**Headteacher peer support (maintained schools)**

**Overall aims**

The local authority recognises the pressures that headship brings and aims to ensure that a each headteacher has access to a range of well being support mechanisms. One of these tools is the access to a peer support programme. Peer support is not intended to replace schemes such as NOSS.

The peer support model is designed to support schools with the implementation of the DfE well being charter. Full details can be found at <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1034032/DfE_Education_Workforce_Welbeing_Charter_Nov21.pdf>

Headteachers will be able to request a cycle of peer support at any point. The local authority will oversee and monitor the programme as well as funding the training. Each member of staff providing peer support will have undertaken funded training provided by UCS.

**Peer support versus mentoring**

Mentoring is often a long term relationship and mentoring meetings are often informal and ad-hoc when the mentee requires some advice of guidance.

Peer support is much more aligned to coaching. It is much more about a short term relationship that focuses on specific areas of concern. The agenda is very much set by the headteacher and the conversation focuses on achieving solutions and providing support around the specific concern.

**Benefits for the headteacher**

* Access to a colleague with current experience of school management
* Opportunity to talk through issues of concern
* Access to a confidential critical friend who may provide a different perspective
* Support in decision making

**Benefits for the peer supporter**

* Professional development
* Opportunity to support fellow leaders
* Contribution to a school led improvement model that strengthens education in Shropshire

**The peer support model**

Any maintained headteacher or head of school will be able to request peer support by contacting [steve.compton@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:steve.compton@shropshire.gov.uk). The headteacher will be sent profiles of the available peer support volunteers. The profiles will include details such as region of Shropshire, size, school type (eg federation, rural etc) and a short summary of background and skills. The local authority will then arrange for the preferred peer supporter to contact the headteacher.

It is important that any arrangement has a defined duration. It is suggested that an initial meeting of up to 1 hour takes place (on teams or in-person) and that a maximum of 6 in-person meetings takes place over no more than 6 months. If further support is required it should be reviewed and agreed at 6 months.

The process should always be individual needs led and focus on being:

* Supportive
* Non-judgmental
* Caring
* Well being focused

**Who can be a peer supporter?**

To be able to register an interest and undertake the training at UCS the following criteria must be met:

* 5 years+ experience as a headteacher
* The current school must be judged good or better at the last Ofsted.
* Good understanding of Shropshire processes
* A proven track record of excellent coaching/mentoring skills

Peer supporters will be drawn from a cross section of schools based on size. locality, structure (eg federations) etc

The peer support model is based on a volunteer model with the local authority funding training.

**Confidentiality**

The peer support conversations should have a high degree of confidentiality and it is expected that all matters discussed remain confidential. There may be rare occasions where a disclosure means that the peer supporter is professionally bound to report a safeguarding or whistleblowing concern. The peer supporter will be provided with a single point of contact at the local authority and the peer supporter will contact the named person to share the concern and agree the action needed.

**Quality assurance**

All headteachers who request and receive peer support will be contacted by the local authority for feedback once the series of sessions has been completed. This will be used to further develop the service. The feedback will not be shared with the person providing peer support without the headteacher’s permission.

**Maintaining boundaries**

Boundaries help to ensure effective peer support. Personal phone numbers should not be used for contact and peer support sessions should take place during the school day or immediately afterwards. Email and phone contact should also take place during a normal working day and not during evenings or weekends or outside of term time.

**Supervision meetings of peer supporters**

It is important that we look after the well-being of staff volunteering to offer peer support. All volunteers will be offered supervision meetings.

Summer 2022