



From mentored to mentor

CASE STUDY

M.G. is a Kosovan woman who started volunteering with BAKC in May 2014 and is now studying Community Development and Leadership at London Metropolitan University. Her volunteering experience with BAKC began after joining our Parenting Programme, a 13 week cross cultural programme we run in central London, where we focus on the role of parents in Albanian and Kosovar families.

This is what she told us about her experience with BAKC.

BEFORE

I worked in schools as a teaching assistant before volunteering with BAKC, so I had quite a good understanding of UK schooling, but as a result of joining BAKC Parenting Programme I learnt from other parents things that I didn't know, especially from those whose children go to secondary school. I completed the training with BAKC as a parent and that was quite beneficial for me, because I could understand other parents' perspectives. Besides, I started questioning myself about the way I was dealing with specific situations regarding my children and the way we communicate, about how much we listen and we use our voice, actually I reflected on myself and I think this is the best practice and best way to improve ourselves.

Before starting, I wasn't quite confident in delivering speeches and presenting in front of people. It definitely made me aware of how I communicate and interact with my children, teachers and people, and how I could improve it. The range of parents who attended the training was very interesting, they came from different backgrounds and professions, so I learnt from their personal experiences they shared with the group about approaching schools, children, GPs, and I learnt how to put that new knowledge into use. Now that I am studying Community Development and Leadership at London Metropolitan University, which is much related to my volunteering experience, I have realize that the training made me even more confident in delivering presentations as a student.

AFTER

After the training as a parent, I was luckily chosen by BAKC facilitators as the most successful parent in the programme, and they asked me to become a facilitator myself and mentor in its next session. I decided to take up this new challenge. I went through a 5 day intensive facilitation training and was immediately involved in sharing new ideas to deliver even a better session. As a parent who experienced their programme directly, and having experienced also a Child Protection training with BAKC, they really believed in me and made me part of the project, they listened to my thoughts and reflections, besides including me in the preparation of the following session - from finding a venue to establishing relationships - tutoring me and furnishing me with new skills. BAKC helped in building my confidence, we prepared every session together and at the end of each one we met and had a chat about how it went and how we could have improved it.

A good point that I want to stress about BAKC Parenting Programme is that, even if in recent months I have been volunteering as a facilitator and delivering the programme to other parents, I have been keeping learning and growing constantly, as each group of parents is so diverse and brings so many different questions and observations that we, as mentors, are learning and gaining more information each time. So actually parents become mentors themselves at the end of the programme. This is probably the most rewarding experience I had and am still having when volunteering with BAKC. Perhaps the only suggestion I could give to improve the programme would be trying to recruit more men, which is always quite a challenge but would mean a great progress and would definitely be even more beneficial to the potential and the objectives of the programme itself.

IN THE FUTURE

I am so glad I decided to join the Parental Programme and later become a facilitator. At the beginning I wasn't so sure I was making the right decision and was so scared of presenting in front of other parents, but the people at BAKC encouraged me and made me aware of the skills I had and about the fact that I could have put them into use and helped other people gaining them. I challenged myself and am happy they are proud of me. We all learnt and are still learning a lot from each other.

Therefore, I would definitely recommend other people to join this programme and any other activity organized by BAKC. It is very important, especially for small communities like our, to stick together when you are living in a foreign country. For me as a parent it was so important to attend this programme and make new friendships, network with other people, meet other families. I myself joined the programme because a good friend of mine participated in it, and can now spread how good and worthy it is.

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