

The Mentoring Fund

Evaluation of The Careers and Enterprise Company Mentoring Fund

Summary report



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Date: 08/07/2020

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Introduction

1. A national mentoring campaign was launched by the Government in January 2016 to connect a new generation of mentors to pre-GCSE teenagers. Later that year, The Careers & Enterprise Company **launched a Fund** to support mentoring activities young people, with the objective of ensuring that; *'25,000 young people at risk of disengagement in the run-up to their GCSEs have a mentor in place by 2020'*.
2. This ambitious programme had three main components;
 - to **reach a significant number of young people** who were at risk of disengagement in the years leading up to their GCSEs
 - to **work with schools across all LEP areas** to include mentoring in their careers programmes
 - to **increase the number of mentors** volunteering to support young people
3. This digest summarises some of the main findings from the external evaluation of the Fund. The evaluation assessed the extent to which the funded programme met its aims in supporting young people and extending the reach of mentoring activities with employers and amongst schools.
4. The funded programme was intended for completion in September 2020, with the evaluation to report before the funding ended. This summary, which draws on performance data collated in March 2020, was finalised, therefore, before the Fund completed its delivery.
5. The findings that are reported here also pre-date the online approaches taken to address the COVID-19 pandemic and the extension of some projects until March 2021.
6. The evaluation research included analysis of monitoring and other secondary data, a survey of mentors, and interviews with all project leads, a random sample of careers leaders in schools and an opportunity sample of focus groups with mentees.

Why was mentoring selected as an approach to support young people?

7. Mentoring has been defined as a **voluntary, mutually beneficial and purposeful relationship** in which an individual gives time to support another to enable them to make changes in their life (Mentoring and Befriending Foundation, 2011)¹. Previous research shows that positive mentoring relationships between young people and those in employment (or with significant experience of employment) **raise young people's aspirations and**

¹ Mentoring and Befriending Foundation (2011). What is mentoring and befriending? Manchester: Mentoring and Befriending Foundation

supports their transition through education and into employment. Such relationships also provide them with a significant ‘encounter’ with an employer as defined in the Gatsby Benchmarks, which were embedded within the Government’s Careers Strategy in 2017.

What was the Fund designed to do?

8. The Careers and Enterprise Company’s Mentoring Fund Prospectus stated it intended to “*level the playing field*”, *close the gap and support social mobility and improve life chances*’ of those young people at risk of disengagement in the run up to their GCSEs. The Company’s *Effective Employer Mentoring* report (Hooley, 2016)² summarised previous research findings regarding what works in careers mentoring such as the need for careful matching and sufficient time to establish good mentor-mentee relationships. The Mentoring Fund was designed to build on these findings whilst supporting innovation and flexibility for mentoring providers to explore new models and work with different groups of mentors and mentees.

How many projects were funded?

9. A total of **39 mentoring projects** were awarded funding from the **Mentoring Fund** to deliver interventions between November 2016 and September 2018. Following the first round of funding, 17 of the original 39 providers received a one-year extension (between October 2018 and September 2019) and seven of the original 39 providers received a two-year extension (between October 2018 and September 2020). This was known as the Mentoring Extension Fund. The intention was that, across the two funding periods, a total of 25,000 young people would be reached through mentoring-related activities.

How many schools and young people were reached?

10. Some schools and some mentors were involved in both the Mentoring Fund and the Mentoring Extension Fund, and providers were successful in increasing the number of schools involved in the latter.
 - The 39 funded projects reached **12,098 young people** by September 2018, with **4,328 mentors** working in **754 schools** across all 38 LEP areas.
 - By March 2020, **the programme had reached 83 per cent of its target for young people**, with seven providers still delivering their second year of the Mentoring Extension Fund. At this date a total of just under **21,000 young people** had been mentored, with **3,582 mentors** working in **815 schools** in England.
11. By early March 2020, The Careers and Enterprise Company were confident that providers were on track to meet the policy promise of 25,000 young people taking part in employer mentoring activities by the time the Mentoring Extension Fund was closed in August 2020.

² Hooley, T. (2016). *Effective employer mentoring: lessons from the evidence*. London: The Careers & Enterprise Company.

Following the lockdown situation imposed by COVID-19, with schools closed and many employers having to furlough their staff, it was recognised that providers would struggle to deliver a full mentoring programme over the summer term and that the target may not be fully achieved by that point. The Careers and Enterprise Company extended their period of funding to March 2021, putting in place a number of measures to help providers reach the policy target (which may include moving some mentoring activities online).

Which young people were reached?

12. The Mentoring Funds were successful in reaching the target age group. In total 97 per cent of the young people involved in the programme were in Years 8, 9 and 10 (ages 12 to 15). The majority of participating schools were in the more disadvantaged LEP areas (as indicated by The Careers and Enterprise Company's Cold Spot Analysis³) and consultees reported that young people involved were those at risk of underachieving or disengaging.
13. The definition of what constituted 'disengagement' was applied flexibly, with some providers using metrics such as eligibility for Pupil Premium to influence selection, whilst others utilised schools' knowledge of the young people. The types of young people who participated included those who were at **risk of disengaging from their studies and underperforming in examinations**.
14. It was not possible for providers to provide demographic data for all individual mentees in the monitoring returns. This makes it difficult to comment definitively on the gender, ethnic profile or level of disadvantage of mentees. From the data available, however, we can report:
 - Over half (55%) of those for whom gender data was available (16,826) were male (9,363)
 - Where ethnicity was specifically recorded (on 10,747 or 52% of mentees), the most frequently reported ethnicity was White British (43%). Twenty-nine per cent of mentees indicated they came from a Black, Asian and minority ethnic (BAME) background. A further 24 per cent defined themselves as British and four per cent said they came from another white background.
 - Some data was recorded on the economic or educational need status of approximately two thirds of the mentees. A marginally higher proportion of mentees were recorded as eligible for Free School Meals (17%) and/or were categorised as Children In Need (eight per cent) than the national averages for these students (15.9% and three per cent), though a smaller proportion (10%) were identified as having special educational needs (the national average for young people designated as SEND pupils was 14.9%). Only a very small proportion of mentees (less than two per cent) were those who had been

³ Careers and Enterprise Company, 'Updating the careers Cold Spots', 2018:
<https://www.careersandenterprise.co.uk/our-research/updating-careers-cold-spots>

persistently absent, previously (72 young people) persistently excluded (94 young people).

Who became mentors?

15. Mentors, as became clear from the survey, came from a **range of sectors**, with a high proportion from the professional, scientific and technical sector and financial sectors, but also from manufacturing, construction and education. The survey respondents were predominantly between the ages of 30 and 49, but spanned different age ranges, with some mentors being younger than 20 years old while others were over 60 years.
16. Providers felt that mentors tended to become role models when young people were able to identify more closely with them (whatever their age). This might be because they came from the same area, for example, or belonged to the same community. Schools reported that having **access to mentors with a varied range of experiences and backgrounds was positive**. One Mentoring Fund provider reported that their most inspiring mentor was someone who had left school with no qualifications, but now owned a successful business. The young people who were group mentored by this individual were enthused by the mentor's story with which they were able to identify.

How were young people matched to mentors?

17. Guidance in the Mentoring Fund Prospectus suggested it was important to connect a mentee with specific career aspirations with a mentor matched by role or sector. In the case of some industry or sector-specific projects (particularly those focused on STEM), the nature of a mentor's occupation and the focus of their industry-specific activity providers also saw this as critical to the success of the mentoring relationship.
18. However, providers felt that the **quality** of the mentor (committed, passionate and motivated), rather than the nature of a mentor's occupation, was more important, especially given the varied aspirations of young people involved in mentoring and the nature of group mentoring. **Providers and schools reported that young people benefited from and enjoyed mentoring most when the mentor showed a genuine interest in the young person.**

What delivery models were used?

19. Projects developed a range of delivery models.
 - Schools were asked to select and invite young people who would benefit most from a mentoring experience and were given flexibility to decide who these would be.
 - Most projects were based in school, as this was seen as a safe and familiar location for the mentees. Some projects had off site elements such as visits to mentors' workplaces.

- The duration of the mentoring experience varied from a short intensive experience lasting a day or two, through to regular but infrequent interactions over the course of an entire academic year. The more usual model was to have a series of weekly or fortnightly sessions over the course of a full term.
 - Projects often used group mentoring as well as the more established one-to-one model. Some used a blend of both approaches, where some group engagements were used to establish early relationship building and to support matching but were followed by more intensive one to one sessions. Some projects chose to pair mentors who would then work together with a pair or small group of mentees.
 - Several projects included group activities (including celebrations) at the end of the programme.
- 20.** To support this delivery, projects needed to recruit, train and security check mentors. They also spent time working with school leaders, administrators, year group heads and careers leaders to explain how their model worked and who would benefit. In many cases, project staff were on site in schools when mentoring sessions were planned to ensure that plans were enacted. Many projects also provided mentors with resources including structured 'lesson plans', careers information and resources, workbooks and other materials for them to use with their mentees.

How did the young people benefit?

- 21.** It should be noted that the true impact of mentoring is hard to measure directly and was not something attempted by the evaluation. The providers had been implementing their projects for some time before the evaluation was commissioned, and while a quasi-experimental design might have been able to help assess impact, it would have been costly and have required providers to use a set of common and agreed outcome-assessment tools from commissioning. Providers were supporting a wide range of young people, across different age groups and with different needs. Reflecting these variations, therefore, the evaluation focus was on perceived benefits rather than quantifiable outcomes.
- 22.** Each of the providers worked with different groups of young people targeting different age groups or needs. They, the school staff and the young people involved variously mentioned:
- improvements in social and emotional skill outcomes that would contribute to 'wellbeing' (including self-confidence, self-esteem, attitude towards school and resilience)
 - improvements in behaviour, engagement and attendance;
 - improvements in attainment and in progression into education and employment.
- 23.** Most schools decided that young people who were non-attenders or who had extreme behavioural needs were less likely to benefit from mentoring, though some included such students and saw improvements:

“In the case of four or five students who had severe behavioural problems, there was a significant improvement following their participation in the programme. They could handle issues and incidents which arose in lessons with maturity, understanding how to resolve problems in a noticeably different way.” **Mentoring Fund school-based interviewee**

24. Interviewees emphasised the fact that mentoring could not be linked directly to every outcome. Similarly, not all young people benefited, and some chose to terminate their involvement. However, where the relationship worked, mentoring was reported by participants to play a part in many of the improvements observed in mentees.

Improvements in wellbeing

25. The most common outcome recognised by providers, schools, and mentors was **improved confidence**, particularly in communicating with others.

“They see their levels of confidence grow – pupils can express themselves better in lessons, are more confident putting their hand up, develop presenting skills and can present different ideas, will get involved in group work and in class more than they would before.” **Mentoring Extension Fund school-based consultee**

26. Young people echoed that view, with a number noting that they had a better understanding of their personal strengths, felt more confident with their peers and were more able to respond flexibly in the classroom.

“I have a lot more self-belief thanks to the mentoring. It helped boost my confidence and it made me more motivated.” **Mentoring Fund mentee**

Improvements in engagement

27. Young people were thought by some providers to have benefited from **improved engagement with school**, which was generally associated with motivation and aspirations. Providers linked increasing engagement in school to a better understanding of the relevance of school learning to employment, which came through young people’s exposure to a business mentor and led to an increased motivation to succeed. School staff agreed, with some noticing an increase in effort and engagement.

“It helps some students to understand why are learning what they are learning – the relevance of what they are learning to business.... So that they understand how it helps in the workplace to keep them motivated or re-motivate them.” **Mentoring Extension Fund school-based consultee**

Improvements in attainment and employability

28. While changes in attainment were not monitored longitudinally by projects (and schools and providers recognised that other factors and experiences played a significant part in student

outcomes) providers and students identified changes that had come about because of the unique nature of the mentoring relationship.

“A key benefit for the students was their being introduced to an employer. Spending this amount and quality of time with an employer enables students to view business from their perspective which makes a big difference.” **Mentoring Fund school-based consultee**

29. School staff, mentors and providers also reflected on the deepening in young people’s **understanding of career pathways** and their developing **employability skills**, something that the young people echoed.

“I think mentoring has helped me gain more teamwork skills... if I was working with someone I don’t like then I would try to suck it up.” **Mentoring Fund mentee**

1.

Who else benefited?

30. Mentors said the experience had supported their **personal development** and reported that they found mentoring both enjoyable and rewarding, and through their programmes, were able to communicate and work with young people more effectively. **Professionally**, they said they had benefited from the experience of working closely with young people as future employees or colleagues, gaining insight into their motivations, and capabilities and overcoming personal preconceptions.
31. Providers and mentors reported that the **organisations** that mentors work for also experienced positive impacts as a result of the programme. These benefits included:
- improved perception of the business across the wider community
 - businesses’ ability to retain staff who are passionate about having a positive influence on society through their work
 - more positive business attitudes to employing young people

What features of the programme and its delivery made a positive difference?

32. The Careers and Enterprise Company funded mentoring programme ran over four years and during that period **each provider adapted and developed their delivery models** to make changes, respond to feedback and extend into different areas. Effective mentoring requires a range of features, chief amongst them being the engagement of schools, mentors *and* young people. Mentoring Extension Fund providers were able to do this effectively, due to the longevity of their relationships and the learning they had gained from the Mentoring Fund. This is because:

- providers were more knowledgeable about the needs of their schools, and schools were better able to facilitate mentoring as they were familiar with the logistics and management processes involved.
 - young people in these schools were aware of the project and did not see participation as a stigma, making them more enthusiastic about being involved, and positively impacting on their commitment and retention.
- 33.** Recruiting appropriate mentors, training them well and supporting them in the role to build **long-term relationships** was essential. Mentoring is not for everyone, but many mentors really valued the experience and wished to do more. Three quarters of the mentors had previous experience in mentoring prior to the extension funding, and consultees reported working with many of the same mentors across both Funds. Mentors with experience of the processes, the needs of schools and working with young people benefited, heightening their impact on young people.
- 34.** **Effective induction and training of mentors** as well as the **provision of resources** to use with their mentees enabled mentors to undertake their role more effectively, making them more able to make a positive difference to their mentees. This was further strengthened by providers building in **effective matching processes**, enabling positive and impactful relationships.
- 35.** Schools also made a positive difference, most especially by having a **small group of school staff to provide a consistent brokerage relationship** between the provider, mentor and mentee. The Mentoring Fund and Mentoring Extension Fund provided mentoring free of charge to many schools, but it still required resources in terms of senior leadership commitment, provision of safe spaces for mentoring to occur, as well as the logistics of making arrangements and managing communications. Mentoring is one component of a school's careers provision and where this was recognised and properly resourced it worked best.
- 36.** Mentoring relationships sometimes broke down, but most providers built an element of non-completion into their models to recognise this. The use of guidelines by providers (e.g. for selecting mentees), good communication and willingness to be flexible allowed projects to be implemented quickly and delivered well and safely.

What were the challenges?

- 37.** Mentoring is a challenging experience – both for those involved in the mentoring relationship and those whose job it is to facilitate it. Introducing mentoring at scale and pace, as the Funds were expected to do, created further challenges. Some Mentoring Funded projects could not make mentoring work in the time and place that they wanted. Others found that it worked in one setting but not another, or with one set of mentees or mentors but not another. Challenges experienced by providers related to engaging and recruiting schools, keeping delivery on track, and engaging the young people who would benefit most from the intervention. Specific challenges included.

- the time-intensive process of creating initial interest and engaging schools
 - the lack of school staff time and resource to facilitate and coordinate the mentoring programme or (over time) the changing roles and responsibilities of individual staff members
 - timetabling the mentoring activities within busy school schedules, sometimes leading to last minute cancellations by schools
 - mentors having to prioritise employment commitments over mentoring and having to cancel sessions
 - young people reporting ill or simply not attending sessions
 - schools' misunderstanding the type of young people projects wanted to support, resulting in challenging behaviour from students for which providers (and subsequently mentors) were not prepared
 - the logistics of organising off-school site provision.
- 38.** These barriers appeared to reduce over time. Providers applied their learning from the Mentoring Fund in delivering the extension funding, refined their project systems, and therefore faced fewer difficulties in engaging schools, supporting mentors and retaining young people on the programme.
- 39.** The Fund supported a wide range of mentoring interventions, but it was not designed to support intensive or specialist mentoring, such as working with young people who were already fully disengaged from school or those with particular educational needs or medical challenges. Mentoring could be very valuable for these groups but required a level of resource that was out of scope of the Funds.

What does the Fund teach us?

- 40.** While many young people can benefit from a mentoring relationship, it does not provide the answer for all young people. Equally, setting up a mentoring programme in a school (or college) is both complex and potentially costly, with the need to:
- identify appropriate mentors
 - select the young people who would benefit most
 - ensure that the mentoring activities will be productive for those involved.
- 41.** Taking these points into account, several lessons emerged from the evaluation of the Mentoring Fund and the Mentoring Extension Fund and these should be considered when schools or colleges implement a mentoring programme

Mentoring works well for some young people, but not for all.

- 42.** Mentoring was said to have enhanced engagement with learning and improved social, emotional and employability skills and attainment for some. For others it proved to be a transformational experience. But the funded mentoring models did not work for everyone and almost all projects experienced attrition, with more young people starting on mentoring programmes than completing them. Few projects indicated that they had success in mentoring young people with major behavioural problems or who were already physically disengaged from school (those who had been excluded or had poor attendance).
- 43.** It is important that any institution adopting a mentoring approach to support their young people considers:
- what is its purpose - what do you want it to achieve and how will you know that it has done so? What information do you need to be able to monitor the progress of the young people being mentored
 - with which young people will it work best – what are their immediate and longer-term needs? Will the proposed mentees be willing to engage with their mentors or do they need more intensive support before being taken into a mentoring programme?
 - the type of mentoring model to be used - will individual young people benefit more from a dedicated one-to-one relationship, a group approach or a mixed approach?
 - understands the time commitment required:
 - from staff, to manage and monitor the internal programme (and/or may need to source either a provider or mentors),
 - from young people, who will be asked to attend sessions that may take place outside school-time
 - from mentors, who are volunteers and will be giving up their own time to provide face-to-face or online sessions that require preparation and/or may require travelling. Mentors need to be able to rely on the young person attending the mentoring sessions
 - is prepared for some mentoring relationships to fail (but is prepared to facilitate new ones).

Mentoring is about developing an effective relationship and matching young people and mentors is crucial for success.

- 44.** Mentoring can only be effective if the young person is able to develop a relationship with their mentor:

- time needs to be invested in matching young people and mentors - the quality, commitment and interest of the mentor appeared to be more important than their age or occupational sector.
- there is a fine balance in selecting mentees who are most in need of mentoring, those who would most benefit most from it, and those who want to have a mentor
- mentoring is not necessarily the answer to all young people's problems - some of the most 'at risk' young people need more support than can be provided in a mentoring relationship.

Mentoring can be done in different ways

45. While the traditional model is of a one-to-one relationship, providers successfully used group mentoring approaches (particularly at Key Stage 3), which provided both peer and mentor support for young people. When selecting the approach right for them institutions needed to consider **logistics** and **the type of mentoring model** to be used:
- how will the sessions be fitted into the school day (before or after school, lunchtimes or during timetabled lessons)?
 - what rooms will be used and how can mentee confidentiality be assured?
 - will school/college staff/support staff need to be present?
 - will individual young people benefit more from dedicated one-to-one provision, a group approach or a mixed approach?
46. The mentoring on which these findings are based was predominantly conducted face to face. Some of the requirements for online provision are however, likely to be the same (such as the timing and mentoring model), but other needs (including access and resource materials) for either model would require further investigation.

Mentoring is not a cost-free option for support, even though it uses volunteers

47. Schools and colleges need to consider their available budgets and whether they are able to run their own programme or will need to bring in external support. The funded projects, for instance, engaged schools and helped them to identify appropriate young people for mentoring; recruited, trained and DBS-checked the mentors; facilitated and resourced mentoring activities and monitored outcomes. Once their set-up costs had been identified and isolated, their ongoing mean hourly costs (covering resourcing and monitoring etc.) were calculated as⁴:

⁴ These figures are indicative only and were based on calculated unit costs for each mentee and the average number of hours of mentoring delivered under each delivery model. The Education Endowment Fund estimates £700–£1050 as the range of costs per person that could be expected for a

- £22.50 per hour per mentee for one-to-one mentoring
- £14.54 per hour per mentee for group mentoring
- £28.77 per hour per mentee for a combination of one-to-one and group mentoring.

A broker can play a crucial role in facilitating the success of a mentoring programme

- 48.** Relationship brokers can provide very necessary support in recruiting, training and supporting mentors and helping schools to identify and recruit the young participants. Schools need to identify staff who will be the key contact for the mentoring provider and provide space and timetabling resource and administrative resource to manage communications.

Assessing the success of a programme is necessary to lead to future improvements

- 49.** One of the challenges about identifying the short and longer-term impact of mentoring on young people is being clear about the intended outcomes and having things in place that can help track those outcomes over time. While some preferred changes in behaviour, such as improvements in attendance, can be monitored easily, institutions (whether schools, colleges or external delivery partners) need to consider whether that is the sole outcome they want to see or whether it is simply being measured because it is relatively straightforward.
- 50.** Those implementing mentoring programmes need to:
- consider and specify their preferred outcomes (such as improvements in self-esteem, changes in attitudes to learning, increased aspirations and so on);
 - identify how these outcomes can be assessed and how change can be monitored over time;
 - be clear on how and why they think that the activities they put in place may have an impact on the outcomes.
- 51.** By monitoring outcomes and testing this relationship, institutions may get a clearer picture of what might be working in the mentoring process, with whom it is working and why it may be successful.

mentoring programme <https://educationendowmentfoundation.org.uk/evidence-summaries/teaching-learning-toolkit/mentoring/> [accessed 16/07/2020]

About the Fund

- 52.** The Funds were focused in areas defined by The Careers and Enterprise Company as ‘cold spots’ – areas where a high proportion of school children were known to be eligible for and claiming Free School Meals; where attainment (including entry in STEM subjects) was low; where progression into apprenticeships was low; where the proportion of young people who were not in education, employment and training (NEET) was high and the proportion of employer establishments who offered any work inspiration was low.
- 53.** In total, The Careers and Enterprise Company forecasts that, based on current delivery, £4.3m will have been invested under the Mentoring Fund and Mentoring Extension Fund in projects to deliver a mentoring experience to young people across England by the time it closes. The unit costs for mentoring (excluding start-up costs) ranged from £25 (for online group mentoring) to £563, with a mean of £196 under the Mentoring Fund, and from £53 (for face-to-face group mentoring) to £815 (for one-to-one mentoring), with a mean of £227 under the Mentoring Extension Fund. These costs compare favourably with the costs estimated by an Education Endowment Foundation review that suggested that the range of costs per person that could be expected for a mentoring programme are generally in the region of between £700–£1050, while interventions for those young people who are identified as ‘pre-NEET’ could be even higher.

About the evaluation

- 54.** The evaluation took place in three phases: a scoping study and two tranches of primary research; one for the Mentoring Fund (2017/18) and one for the Mentoring Extension Fund (2018/20). SQW’s interim report of the Mentoring Fund included recommendations for The Careers and Enterprise Company support for the Mentoring Fund and its ongoing evaluation.
- 55.** This briefing is a summary of the findings from the scoping, interim and final phases of the evaluation. It is based on an analysis of monitoring data collated by the Fund manager (Ecorys), a series of 42 scoping interviews, two tranches of fieldwork with the funded providers, in-depth interviews in 33 of the 38 LEPS, an online survey of 184 mentors, linked to the 14 providers who were active during the Mentoring Extension Fund period and interviews (variously) with staff and students in 25 schools.

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