonated with me the most were making your own luck and that if we want change we have to be the change. I will make use of this learning by applying for more opportunities offered by the council.

I found it very helpful to be in a room with likeminded people. I have already made changes in my department such as people being encouraged to chair team meetings.

I learnt that some services are not aware of our events and support programmes. Going forward I will circulate relevant information directly to my new networking contacts I have made in these services.

Shadowing experience (CE and Senior Managers)

It was great to hear that the CE and all strategic directors share the same view as those of us that really want to encourage change and play a huge part in improving the services that we provide to our customers.

It has been extremely interesting and very inspirational to observe XX's leadership and management style and how she adjusts to situations / individuals. I learned about the importance of senior member of staff showing visible support for staff initiatives and working together with Operational Directors and external partners. I will apply this learning as part of my development on the graduate scheme.

I learnt what the strategic director does and their path before being appointed as strategic director. I also learnt what the different services in this directorate do. I will use this experience to improve my performance as I am more aware of the needs of clients and service users.

I learnt about different parts of the Council that I normally don't have much involvement with. It was interesting to understand the role of the Chief Executive, what responsibilities she has and what meetings she attends. It made me appreciate how much happens in the Council too.

I learnt about how it is useful to have a pre-meeting with other key stakeholders for important meetings. Mainly as a chance to coordinate and synthesise information beforehand so the meeting runs smoothly and the Chair can draw the maximum from the meeting itself. I also learnt how important it is to be aware of the timings and not let the agenda get out of control so that the meeting drastically overruns. I also recognised the fine balance between allowing participants to have extended says on agenda items and needing to move the agenda swiftly and appropriately to cover all of the items.

I was able to understand the vast brief of a chief executive and her corporate management team.

I learnt that the council isn't diverse at the top end of the scale.

2. What did you enjoy most about the session and what did you least enjoy?

Reverse mentoring circle with the Chief Executive

Most enjoyed

The opportunity to be allowed to have the freedom to make suggestions and that Carolyn actually listened to us. I really appreciated the fact that it wasn't structured with themes as this meant there was no restriction.

Appreciation of Carolyn's time and feeling comfortable to speak to the Chief Executive.

I enjoyed the opportunity to speak with the chief exec and hear different perspectives from staff.

Carolyn's knowledge of what is happening around the WHOLE council.

I enjoyed the group discussions and hearing the views of other employees.

Least enjoyed

It would be better if there were more staff members from different departments.

The session was at one point hijacked by staff from one of the departments.

Can't see the organisation's culture changing a lot from sessions like this.

Shadowing experience (CE and Senior Managers)

I enjoyed the whole day.

Thoroughly enjoyed the meeting I observed and learned a lot through observation and reflection.

I enjoyed being trusted with confidential issues and access to reports.

I enjoyed most my 1:1 conversation with XX.

I was impressed by the knowledge of the participants.

I enjoyed getting some background insight about the session from XX and it's importance and having a de-brief afterwards. This was useful to inform my learning when observing the meeting. There were perhaps times when the content of the meeting went over my head in terms of understanding, but I understand that this is inevitable when shadowing a different department to my own.

I enjoyed being able to see and hear how decisions are made, issues that we are facing that are not information known to staff on my level. I least enjoyed no tea or biscuits for nearly a three hour meeting, but addressed this with XX.

I enjoyed being able to interact with Carolyn and hear her candid perspective on things in the Council.

Least enjoyed

I felt a little intimidated to speak openly in front of certain senior managers.

I learnt that there is a lot of work based on dealing with ASB/ nuisance in the borough. However, there was no direct application to my job function.

3. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

Reverse mentoring with the Chief Executive

Thank you for a very positive meeting, allowing staff to feel comfortable to speak out with their concerns and suggestions. I am hoping this will be the start of us all working towards empowering staff and putting heads together with ideas for dealing with situation we face in Brent.

It would be great if future sessions have themes/ topics. It would make it easier to focus on specific solutions rather than generic ideas.

Have a theme OR a statement that is challenging and get feedback from the group.

Possible themes:

- How to empower staff to do better?
- How to change people's thinking and encourage individuals to see things from a different perspective?

Use post it notes to identify three things that work well and not so well and what could be done to improve them.

Use a flip chart to record points and avoid repetition.

Focus on solutions and next steps.

Shadowing experience (CE and Senior Managers)

This was a great opportunity and I'm very grateful that Carolyn participated in this, considering her busy schedule.

I wish we had a short conversation at the end of my shadowing to debrief on the experience

Perhaps if you could expand it to being a full day of shadowing to get a flavour for the different facets of a Strategic Director's role?

General comments

It is a brilliant scheme and I hope that the scheme will continue to exist.

Sometimes decisions are made from the top, with not much knowledge of how the work is really done, maybe meetings with a small group of staff to understand how we work, may give CMT a better understanding as to how to make changes to sections.

I think that Carolyn is a warm and approachable senior manager which means that she will be open to comments and ideas from a range of people at different levels.

4. Will you register for other initiatives in the programme?

All participants answered **Yes**.

5. Will you recommend the programme to your colleagues?

All participants answered **Yes**.

Appendix 3: Summary of feedback from Senior Managers

Summary of feedback from Senior Managers



Back to floor

I love back to the floor - it's a great way to understand what staff really do and to hear about their work and issues first hand.

I think it would be useful to attend a team meeting of the service and observe.

Shadowing

I have enjoyed having people shadow me. I think it works best when you can find different activities to illustrate our roles. It's hard to know what people will find valuable.

I enjoy 121 talking with staff members and the chance to understand their ambitions and how we might help them on their way.

General comments

I have enjoyed the initiatives and would be interested to know what colleagues found most helpful.