

Mentor Profile

From the Ako Aotearoa co-funded project:
‘Evaluating the effectiveness of support interventions for adult dyslexic learners in New Zealand’s multiple learning environments’

Introduction

An important finding from an Ako Aotearoa co-funded project showed that successful adults with dyslexia each have in common a “significant other” to support them. Sometimes this person is a spouse, partner, parent or friend but oftentimes, the support person is a mentor. The co-funded project explored how best to support adults with dyslexia in industry training, tertiary education and the workforce..

Trainees regularly excel at hands-on skills but struggle with the theory component of their training. Studying to complete an apprenticeship is very demanding because the apprentice must pick up the books and the end of a long day’s work. Research confirms that the support of a mentor can make a lot of difference.

So, what is a mentor?

A mentor is a volunteer who helps a learner complete their course training. Mentors are not technical experts but are there to provide motivation, structure, purpose and regularity. Generally, mentors meet with their mentee once a fortnight, for an hour or two to assist with the completion of theory assignments and assessments.

How does a mentor help?

Mentoring is a light intervention. It is a commitment that does not become too onerous for either party. Volunteer mentors are recruited and provided with a training package before starting a mentoring programme.

Mentor Roseanne Robertson

Rosanne is an ideal mentor to Liam Wilkie, a young chef apprentice. Liam has been assessed as dyslexic and struggles with reading, writing and spelling. He is a gifted young chef and has won prizes both regionally and nationally for his skills. Roseanne says categorically, “I get as much out of the relationship as Liam does. It is a real pleasure to make connections across the generations.”

Rosanne has recently retired from a rewarding and varied career consisting of roles, from journalism to law,



to work in a member of parliament’s offices. Rosanne has fostered children and worked in the offices of Human Rights. With a lifetime of experience and wisdom, Rosanne is pleased to assist Liam, “We are able to talk about all sorts of things that hopefully serve to enrich both of our lives.”

“I was delighted when I found out that Liam had won the prize for Service IQ Champion Apprentice Chef of the Year. It was down to his hard work, but it felt great to be involved.”

More information

As part of a recently completed research report on the support interventions for dyslexic learners, Ako Aotearoa aims to champion increased positivity and awareness of adult dyslexia within the New Zealand tertiary education sector.

This comprehensive project report provides valuable insight to how a range of industry training organisations have collaborated to utilise a new effective model to support these learners, but the project team has also developed:

- A short fact sheet on the project report
- Posters to assist with recognising some common signs of dyslexia in adults and where to go next
- Profiles of two talented and hard-working adults with dyslexia who were participants in the research project.
- A profile of an effective and life-changing mentor who supports adults with dyslexia.