

### **Appendix 3. - Buddying Scheme Proposal**

**Background:** A relatively inexperienced manager with a challenging team at Aston University Library. Was working very hard with the team, but had recurrent problems. Wanted to be able to talk things through and benefit from the experience of someone else, without feeling too exposed.

The University's own mentoring scheme seemed to be too formal; mainly aimed at academics; and mainly aimed at career progression.

We decided to try buddying with a more experienced person doing a similar role elsewhere, who could ask questions, elicit some suggestions and offer reassurance about the fact that some problems seemed to be intractable. Somebody neutral and non-judgemental.

Local Universities were contacted so as to enable meetings and minimise time spent travelling – Birmingham, BCU and Wolverhampton, and all responded positively.

It was agreed to go ahead with Wolverhampton.

The 2 parties met, had a couple of meetings in both libraries and exchanged some emails

This is what happened:

- Staff members got to know one another and ascertained that they could work together
- The issues were outlined honestly
- Discussion of issues
- Aston manger felt

Similar to “All The Same But Different”, both staff members went away with some new ideas for amending procedures. Feedback was very positive:

*“Speaking to someone in another organisation made me realise that challenging and trying to deal with difficult situations rather than letting them go on or trying to avoid issues, was the issue.”*

### **Proposal**

The proposal is that this procedure should be rolled out to staff in all Mercian Collaboration Libraries, and that managers should support staff availing of the scheme by permitting work time to be used.

- Buddying should normally be peer to peer (same or similar pay grade/ role). It is most suitable for people new in role.
- A manger or MSDG rep should mediate finding a contact.
- Ideally use a local or similar university.
- 6 months should be the normal term. Less if there is a specific issue and it is resolved sooner.
- Meetings should take place during normal working hours
- Each meeting should normally be about 2 hours
- Emails/phone calls can also be exchanged
- At the end there should be a review of the usefulness of the arrangement and the lessons learnt.

## **Practicalities**

### **What are the characteristics of a buddy?**

- Be open and committed to the scheme– it can be a learning experience for both parties
  - Be non-judgmental
  - Have relevant knowledge and experience to be able to provide the right level of support
  - Be trained in giving successful feedback
  - Be able to ask challenging questions
  - Be able to use questions to encourage buddies to think for themselves
  - Don't have all the answers
- 
- **At the outset:**
  - Outline your role and experience
  - Find out about the other person's background and experience and identify their understanding of the "buddy" relationship and how it will work
  - Identify the issue(s) they would like support with
  - Clarify expectations of what you can do

### **During the relationship**

- Exchange notes after meetings
- Don't create dependency
- Feedback to your line manager about the usefulness of the arrangement

**Angela Brady**

**Aston University Library**

**September 2016**